

Language discussion 1: Linguistic practices in the work community

Agreeing on working language(s).

Agree on working language(s) ahead of the discussion. Make sure that everyone may use a language that allows them to express their opinions relatively easily. You can also agree on the use of **language coordinators** or voluntary interpreters in advance so that everyone can understand and be understood.

Working objectives

Discuss objectives that best suit your work community. Here are some suggestions:

The work community becomes aware of the languages used for work in different scenarios, which languages community members would like to use, and which languages could be used. In addition, linguistic challenges in the work community can be brought up, and solutions to how multilingualism and language learning at work could be supported by the community can be discussed.

Introduction to the topic

Where are we now?

Discuss in pairs or small groups:

- What kind of language and language use changes are currently under way in the work community?
- What kind of tensions do the changes cause?
- What positive impacts do these changes have?
- What positive impacts could they have?

Compile your thoughts on a flip chart.

Use the descriptions provided in the Kielibuusti website or the Monikielisen työyhteisön opas guidebook to introduce the **Steps toward language awareness in the workplace**.

Joint work

Discuss the use of language at work.

Everyone writes down the languages that they used for work duties yesterday/last week/last month/last year. What are these duties?

Everyone chooses **three frequent or otherwise important work scenarios** and writes down answers to the following questions:

- What role did language play in those situations?
- What was language used for? (Informing, influencing, directing, persuading, negotiating etc.)
- What kind of language proficiency did these duties require? (Spoken, written, passable, good, excellent).
- How did the participants' language proficiency affect the situation?
- How would native language use have affected the situation?
- How would foreign language use have affected the situation?
- Who were involved?
- What was the language background of other people involved?
- At the beginning of the scenario, did you discuss which languages can be used in the situation?
- Which languages do you prefer to use at work?
- Which languages would you like to use at work? In what kinds of scenarios?
- Which languages would you prefer not to use at work? In what kinds of scenarios?

Reflecting on language support at work.

- Which kind of scenarios do you find challenging in terms of communication or language? What happens in those scenarios?
- What kinds of communication or language problems do you feel you need support for?
- What kind of language support did you seek or receive in those situations (translation software, interpreter, colleague)?
- What kind of language assistance or support would you have needed?
- What kinds of software or apps have you used for linguistic support (machine translators, online dictionaries, language learning apps etc.)?
- What kinds of language-support software are available to the work community?
- Can you identify any linguistically discriminatory practices, e.g. frequent situations in which some participants do not understand the language or cannot participate in discussion due to language proficiency issues. How could these be addressed?

Compare your answers in pairs and then in small groups.

Compile a list of workplace communication situations on the flip chart together and discuss which languages and what kind of language proficiency they require. Also support measures.

Summary: Proposals for agreements and measures

- Which languages would you like to use at work? In what kinds of scenarios?
- Which new languages would you like to introduce?
- What should happen in the work community for these languages to be introduced? Is there a need for language courses, language coordinators, interpreters, translators, discussion groups?
- What kind of language-related issues require joint agreement? Is there need for rules related to language use in the work community?
- Does the work community need more formal linguistic policies to support employees and supervisors?
- How far do you want to progress on the Steps toward language awareness in the workplace? How quickly? What would it take to rise to that step?

Compile your proposals on a flip chart. Then select three most important proposals. How will you drive these proposals?