

The use of Lingua Receptiva in practice

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Motivation

Utrecht University has been commissioned by the Dutch Language Union to carry out research into the use of **Lingua Receptiva** in the construction industry, healthcare and education in the Netherlands and Flanders (for more information see luistertaal.nl and taalunie.org). Lingua Receptiva means that both conversation partners speak a different language, but understand each other because they have sufficient receptive skills in the other's language. The Dutch Language Union wants to stimulate the use of Lingua Receptiva as an accessible and effective way to achieve mutual understanding in multilingual situations. With Lingua Receptiva, people can continue to express themselves in one language while improving their control of another.

Research question and method

The main question of the research is: 'How is multilingualism being dealt with in the social sectors of construction industry, healthcare and education? And what role does Lingua Receptiva play in this?' Other so-called *communicative modes* and means of communication that are used in combination with Lingua Receptiva have also been mapped out, for example: interpreters, written translations and pictorials. Furthermore, we looked at how language legislation and language policy are implemented in the three sectors and whether the principle of Lingua Receptiva is or could be part of it. As a methodology, a desk research was carried out and in-depth interviews were conducted with informants from the three aforementioned sectors.

Existing practices with Lingua Receptiva

In the **construction industry**, Lingua Receptiva is mainly used in formal meetings; in the Netherlands with Dutch, German and English and in Flanders mainly with two Belgian national languages: Dutch and French. Furthermore, Lingua Receptiva works well in combination with non-verbal communication, such as gestures. In **healthcare**, Lingua Receptiva works well in formal meetings between hospital staff. Lingua Receptiva is also combined with an interpreter (both formal and informal) or with an intercultural mediator in conversations with patients. Lingua Receptiva turns out to be a useful tool for providing culturally sensitive healthcare. In **education**, Lingua Receptiva is mainly a stepping stone to the productive learning of a second or foreign language. The use of Lingua Receptiva can also reduce fear of speaking in another language. In both education and healthcare, the use of Lingua Receptiva appears to be an important tool for expressing feelings and emotions.

More possibilities for Lingua Receptiva

There are not always concrete agreements about the languages which are being used in organisations and institutions. Lingua Receptiva is therefore mainly used on an ad hoc basis. According to interviewees, it would help if more information about Lingua Receptiva and other communication possibilities were incorporated into language policy. At the same time, there are concrete initiatives in the sectors to which the principle of Lingua Receptiva could easily be linked. This way, the use of Lingua Receptiva can make a positive contribution to safety and quality assurance in the construction industry, to comprehension and health literacy in healthcare, and to well-being and learning in education.

Recommendations

Interviewees identified factors that can both foster or constrain the use of Lingua Receptiva. Based on these factors, we have drawn up a number of general cross-sectoral **tools** for the successful use of Lingua Receptiva in practice (see below). It is advisable to continue to investigate the use of Lingua Receptiva, also in other sectors and in other (European) countries. In addition, more awareness is needed that Lingua Receptiva is a viable option alongside other communicative modes. In order to increase awareness and use of Lingua Receptiva, practical trainings on this mode can be developed. The last recommendation is about setting up **pilot projects**, for example in border regions, to explore how Lingua Receptiva can contribute to employment and economy. For example, with sufficient receptive skills in a language, one can already start a job, while the productive skills in this language are gradually being improved. Link to research report: taalunie.org/publicaties/118/het-gebruik-van-luistertaal-in-de-praktijk

Practical tools for the use of Lingua Receptiva

Preparation

- **Language policy.** Develop a language policy within the organisation and include Lingua Receptiva and other communicative modes/means (e.g. interpreters, written translations, videos, pictorials and gestures).
- **Language repertoire.** Map out which languages and/or language varieties are present and spoken and what the possibilities are for Lingua Receptiva.
- **Agreements.** At the start of a conversation, make agreements about which languages/language varieties will be used. When making a conscious choice for Lingua Receptiva, it is important to hold on to this and remind others of it.
- **Conversation topic and prior knowledge.** Take into account the topic of conversation and the common prior knowledge and experience that goes with it.
- **Advantages.** Explain to all participants what the advantages of using Lingua Receptiva can be, such as: people can express themselves best in their own language and they can work on the acquisition of the other language at the same time.



Implementation

- **Language use.** When using Lingua Receptiva, always articulate calmly and clearly. Be aware of the use of more complex words and sentences.
- **Check mutual understanding.** During conversations, check on a regular basis whether everyone understands and comprehends each other sufficiently. Be patient, listen actively to each other and give each other time and space to ask questions.
- **Opt for other means of communication.** Make an informed decision about the additional use of other communicative modes and tools. Determine what alternative communication options are available if Lingua Receptiva does not work well, such as using a single lingua franca.
- **Linguistic and cultural differences.** Be open to different linguistic and cultural backgrounds and take possible differences in vocabulary or terminology into account.

Evaluation

- **Reflection and evaluation.** Reflect on the communication process and think about possible improvements. Provide a periodical evaluation of the practice of Lingua Receptiva in light of language policy, employees' linguistic competences, recruitment, division of labour, team building and training.