

“Inclusion means fun, esprit, irony, a language, the language of the company,,

Role of workplace language and communications in the new work order for the inclusion of immigrant workers into the labour market and social life

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# Agenda

Ø Why foster workplace (second) language and communication?

Ø DIE insights from the project “German at the Workplace” financed by the Volkswagen Foundation

Ø Some recommendations for ALE



# DIE insights 1: New work order and communication 1

In contemporary societies literacies are necessary instruments “to make sense” of the world. In the new work order ...

*“... the most important thing is language.” (Operations manager)*

**... language/communicative competence is a key vocational competence.**



# DIE insights: New work order and communication 2

Ø Modernisation and rationalisation (lean management, quality management etc.)

*“If something goes wrong, you have to communicate it” (Supervisor)*

*“Every morning we have so called 5-minute-talks, in which we discuss quality issues.” (Manager catering company)*

Ø Expansion of the service sector

Ø Growing need for continuous further workplace training and qualification

*“Low-skilled jobs are diminishing. Qualified workers are needed.” (Employer)*



# DIE insights: New work order and communication 3

Ø Technological developments:  
automatisation, robotisation, ICT

Ø Health and safety legislation  
*“The cleaning and disinfection  
of the kitchen are also written down  
by the workers and signed.”*  
(Commis de cuisine)



Ø Importance of informal learning/learning embedded in work practices

*“I have learnt German on the shop floor. ... My German mate has explained me everything: what to do, how this and that works, what for material it is, what it' is good for, where to find it in the warehouse...”*  
(Polish worker)

# DIE Insights: some discrepancies

## Semi-skilled workplaces: silent workplaces or invisible communicative requirements?

Ø Discrepancy between communicative tasks requirements

*“I do not need to talk to my cleaning rags”*  
(Employee cleaning firm)

and communicative role requirements



*Production-helpers as well must take part in performance appraisals. That's an enormous hurdle!”* (Personal manager)

The new communicative requirements

â more democratic practices

but also

â barriers to employability

*“... if they can't speak German well enough to be trained in a short time, then we have a problem.” (Supervisor)*

â barriers in job performance

*“If the supervisor does not understand the [immigrant] worker, he takes another one.” (Supervisor)*

â harrassment

*“...we work ... under high voltage. The German co-workers get impatient and angry, when they don't understand and make mistakes ...” (Employee)*

# Recommendations for ALE

- Ø Acknowledging the importance of workplace literacies and L2 for social justice and inclusion and **taking action**
- Ø Promoting the issue in politics, business, research, and civil society
- Ø Giving the issue high priority on own educational agenda
- Ø Triggering synergies between interdisciplinary research and practice
- Ø Providing for adequate conditions for teachers and learners
- Ø Encouraging innovations: integration functional & affective learning. learning embedded in working practice, training co-workers as language mentors, etc.
- Ø ...

# Thank you for your interest!

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