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Multilingualism In higher education in Latvia

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Abstract. The world is becoming more multilingual in various spheres, including education, professional and social life. However, just being aware of multilingualism is not enough. What is required is plurilingual competence, that is the ability and skills to use two or more languages in various settings. Recently there have also started to appear scales how to measure this competence. Therefore, the goal of the research is to find out whether the students studying in higher education institutions in Latvia demonstrate plurilingual competence. The research participants were local students, international students enrolled for a full programme and Erasmus students majoring in business, tourism and advertising and public relations and representing three universities in Latvia. All students had taken or during the research were taking English for Specific Purposes (ESP) as a study course. The language of instruction in the course or in the entire programme was English. The Plurilingual and Pluricultural Competence (PPC) scale comprising 22 items on a 4-point Likert scale was applied in the study. The research results demonstrate significant differences in plurilingual competence between the local students and the international students. However, similarities are found between the local students and the Erasmus students. The authors conclude that plurilingual competence is a factor that needs to be taken into account when teaching ESP.

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