

Seminar on Linguistic Human Rights

Hosted by SISL – *Language, Interaction and Social Equality*
University of Southern Denmark, 14. November 2025 in room U166.

Language is never just a tool for communication – it is deeply tied to identity, belonging, and social equality. Around the world, people's rights to use and maintain their languages are challenged in schools, workplaces, public services, and everyday life. These issues are at the heart of **Linguistic Human Rights**: the idea that everyone should have the freedom to use their own language without discrimination, exclusion, or loss of opportunities.

The SISL research group warmly invites you to a one-day seminar on **Linguistic Human Rights**. Together, we will explore how language rights shape social participation, what challenges minority language speakers face, and how institutions and communities can promote equality through language.

This seminar will bring together researchers, practitioners, and anyone interested in questions of language, rights, and social justice. Whether your background is in linguistics, education, law, policy, or simply a personal interest in these issues, you are welcome to join the discussion.

Guest speakers

Assisimina Gouma, Pädagogische Hochschule Wien (University College of Teacher Education Vienna)

Despite the widespread celebration of diversity in educational settings, segregative policies and strategies have increasingly come to shape the school landscape in Austria. The education system itself contributes to this development by fostering social segregation through early selection processes. However, my contribution focuses on media discourses surrounding parents' segregative strategies in school choice. Parents across the political spectrum push for their children to be placed in schools where the majority of pupils speak German as their family language. Therefore, my analysis focuses particularly on **linguicism** – a form of racism that operates by devaluing and excluding people based on their languages or ways of speaking – as a central discursive topos in debates on school choice.

Robert Phillipson, Prof. Emeritus Copenhagen Business School

Promoting Social Justice through Linguistic Human Rights

Linguistic diversity is in trouble worldwide, including Denmark. Minority rights are respected in international law and some national law but are often suppressed. Articulating and implementing Linguistic Human Rights aims to create social justice through active language policies.

Robert Phillipson's books on language policy, linguistic imperialism, multilingual education, and language rights have been published in 11 countries. He was awarded the UNESCO Linguapax prize in 2010, and the President's Award of TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages), USA in 2024. For details of CV and publications, see www.cbs.dk/en/staff/rpmsc.

Plan: 14. November 2025 in room U166

12.30-13.30 Robert Phillipson

13.30-14 Coffee and break

14-15 Assimina Gouma

15-15.30 Discussion and concluding remarks