

Linguistic Inclusion in the Work of International NGOs: English as Both an Opportunity and a Barrier

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Abstract : This research examines the intricate relationship between language practices and beliefs within international environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS), with a particular focus on the Climate Action Network Europe (CAN Europe). While acknowledging that ENGOS often employ multilingual staff, this study aims to analyze the dual role of English within this sector. While English facilitates practical communication among individuals from diverse backgrounds, it also perpetuates inequalities and marginalization within CAN Europe. Instances of linguistic dominance impede participation and representation, reinforcing language hierarchies. Furthermore, the symbolic power of English risks overshadowing the multilingual skills of NGO employees. Through fourteen in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and observations, this research uncovers the lived experiences of individuals navigating Europe's largest environmental NGO network. By analyzing CAN Europe's implicit language policy and the hegemony of English, this study illuminates the challenges within multilingual settings. The organization advocates for the implementation of more inclusive language policies and practices, with the objective of recognizing and embracing linguistic diversity within international environmental NGOs.

Keywords : language policy, English, NGOs, linguistic inclusion, multilingualism

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