

Second language training at the workplace: Insights and implications

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Agenda

- Some assumptions on workplace communications
- DIE Insights
- Implications for second language training and provision



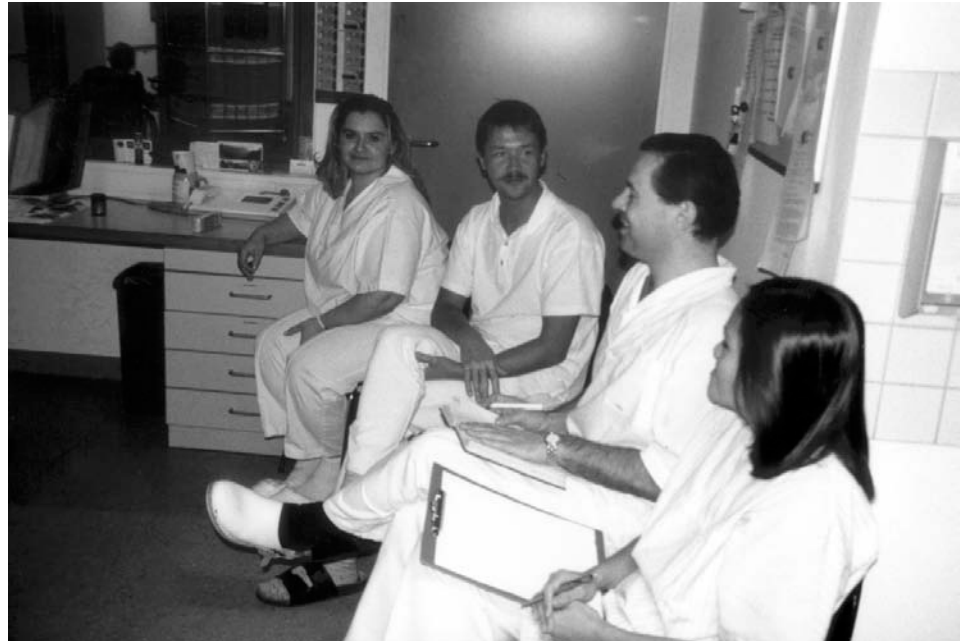
Workplace communications

- are determined by the organisation of work:

 - who has to speak/write/read,
what, when, why?

- take place in an area
of

 - forced and hierarchical
relationships
 - multilingual and
transcultural settings



In the “new work order” communicative competences are a constitutive part of vocational/professional competences

The post-fordist organisation of labour is characterised by

- modernisation and rationalisation (quality management, lean management, etc.)
- expansion of the service sector
- service orientation/customer orientation
- health and safety legislation
- technological developments (automatisation/robotisation/IT, etc.)

are based on the results of the project
„Deutsch am Arbeitsplatz - German at the Workplace
Researching workplace communications in organisational
contexts towards L2 workplace provision.“

The project is financed by the VolkswagenStiftung
Germany.

Semi-skilled workplaces are often “learning-hostile and silent” workplaces.

- Discrepancy between the communicative competences required by the job tasks:
“I do not need to talk to my cleaning rags.”

(Employee of a cleaning company)

- and those required by the overall organisation of work:

“Production assistants must take part in performance appraisals. That’s an enormous hurdle.”

(Personal manager)

For elderly semi-skilled workers:

- Discrepancy between the (low) communicative competences required previously

“You are not here to make conversation!”

(Memory of a worker)

- and those required by the new work order

“The times when the worker simply produces a piece ... are over. Today he must recognize all the pieces from the drawing, he must understand the whole process and be able to describe it.”

(Human resource manager)

- Discrepancies between corporate policy and practice:
“Nurse always running, never speaking”
(Nurse)
- Growing need for continuous further workplace training and qualification in the new work order



Different attitude of employers towards use of other languages than German:

➤ Contra:

“Russian is not “verboten” (forbidden), but also not allowed.” (Russian native speaker employee)

“It keeps them from improving their German.” (Employer)

➤ Pro:

“There are cases like Mr. Eliseev, who is a little weak in German. Now and then he gets things explained in Russian.!” (German co-worker)

➤ Constraints:

“Basically there is no problem employing migrants, but if they can’t speak German well enough to be trained in a fairly short time, then we have a problem.” (Supervisor)

➤ Solidarity crumbles

“If the supervisor does not understand the [immigrant] worker, he chooses another one... It is not nice, but it is the reality on the shopfloor.” (Supervisor)

“In the kitchen we work at regular times under high pressure. The Germans get impatient and angry with their non German speaking co-workers, when they don’t understand and make mistakes [because of the language].” (Employee)

Further assumptions about LLL and adults

- Adults have little inclination to learn what they do not perceive as meaningful for their own life goals
- They (can) draw on the resources they have
- Employment perspectives are a key factor for learning motivation

(e.g. Illeris 2003)

What do these insights imply for the development and provision of second language trainings at the workplace?

- **A Communication Analysis** is required as a first step towards the development of a workplace language training.
- It has to focus on the subjective and objective needs and conditions
 - of the workplace in question
 - the employees
 - and the employers

Communication Analysis: subjective and objective needs

- Subjective needs (employees and employers): Expectations, attitudes (and motivation) towards communication and learning
- Objective needs : task (*reporting on failure*) and role requirements (*filling in a form to request holidays.*)
- Conditions: Rooms, paid working time etc.

Steps

- Developing a curriculum based on the results of the communication analysis
- (ongoing) negotiating the curriculum with the employers/steering committee
- mentoring and guidance (before and during provision)
- Developing training material
- Carrying out the training
- Evaluation

Challenges for teachers and providers

- Designing the Communication Analysis
- Developing authentic training material and workplace relevant tasks
- Linking the training to the workplace communication reality during provision

Challenges for teachers and providers (organisational)

- Employers
 - Negotiating curriculum, conditions etc.
 - Proposing/Carrying out additional measures
- Learners
 - Guidance...

Programmatic proposals

- Empirically based descriptions of language use at the workplace (database)
- (Sensitising) campaigns for
 - educational politics
 - business and
 - other labour market actors
 - migrant organisations
- Training provision
 - for educational providers and teachers (inside and outside companies)

**Integration means "Fun, esprit, irony, a language, the language of the company"
(Manager)**

Why not cooperate!

- joint research
- a joint project, e. g. developing a train-the-trainer scheme
- a joint campaign to lobby decision makers at European level
- a joint platform to exchange insights, concepts, etc.

Thank you for your interest!

Referees

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