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Linguistic challenges for employees with an ethnic minority background in the Health and Social Care Sector

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1 Introduction

Language skills are a key competency for migrants' integration into the labour market: Lack of language skills are often equated to incompetency, leading to a challenge for many migrants in finding suitable and qualified work. According to second language teachers, differentiated knowledge of essential terms, sentences and behavioural codices in their work life will increase their opportunities in the labour market – and at the same time will increase self-confidence, as they are provided with specific and necessary vocational knowledge.

Another important aspect is that having a migrant background is often not an advantage in relation to job applications. Demands on writing and language skills in connection with job applications often differ from the actual language skills needed to undertake the job. As such, it is crucial to create awareness in employers of this mismatch – and accordingly, the work of teachers would benefit from an understanding of the perspectives and needs of employers. The same applies to useful teaching materials, which can offer the essential terms, demands, or can explain expectations of employees in the sector in question.

In the EU project: **Meet the Need. Vocational Teaching Material Supporting the Integration of Migrants into the Labour Market** six countries take on the challenge, and will over the course of two years aim to develop teaching materials targeted at selected sectors for use in the teaching of bilingual students in language centres in the country. The selected sectors are Building and Construction, Wholesale and Retail Trading, Hospitality and Restaurant Businesses, and well as Healthcare and Social Care Sector¹. These sectors have been chosen based on analyses of where future labour demands may be, as well as which areas currently employ migrants. Each partner will develop (basic) teaching materials for one specific sector. In Denmark, the focus is on the Health and Social Care Sector, and the tasks will be handles by mhtconsult. Other participating countries are Austria, Italy, England, Germany and Romania.

In cooperation with vocational training experts, employers and language teacher, a compendium will be developed containing vocations second language educational material, with the aim of

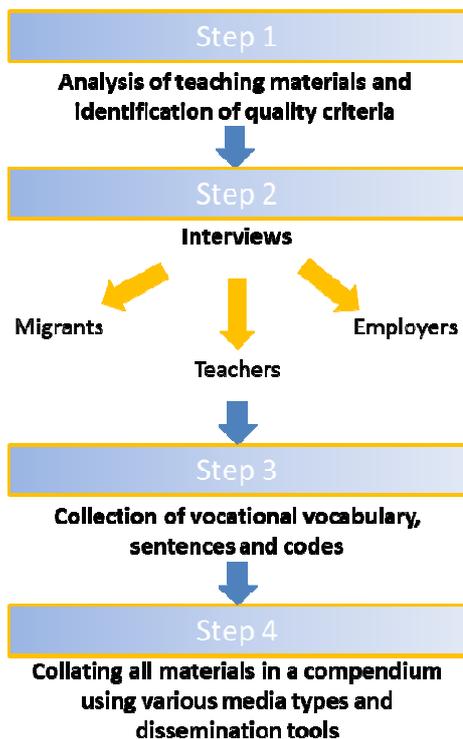
- Strengthening specific further education of migrants
- Strengthening migrants' possibilities for entering the labour market
- Support migrants' integration possibilities
- Support migrants' identity in a second language (vocational) environment
- Raising awareness for employers of vocational challenges for migrants

All material will be collated into a compendium. The compendium will be developed for second language teachers and is designed as a supplement to the general second language training. The material will further be made available online.

¹ Related to NACE Code

http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/ramon/nomenclatures/index.cfm?TargetUrl=LST_NOM_DTL&StrNom=NA_CE_REV2&StrLanguageCode=EN&IntPcKey=&StrLayoutCode=HIERARCHIC

The project takes place in 4 phases as illustrated in figure 1:



At present, the project is at Step 2, and this report collates the experiences collected in interviews with migrants, teachers and employers in Denmark in relation to the sector Healthcare and Social Care. The purpose of the report is to describe and analyse the requirements, which the compendium should aim to address.

The project was initiated in January 2011, and will finish in December 2012. The project is financed by the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme, Grundtvig, and is coordinated by the Research Institute of Red Cross, Austria.

2 Rationale

As part of the first phase of the project (step 1) each partner country has undertaken an analysis of the labour market in the respective countries, relating to which sectors have the most employees with migrant background, which educations they hold, which sectors will have the greatest need for labour in the future etc. The purpose has been to select the sectors to focus on in the project for the development of sector targeted teaching materials. The following sections set out in brief the Danish results of this analysis.

The Danish labour market

The labour market situation in Denmark is characterised by the financial crisis, which is also having an effect in many of the other European nations. As of August 2011, unemployment in Denmark stood at 6.2 per cent², covering a steady increase every month from April to July

² Source: „Konjunktur og Arbejdsmarked“, week 40 2011, Department of Labour.

2011. In addition, the political debate is currently characterised by disagreement as to whether the unemployment numbers may in fact be higher, as unemployed persons outside of the jobseekers allowance and benefits system are not counted. Following the tightening of the benefits rules, meaning that residents can only receive benefits for two years in comparison with the earlier 4 years, a number of residents will after two years 'exit' the system because they no longer qualify for jobseekers allowance. As such, the unemployment statistics may actually be higher. Employers in the Danish labour market therefore generally do not have problems recruiting employees – however, there are specific positions, which are difficult to fill, such as specialist medical consultants.

In Denmark, the majority of migrants are employed in the following sectors:

Table 1: Sectors with the most employed first generation immigrants from non-Western countries divided by gender.

Sector	Migrants employed, men (%)	Migrants employed, women (%)
Industry, supply and sanitation	18,9	10,2
Trade	14,7	11,7
Transport	12,6	2,2
Hotel og restaurants	12,7	6,9
Travel agencies, cleaning etc.	10,8	17,3
Healthcare	2,5	6,9
Social organisation	3,9	21,8

Note: The numbers show employed first generation immigrants from non-Western countries by sector and gender. The percentage of men supplied shows the percentage of all employed men with first generation immigrant background in the sector in question. The same applies to women.

Source: The Department for Refugees, Immigrants and Integration immigration data base in Denmark's Statistics, INMUDD59.

We have chosen to focus the study on first generation immigrants from non-Western countries, as these make up 67 per cent of all migrants in Denmark – mainly from Turkey and Iraq. In addition, 67 per cent of this group have no Danish education, while 12 per cent have GCSE certificates as their highest educational level. As such, the group of employed first generation immigrants with non-Western background appear to be mainly unskilled labour.

In the future, Denmark will need skilled labour in all sectors. The various sectors' need varies from region to region, but in this study, the focus is on Eastern Denmark, as this regions has the largest need for skilled labour in the future. The following sectors in Eastern Denmark will require labour³:

- Healthcare
- Trade

³ Source: "Globalisering, vækst og velfærd. Østdanmarks udfordring. Arbejdsmarked og erhverv frem til 2020", Region Zealand, Region Capital as well as Labour Region Capital and Zealand, June 2010.

- Iron and metal industry
- Social organisations

These sectors have also to some extent been shown to have labour needs in the partner countries. The chosen sectors for the project are thus:

- Building and Construction Companies
- Welding
- Wholesale and Retail Trading
- Hospitality and Restaurant Businesses
- Healthcare and Social Care Sector⁴

In Denmark, the focus is on the Health and Social Care, and the sector is described in the following sections.

Human health and social work activities

The sector *Human health and social work activities* according to the European Commission's NACE Code, covers a wide selection of job functions. Overall the term refers to Human health activities, Residential Care Activities and Social work activities without accommodation. This includes the following specific sectors:

- **Healthcare:** Hospitals, general practitioners and dentists as well as general healthcare.
- **Residential care:** Residential nursing care activities Residential care activities for mental retardation, mental health and substance abuse, Residential care activities for the elderly and disabled, Other residential care activities.
- **Social work activities without accommodation:** Social work activities without accommodation for the elderly and disabled, Other social work activities without accommodation.

In Denmark, the sub-sectors of Residential care and Social work activities without accommodation are the focus of the study, as these, more than the Healthcare sector, employ workers with short educations as well as unskilled labour, and therefore offer a sector with employment opportunities for first generation immigrants from non-Western countries as described above. As such, the subject of study is made up of *residential care homes* and *social care community services*, which employ health and social care assistants as well as unskilled employees. In the future, this sector is expected to have increased labour needs, as the larger generations age and start to have care needs.

⁴ In the selection of sectors across the partner countries, the NACE Code sector classification is employed to ensure uniformity across the partner countries. As such, different categories to the previously employed ones will feature here, as the pre-analysis in Denmark was based on the Department for Refugees, Immigrants and Integration immigration data base in Denmark's Statistics.

3 Methods used

3.1 Description of the sample

3.1.1 Overview of the sample

Table 2: Overview of interviewees in the study.

Method	Employers	m	f	Mi-grants	m	f	Teachers	m	f
Face to face interviews	3		3	5	2	3			
Telephone interviews							3		3
Focus group	3 (1)	1	2				7 (2)	3	4
Online survey									
others [please name]									
TOTAL each group									
TOTAL all	6	1	5	5	2	3	10	3	7

Note: The numbers in parenthesis indicate whether they refer to participants in a focus group. For example, seven teachers were interviewed split between two focus groups.

Table 2 shows that the study includes more women than men as interviewees – 15 women and six men – which relates to the fact that the sector generally employs more women than men, as also shown in section 3.2 above.

3.1.2 Interviews with employers

The study includes interviews with six employers – three from residential care homes and three from social care community services. The interviewed employers are all in managerial positions, either as section heads, deputy leaders or area managers. One interviewee falls ‘outside category’ and is in an IT position. People interviewed are five women and one man.

The interviews were arranged through telephonic contact with the individuals in question, in which they were presented with the project and their interest in participating was queried. Each interviewee was further supplied with the folder with introduction to the project via email either before or after the telephonic contact. All of employers contacted have shown great interest in participating and have further wished to take part in subsequent activities.

Three individual interviews and one focus group were held with employers. The three individual interviews were held with managers of residential care homes and were all set at the respective care homes, while the focus group was held at mhtconsult offices with employers from social care community services. The interviews lasted an average of 80 minutes (ranging from 65 to 90 minutes).

3.1.3 Interviews with migrants

In addition to interviews with employers, a number of interviews were held with migrants who are employed either at residential care homes or in social care community services. Five

migrants in total were interviewed, whereof four are employed in residential care homes and one in social care community services. Four of these are employed as health and social care assistants, while one is a home worker, which mainly consists of cleaning and kitchen tasks. The group interviewed consisted of three women and two men.

The majority of the migrants have been in their current positions for a relatively long period of time: three have been in the current position between six and 20 years, while only two have been employed for around a year. They have all been in Denmark for a large part of their lives – between 10 and 24 years. The interviewees' countries of origin are Sri Lanka, Turkey, Ethiopia and Lebanon and the majority speak only their native language as Danish, while two speak a little bit of English.

Interview arrangements were mainly made via telephone after agreement from employers. The employer selected relevant employees, notified them and provided their phone numbers to mhtconsult, who subsequently made contact and agreed the arrangements. The employees were therefore able to participate within work hours, and the interviews were carried out as individual interviews and the place of work. One interview was held in the employee's home outside work hours, as the individual was known to mhtconsult and as such recruited through existing networks. Interviews lasted an average of 67 minutes (ranging from 25 minutes to two hours).

3.1.4 Interviews with teachers

Finally, the study includes interviews with 10 teachers, who work with Danish as a second language. These interviews were held either as phone interviews or as focus groups. This includes three phone interviews with teachers employed at a Health and Social Care school, who all teach Danish in a Health and Social Care context; one of these is further a language guidance counsellor and has authored books on linguistic support. The further seven teachers are language teachers in language centres and have participated in one of two focus groups, both of which were held in two different language centres. In total three men and seven women were interviewed.

Each of the interview teachers are, to varying degrees, experienced in vocational training – either sector specific (six teachers) or in general labour market conditions (four teachers). All of them have therefore been able to contribute observations concerning sector specific teaching materials in language training.

Interview agreements were made through first sending a request via email including the folder with presentation of the project, followed by telephonic contact and agreement for the interviews. Each of the teachers have been very accommodating and have shown a great deal of interest in the project, and they have all expressed wish to be involved in the later stages of the project. The interviews lasted an average of 57 minutes (ranging from 30 minutes to 90 minutes).

3.2 Description of the explored sector (technical data)

The employers interviewed for the study are all from the sector *Human health and social work activities* – including the sub-sectors *Residential care activities for the elderly and disabled* (residential care homes) and *Social work activities without accommodation*⁵ (social care community services), meaning that the majority of the activities are made up of care services. These sub-sectors have been selected, as described above, because in future they will have a large need for labour, and because this sector already has experiences of employees with other ethnic backgrounds.

The company size varies greatly: from 10 to 230 employees. The employers from the social care community services have provided the number of employees they employ within their respective departments. The remainder have provided the number of employees in the respective residential care home. Half of the interviewees have around 80 employees, and as such the sample is made up of relatively large employers.

By far the majority of employees are women (90-98 per cent), while there is some variation in how many employees with ethnic minority background the companies employ. The percentage of ethnic minority employees is between nine and 40 per cent, of which the majority are women. Just one workplace reports that 12 per cent of the employees with other ethnic background are men.

4 Results workforce

4.1 Recruitment process

For all employers interviewed, the recruitment process is well structured and defined. In each instance, all **permanent positions** are advertised. The process of advertising varies, but the most common avenues are local newspapers, various internet sites as well as the company website. Word of mouth is also a commonly cited strategy. After holding interviews and selection of the candidate, an induction programme is arranged, generally of approximately six weeks duration, and after three months the new employee is considered fully trained. In one workplace, new employees fill in a questionnaire after the six weeks, covering the entire induction and training phase, as well as the employee's evaluation of the progress to date. In the majority of the workplaces, a number of mandatory courses are furthermore included in the induction programmes. In all instances, new employees are assigned a colleague as their contact person, who in several places functions as a kind of mentor.

When recruiting **temporary staff**, procedures are somewhat different. These positions may be advertised, but are often filled when individuals turn up in person to enquire about possible vacancies. In one workplace, 'taster sessions' are employed, in which prospective tempo-

⁵ In accordance with the NACE Code

http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/ramon/nomenclatures/index.cfm?TargetUrl=LST_NOM_DTL&StrNom=NA CE_REV2&StrLanguageCode=EN&IntPcKey=&StrLayoutCode=HIERARCHIC

rary staff members spend three days at the workplace in order to gain insight into the job, and to gauge whether the position would suit them. This strategy is used when recruiting individuals who lack experience of working in a care home. This procedure is loosely structured, as the situation often arises after a spontaneous enquiry from prospective employees.

All workplaces additionally indicated that they often employ **trainees**. Advertising of permanent positions is required, but employers often encourage trainees to apply in instances where they have valued the work of the trainee. Three of the migrants interviewed described being offered work after the conclusion of a trainee placement or apprenticeship. The migrants did not describe the appointment process in detail, but the impression is that in light of their previous trainee period or apprenticeship, the induction programme would have been less extensive. Neither of them expressed dissatisfaction with this. Appointing trainees and apprentices can be presumed to be less resource intensive for the employer, given that they are already familiar with the work. The induction programme presumably takes place as part of the initial recruitment of the trainee or apprentice, and is therefore unnecessary upon permanent employment.

Two of the migrants did not give a reply to the question concerning the recruitment process, but simply describe enquiring in person about employment, and swiftly being recruited.

4.2 Operations and language competencies

4.2.1 (Daily) Operations

The daily tasks and responsibilities of the employees is described below, in order to present the day to day routines, and set the scene for the linguistic challenges encountered by employers and employees.

For employees in a **care home**, the workday looks roughly as follows:

The day shift starts in the morning around 7.30 am, and immediately read the reports from the preceding night shift. This involves checking the electronic records of the residents, in order to ascertain whether any extraordinary incidents have taken place, or there are any other factors they need to note. Next, most workplaces hold a meeting between all daytime staff, in order to assign the tasks of the day.

Subsequently, the remainder of the morning is spent helping residents out of bed, getting dressed and possibly bathed them, getting their medication and other practical responsibilities; further, the employees ensure that residents are given their breakfast. In some places, the healthcare assistants will prepare breakfast themselves; while in others the kitchen personnel prepare the food, and the care assistants merely have to serve the meal. Employees are generally required to have a hygiene certification, as they handle food, regardless of whether they prepare it or are merely serving it. In some instances, they are required to be prepare traditional Danish meals for up to 20 people, which presents a challenge for many.

The morning's work is also characterised by the fact that some of the residents must be escorted to various activities, such as hairdresser, exercise, physiotherapy, arts and crafts, bingo or similar. Other practical tasks, for example ordering supplies, laundry, collection of bed linens etc. are also handled during the course of the morning.

At around 11 am, the morning activities are concluded, and the staff will either take a break, prepare lunch or hold a planning meeting to assign tasks for the following day. Lunch is served at noon, and a minimum of two staff members will eat with the residents as part of an educational meal. Residents may likewise need support with cutting their food, or may need to be fed. After lunch, residents are put down for a nap.

In the afternoon, various activities once again take place, which residents need support for. At around 2.30 pm, most places will serve coffee and cake, perhaps while showing a film, playing cards or board games, watching TV or other activities.

The employees record their activities during the course of the day, and in some places, the residents have care plans, which require follow up. For example, for residents with dementia, it is important to record any observations – if resident with dementia has as an aim in their care plan to help them be calm, it is crucial to describe any situations, places or items which helped the resident in question feel calm and secure. It varies between workplaces when the records are filled in, and under which conditions. Some will write up their records while the residents are having their midday rest, others at the end of the day or whenever they have a quiet moment. In some places, the employees have laptop computers, and can write their records anywhere, while others have desktop computers, and have to be in the office when writing up their records.

The day shift usually ends at 3 pm, finishing with an oral report to the evening shift, focusing on any specific noteworthy points or incidents. The evening shift staff then read the records and assigns tasks in the same way as the days shift when starting their workday. However, the evening staff has far fewer practical tasks, as the residents will generally be helped to their rooms following dinner, where they watch TV and are helped to bed at various times during the evening.

Night-time staff will usually do very little, to ensure peace and quiet for residents during the night. They may do some laundry, de-scale the coffeemaker or other similar tasks, but otherwise their work is mainly focused on monitoring the residents and ensuring that no one has had a fall, helping residents to the toilet, as well as helping very vulnerable residents to turn over in bed during the night. In homes with residents with dementia, the night-time staff must also monitor that the residents do not get out of bed and are walking around the hallways in a state of confusion.

One employer explained that staff is daily subjected to threats and violence from residents. Besides elderly people, care homes are also home to dementia patients, mentally ill people, physically disabled people as well as people with learning disabilities – generally people in ill health – and many of them may display aggressive behaviour. Even relatives and families may be unpleasant to staff, often as a consequence of negative media attention on care

homes, which is transferred onto the employees. All incidents of threat or violence are reported by employees, and they are subsequently entitled to a meeting or discussion with their line manager, health and safety representative or a colleague if they need it. The employers find that this aspect of the job is the most difficult for employees to deal with – combined with the increasing demands from residents and the surrounding society, which are challenging to live up to given the existing societal constraints.

For employees in **community services**, the workday routine is as follows:

They start their day in the morning, and receive a plan for the day, setting out the service users they need to visit, and the specific tasks involved. Employees are as much as possible assigned the same service users every day, in order to ensure coherence. The entire morning is spent 'in the field', cleaning for service users, helping them get washed and dressed, as well as feeding them etc.

At noon the employees return to the office and have their lunch together. Every other day, a staff meeting lasting about 20 minutes is held, following on from the lunch break. After lunch, employees go back out to undertake more visits to service users, where they mainly handle shopping, laundry or similar work. Once completed, the employees return home.

As for care home staff, community service employees are required to keep a record for each service user; however, they are only required to capture events beyond the ordinary. The employees have a portable device, which can access the network remotely. If an employee is having difficulties managing the records, they are able to book a meeting with management, a coordinator, an assistant, a nurse or other colleague for support.

4.2.2 Language competencies needed in daily operations

Operation	Language Requests	S	L	W	R
Reading records	Read and understand implicit information				X
Staff meetings	Participate in the planning of the daily activities, and sharing tasks with colleagues	X	X		
Group messages	Understand what is said as directed at them, and to act accordingly		X		
Record keeping	Writing notes and observations over longer time frames			X	
Support residents in miscellaneous activities	Speak to residents about activities, needs, well-being etc., as well as general conversation	X	X		
Communicating with colleagues	Speak to colleagues about work assignments as well as participate in social activities	X	X		

Communicate with external contacts as well as relatives	Speak to external contacts and relatives regarding residents, for example to arrange doctor's appointments, hair dressing appointments, inform relatives about health issues, monitoring residents' diaries etc.	X	X	X	X
Food preparation	Able to achieve a hygiene certificate, understand recipes, nutritional plans etc.			X	X
Provide report at shift changes	Verbal reporting on the events of the day to colleagues at shift change	X			

Table 1: Language competency needed in challenging situations at work

4.2.3 Challenging situations and dealing with them

Following this overview of the work day for employees in the care home sector, the following section sets out the linguistic challenges which employees and migrants report experiencing in the course of their work in association with having bilingual employees. The interviews uncovered five general themes in relation to language:

1. Written communication
2. Implicit information
3. Verbal communication
4. Collective messages
5. Understanding of labour market characteristics

The linguistic challenges are covered below.

Written communication

A general theme in the interviews with employers as well as migrants, is that written communication for the purpose of reporting presents a challenges for ethnic minority employees. The employers find that migrants aim to avoid this task if possible, and that they otherwise express themselves briefly and with little detail and nuance. This applies to qualified care assistants as well. The employees may ask a colleague to write the records for them, or to assist them when writing reports or notes.

In one workplace, the employer did not experience written communication as an issue. Here, the employer generally encourages employees to write their reports jointly in pairs, where one is skilled at IT and the other at understanding service users. In her opinion, this method is satisfactory, as employers make use of each other's strengths. Her general perception is that migrants who have undergone language training have good written communication skills.

However, a general theme in the interviews is that migrants write short sentences and have some difficulty with abbreviations, but it varies as to whether the employers see this as a problem. An issue raised, however, is that the migrants are uncertain and reticent in their written communication, because of a concern over expressing themselves incorrectly in Danish. The employers reiterate to these employees that it is more important to communicate important information, than to be concerned with correct spelling or sentence structure. Most do not consider this a requirement of the position. The reticence of the migrants can present

a problem if they are required to describe a longer course of events with a variety of observations. Here the migrants often make use of their colleagues, which is also expressed in the interviews with the migrants.

Implicit information

A challenge experienced by half of the employers is problems for the migrants in reading and understanding implicit information in written documentation:

When messages are given in the morning, it is often the case that messages are given at once, or perhaps without articulating the entire task. You may say "will you make breakfast", which can mean a variety of things. There are many ambiguities. But linguistically, this is where the challenge occurs. For example: "remember that today we are having a communal meal due to a birthday", which means the residents are eating here (where we are sitting) and not in the residential unit. This is easily missed out. And often, the task will be undertaken as usual, and the residents will not be prepared for the variation to their routine today. It is often a good idea to inform the residents, when getting them up in the morning, so that they are prepared for their day (quote from interview with employer in a care home).

Another example is:

But the challenge for ethnic minorities is to read and understand. For example, miscommunication may occur if it says "the resident had a fall the previous evening", and then they need to reflect on this – what does this infer? They for example will have to establish whether the person has been hurt, how it is going, whether their head hurts, are you feeling better, are you injured, in pain – follow up on that. They will have to be able to understand what it means and to relate to it (...) For example, it may also say "the spouse will pick up his wife at 11".

They have to be able to understand this, and that the resident then needs to be up and ready. This is implicit, and can be difficult, and if there are also difficulties with the actual language. These are all implicit messages. It will not say "you must make sure that Mrs Jensen is up, has eaten and has been dressed etc.". In that way, staff have to take responsibility. And some may be accustomed to being told exactly what they are required to do. (quote from an interview with employer in a care home).

Lack of understanding of such implicit messages causes irritation and frustration for colleagues of the migrants as well as for residents. In some cases, employers report that in extreme situations it may even be reason for termination of employment.

In relation to work related tasks, lack of understanding of implicit messages can also cause shortcomings in the care provided to the service user. One employer describes a situation where a record states that "urination must be observed", and where subsequently no observation was noted because no urination took place. Lack of urination is equally an observation, which must be noted, and such misunderstandings may at times complicate work for colleagues – and it may lead to harm for the residents.

Verbal communication

Several employers explain that migrants with poor Danish skills are also more reticent in verbal communication with **colleagues**. For example, they may remain passive in staff meetings concerning the daily planning of tasks, which means they are not able to influence their own work plan – and likewise are not likely to receive the tasks involving higher levels of responsibility, such as trainee supervisor, health and safety representative or similar. According to employers, a few experience this as an expression of racism, whereas the deciding factor is language abilities rather than prejudice. When reading aloud from records to a group, one employer also experiences nervousness among the migrants, who appear to be uncertain with regards to correct pronunciation and comprehension of all words. Only one of the employers expresses this experience with regards to reading aloud – and only one employer refers to a feeling that social interaction with colleagues is adversely affected by the migrants' lack of Danish skills, in situations where the migrants are not fluent Danish speakers and are not able to capture all the nuances. This does not appear to be a general issue.

Several of the employers describe situations in which the migrants give the impression of having understood a message or task, through sayings yes and smiling – but where they nonetheless have not understood what was said. The employers encourage them to speak up when there is something they cannot understand, but find it difficult to get this to happen in practice. This may be a case of the migrants thinking they have understood the message, rather than a fear of indicating a failure to understand. This issue is well known – misunderstandings where the employers think that the employee has understood, but where the positive feedback are due to shyness, fear of authorities, misunderstandings or similar. Employers, colleagues and migrants themselves appear to handle such situations by communication with one another about the issue. In some cases, employers call the employee in for a conversation about specific situations/incidents, and in some cases a choice is made to develop a plan to support the employee – for example around how to manage and arrange a resident's diary – in order to empower the employee and provide learning.

All the migrants interviewed explain that they handle the challenges by asking colleagues if there is anything they do not understand, and that they are very helpful and supportive. One migrant does express a reticence here. The migrant in question has a very limited vocabulary, and she sometimes finds it embarrassing to have to ask questions, because she has been in the country for many years and is married to a Danish man.

Verbal contact with **partners** is also an area in which many migrants remain passive, and let colleagues handle the contact. One manager has for that reason chosen not to have any evening staff with a migrant background, as evening staff are often alone and have to handle extensive contact with relatives during a shift – especially if a resident is taken ill. Other places do not experience this as an issue, and employees with a migrant background undertake this contact to the same extent as others – as well as handling resident diaries, booking doctor's appointments, passing on messages etc. It is a requirement of the position that employees are capable of taking responsibility for such planning on behalf of residents. If this ability is not present, this will become apparent during the probation period, and permanent employment will not be agreed.

Verbal communication with residents on the contrary is by and large seen as unproblematic. Among residents who are very poorly, and especially residents with dementia, communication is to a large degree based on body language and a very simple verbal language. Pronunciation alone is identified as a possible issue. Residents may become highly impatient and angry – especially residents with dementia – if words are not pronounced in a way they can understand. However, it is unimportant whether migrants mix up the order of words or speak slowly. The migrants seem to handle any communicating issues with residents by speaking slowly and articulating clearly, as well as repeating the message, often using alternative words.

A few employees have experienced prejudice and racist remarks from residents, but it is far from the norm. Employers in these cases avoid assigning these residents to employees with a migrant background. The overall experience is that residents are open to hearing about other countries and to try different foods, although only as a supplement to their usual meals.

Collective messages

A few employers emphasize problems concerning understanding collective messages among employees with an ethnic minority background. The impression is that these employees are not able to “take it all in” and do not take what is said as being directed at them – that they need to be told directly on a one-to-one basis. This can be a collective message given verbally or in writing. An example of a verbal message is “remember the communal meal today”, which contains previously described implicit messages around information for and preparation of the residents etc. Some migrants fail to act accordingly. An example of a written message could be posters regarding annual leave requests, with information regarding deadlines for feedback. Several employers mention that employees with a migrant background may fail to grasp the process of this.

We may call a meeting for planning the summer holidays – this takes place collectively. And employees have to note their preferences on a sheet beforehand, and subsequently participate in the meeting where they plan is drawn up. Something gets missed here. It seems to be something around them thinking “do I need to make a request? Are you referring to me?” And if you then turn up afterwards when it has all been settled, then it is too late. It cannot be changed. I think this relates to the collective form of communication. This creates internal frustrations for colleagues. It also relates to days off. Irritation that they do not understand such messages. They never get round to signing the sheet. I do not know why. Often, a collective message may be “a poster has gone up about who wants to take time off during Whitsun, and remember to sign up before the first of the month”. And this is followed up via email. But I guess that they do not realise this is directed at them. But I do not know (...) Often, they only realise once the holidays have already happened – why did I not get any time off? But you did not sign up! (quote from interview with employer in a care home).

The employers handle this challenge by early on in an employment to ask thorough questions, repeat and explain, to ensure that messages are being understood – and in this way to hopefully early on in the employment establish a culture for the individual whereby the collective communication is understood. Experienced employees, who after a long period of employment still do not comprehend the collective messages are encouraged to ask further questions and to make sure that everything has been understood – however, the problem is

that the employee may believe they have understood, may not see themselves as the target for the message, or may not be accustomed to collective written messages (for example in a notice board) and are therefore not aware of this. The be all and end all seems to be to have a conversation with the employee immediately following any type of conflict, as well as being very specific when messages are passed on.

Understanding of labour market characteristics

As a final challenge, which does not relate directly to the daily work of the employees, several employers mention problems concerning the understanding of labour market characteristics. This relates in particular to pay slips, rules relating to maternity leave and holidays, as well as filling in forms and schedules – and not least about a lack of knowledge about what they are entitled to in their employment. Here, the employees often ask for assistance, and in several places the employers take the time to sit down and provide the necessary help:

Sometimes you have to do a lot of social work, because we have to help with so many other things. For example in applying for child support, looking up websites and generally finding information (quote from interview with employer in a care home).

Furthermore, the interview provide examples of a lack of understanding of the general work culture – for instance, one employer described an employee who in connection with the death of a cousin wanted to travel to the country of origin for three weeks. In such cases, the employers have a conversation with the employee when specific situations arise where employers or colleagues for example salary administration staff has to explain the situation to them.

4.3 Supporting activities

In the interviews, there is also a focus on which supporting activities employers as well as migrants may require for handling these linguistic challenges. A few suggestions are made, which are covered in the following section.

For **employers**, the following wishes are expressed:

- **Courses** concerning cultural understanding. The attitude is that better knowledge of different cultures and their work customs could minimise a lot of misunderstandings. The wish is for courses which are prioritised by the Local Authority, and as such send a signal that this is an important and significant area. Herein lies also knowledge of what it means to be a minority in Denmark – to be able to view us “through the eyes of others”. What is it that we actually do, which phrases do we use, in which contexts and why etc., allowing employers and colleagues to see themselves from the outside in an anthropological way.
- **Communication tools** as a form of question guidance, where employers and colleagues in a basic, practical way are provided with tools for ensuring that something has been understood. This refers to a form of conversation tool developed to limit misunderstandings, where both parties believe they have a common understanding of a task.

For **migrants** the following wishes and advice were expressed in interview with both employers and migrants:

- **Unions** should become more actively involved, so that migrants can make use of them to help them understand and decode rules, and to help furnish them with an understanding of the Danish labour market. However, one employer feels that unions are not supportive of this idea, and that on the contrary they may be resistant to this.
- **Asking questions.** Migrants need to be better at asking questions and not be afraid to approach their managers and colleagues with questions or doubt issues. Better to ask one too many questions.
- **Danish training** focusing on pronunciation and understanding and decoding implicit messages. And the possibility of gaining access to a computer with a dictionary is also an expressed wish. For example, there is not Amharic⁶-Danish dictionary, and a need is expressed for a leaflet with pictures of relevant tools of the trade (for example dish cloth, wheel chair, lifts etc.) with accompanying text.
- **Language mentor.** One migrant articulates a wish for a personal supporter – a sort of language mentor – who is present in the work place, and with time assigned for exercises in the work place.
- **Training on body language.** A suggestion is made for training on body language, as a few interviewees have observed difficulties in understanding body language and using it themselves.

4.4 Value and use of different language of employees

Through the interviews, a general picture is generated showing that migrants' various native languages are not systematically used in a professional context. Few migrants have had an experience where they could use their native language, but these have been isolated incidents.

Employers do not express that they consider this dimension of language in the work of their employees. This is mainly due to the fact that the care homes have very few residents with other ethnic background than Danish. In the community services, some cases are mentioned where employees have been asked to act as interpreters in the homes of ethnic minority service users, and their cultural knowledge has had particular value in relation to deaths.

One employer is alerted by this question to the potential benefit of pairing new employees and existing employees of the same nationality during a training period – both because of the language dimension and for the purpose of “translation” of the cultural codes – but this has not been tested or systematically arranged as of yet.

⁶ Language spoken in Ethiopia.

4.5 Experience with language courses

4.5.1 Experiences of employers

The employers have little experience in Danish courses. A few have managed Danish courses for Swedish staff through adult learning centres or as internal training, but without great success, as the employees apparently lacked motivation for various reasons. Only one employer is aware of the need of courses on refreshing sector terms and phrases etc. for migrants.

4.5.2 Experiences of migrants

With one exception, the migrants interviewed have all participated in language courses, and have finished Danish tests at various levels. However, they all express a wish for further language training, to cover the following areas of need:

- Training on pronunciation
- Increased vocabulary – including health care terms
- Improved writing skills
- Increased knowledge of Danish culture – for example historical Denmark versus present day, which could be helpful in particular for working with elderly people.

These points are made both in relation to the current job of the migrants as well as when asking what a tools an employee needs for handling a job in the sector.

A minority of the migrants interviewed, however, actually want to go back to school. Instead, they make the following alternative suggestions for what could support them in improving their Danish language competencies:

- **Language mentor:** All of the interviewees would like a mentor who can train and challenge them, or order for them to improve their pronunciation and vocabulary. In addition, they all emphasize that this training should take place in the work place. They prefer this personal contact to computer based training. This could take the form of small challenges throughout the course of the day, where they would be asked to learn a new word and use it in different settings in their daily tasks. Further, it is important that time and space is allocated for this mentor-mentee interaction, and that it is thereby organised and prioritised.
- **Dictionary and pictorial reference book:** Around half of the migrants would like access to a dictionary of their native language translated into Danish. One expresses a direct wish for a pictorial reference book, where different work related items are pictured with accompanying Danish text.
- **Communication in the work place:** Every interviewee also mentions the importance of practicing their language skills at work with colleagues, as this is the best route to learning a language. Several have had previous positions where they did not have contact with colleagues and felt that during this period their language development stagnated or even reversed.

4.6 Success stories and suggestions

A central aim of the survey has been to encourage interviewees to highlight success stories, in order to place the focus on why and how something can work well, and what the deciding factors are for migrants to be integrated into the labour market in the care assistant sector. The following quote is an example of a success story related by an employer:

I have a guy from Sri Lanka, who is a Tamil refugee. He started an education as a health care assistant and was a trainee with us. And we were very pleased with him, and he ended up being employed here and speaks excellent Danish. He is strong on written communication, and is generally well liked. He is a man, jet black, and still accepted by everyone and very well liked – including by relatives. Five years ago he brought a wife to Denmark, and we employ her on our cleaning staff, and she wanted to get an education. In order to get in [to the education, ed.] she needed one years practical experience, so we have arranged that for her, and now she is about to start her education. So we employ both of them now. They have become really well integrated (...) Our attitude to the situation and the way colleagues received him ham [have been deciding factors]. His way of handling things and his general character. He is friendly, polite and very conscientious (quote from an employer in a care home).

Employers as well as migrants agree that the major factor relates to personality, attitude and knowledge rather than language ability alone. Of course, a certain level of language is necessary for employees to be able to manage a job with such a significant level of contact, but the determining factor for success is attitude and resourcefulness. Overall, the following factors are highlighted as crucial for success:

- **Support from colleagues:** Positive reception from colleagues, and support and help around language and comprehension, and general integration of migrants into the social life at the work place.
- **Management support:** A few migrants emphasize this dimension, which is part of signalling support as well as providing security and recognition.
- **Attitude of the migrant:** Several interviewees mention, in different terms, this aspect. It is critical that the migrant is relaxed, takes time to learn the ropes, and is not afraid to make mistakes. The most important thing according to the migrants is empathy rather than language, and therefore it is particularly important to be open-minded, gain knowledge of the country, chat to colleagues during breaks, try to understand the residents' frame of reference and to practice language in all contexts without being afraid of making mistakes.
- **Societal knowledge:** One interviewee focuses on education on sociological topics, which the interviewee in question received during a course. This knowledge was particularly useful because the migrant gained an overview of the country – including in relation to historical issues.

One migrant, who has been in the country for a long time, explains that upon his arrival he was assigned a contact family, who helped him get involved in society:

When I arrived, I had a contact family, who helped me, and I often visited them. You quickly learn language and culture and mentality in that way. So I am someone who should give something back. I therefore made an effort in relation to language and studied with dictionaries in English, Tamil and Danish. I tried hard and was happy with the teachers in school and with the family. I also lived with a Danish family once and rented a room there, and they had kids who I could communicate with. That was really helpful. (Interviewer: How did you get a contact family?). The person worked at the refugee centre, and she invited me home to her family and birthdays and Christmas and was in contact a lot. It was a coincidence that it became her, but others also got contact families if they wanted it. That was what you did then
(quote from interview with care assistant in a care home).

This quote reflects the core of a lot of the points made in the previous sections and in particular shows the importance of the relationship between the migrants and society (in this case, management and colleagues) in order to achieve success. It is not enough to learn the language, and a limited language is not necessarily a barrier to success, if the right level of resourcefulness is present.

5 Results language teaching

5.1 Challenges in teaching and learning vocation related language

The educators interviewed for this study teach in either a language centre or a care assistant school. Teachers in the latter handle all functions involved in language education at the school in question.

The teachers indicate the following factors as particular challenges for bilingual students in relation to vocational training:

- **Vocabulary and pronunciation:** In care assistant schools, theoretical and subject related matters are taught, which are often intensive and require understanding of words and concepts. Teachers here experience that bilingual students find pronunciation difficult, and that they need to enhance their vocabulary.
- **Educational culture:** Several teachers have experienced challenges relating to what could be referred to as educational culture; that is, the notion of what makes a "good student". They encounter students who are accustomed to being required to sit still and pay attention in order to be good students, whereas in Denmark a problem-based approach is required. This means that the student is expected to ask questions, reflect, present, work in groups, keep a log or similar. This is a form of learning which students of other ethnic backgrounds may find challenging or may simply not be familiar with.

- **Nuances and marginal language:** This relates to filler words, for example: “*she is feeling alright*”, which is an assessment, where the listener is required to guess the actual meaning. Migrants may find it difficult to relate to such descriptions, which are expressed in an unclear way – and they are difficult for non-migrants to explain.
- **Contextual learning:** Related to nuances as well, and to understanding and relating to the context of a situation. How do you communicate with a colleague versus a friend? What is the difference between keeping a patient record and writing a diary? This relates to the ability to communicate with a variety of audiences – colleagues, residents, relatives etc. – and to understand how to act in a working environment. Even though the students are able to communicate and articulate themselves in writing, it may be a challenge to appreciate, who they are communicating with and how. An added complication is the knowledge of how to use abbreviations and acronyms, and how to communicate in logs and records – the nuances and variations in language. Teachers in language schools further point to the challenges in relation to understanding expressions, proverbs, idioms and unwritten rules. For example, in a lot of workplaces there is communication back and forth when a task is set, and it can be difficult to decode what the actual instruction is. An instruction is often presented in terms of a friendly request, i.e. “if you have time, please do check on Mrs Jensen”, but herein lies a genuine instruction/ command to actually check on Mrs Jensen – not just if there is time.
- **Rights and duties:** A few interviewees mention challenges for the migrants in understanding rights and duties, when teaching labour market concepts, which equally presents challenges for a lot of ethnic Danes. Which entitlements and duties exist in an employment relationship, and how is the labour market generally set up?
- **Written Danish:** One teacher in a care assistant school mentions difficulties in relation to sentence construction, with an experience that the migrants do not have their basic skills in order when they begin an educational course at the school.
- **Lack of understanding in work places:** One language school, which amongst other things teaches vocational Danish skills to companies, occasionally encounters a challenge relating to a lack of understanding within the companies of what it means to be a migrant in a work place – that is, a lack of understanding of the difficulties this presents and why, as well as an ability to view the company through the migrants’ eyes. All interviewees do not share this experience, and some have experienced that the understanding actually grows once the company realises the consequences of not focusing on this issue.

5.2 Specific material related aspects

The following sections present the reflections and suggestions of the teachers in relation to the format of educational materials. This refers to the level of linguistic ability the materials should be targeted at, what the design should be, which educational methods they should be linked with, and how the teachers envision employing the materials.

Linguistic level

The teachers interviewed make a variety of suggestions for the linguistic level, which the educational materials should be structured for. However, they generally agree that the materials should allow the educators to differentiate in their teaching methods, as the students in their classes are often hugely variable in their levels. Suggested levels are A1 and B1, but the main point made is the ability to differentiate.

Design

The teachers further make numerous suggestions relating to how the materials could and should be designed. The main points are summarised below:

- **Template.** One focus group presents the suggestion that the materials should be structured as a form of educational framework, with corresponding methodologies and approaches as well as standard templates. These templates can then be filled in with relevant content, depending on the situation and the vocation.
- **Image and sound.** There is general consensus among the teachers that film clips and possibly also audio clips should be incorporated for this particular audience. Several of the teachers have had good experiences with for example film clips of a given situation – for example how to make a bed or a situation showing a miscommunication – the students subsequently discuss the clip and undertake some simple written exercises⁷. Some teachers also point to the importance of training on gestures and body language, and the film media is particularly relevant for this purpose.
- **Internet based and interactive.** The teachers further point to the option for film and audio clips to be internet based, forming part of an internet based and interactive educational offering, where exercises are undertaken individually or in groups at a computer terminal. All the interviewees do stress in this context that for this audience, it is crucial to ensure that the programme used is simple and user-friendly. Examples are the materials "Danish in the Workplace" and "ABC-Danish", which contain well developed templates and exercises, but which are difficult to use because they operate at too high a level.
- **Authentic materials.** Several of the teachers highlight that materials must be authentic. The students gain the most benefits from relating to realistic situations from their every day experience – including working with meaningful conversations with real exchanges between the students. This could be examples of semi-authentic conversations between a care assistant and a resident, colleague, manager, relative or similar. Some teachers advise the present study to include observations of the work before developing the materials, in order to gain insight into the requirements, the work culture, the tasks involved and so on. It is important to have an understanding of what the daily tasks are for the employees, what the small talk during breaks is centred on, whether the main arrangements and agreements are made at the coffee maker or on meetings etc. This is very much a question of work culture.

⁷ Some of the teachers successfully use such film clips from www.emu.dk.

- **"Back to basics"**. One teacher suggest that the materials should take as their starting point very basic characteristics of the sector, for example words such as "pain", "well-being" or similar, and to focus on different exercises in relation to these terms – for example how to ask about well-being, what the word refers to and so on. This is combined with basic courtesy phrases and instructions – how to use courtesy phrases, and how to encourage the residents to move, get dressed, sit down etc. For example, the word "just" is a useful filler phrase, which mitigates the risk of ending up ordering the residents about. As such, the suggestion is to take the care sector as the overarching theme, and to centre the training on a variety of common phrases here.
- **Written documentation**. One teacher suggests using exercises, which focus on the written documentation, which employees in the sector need to produce in their records on service users. This relates to tools for how an employee can describe their observations in an objective manner and without employing subjective interpretations, and in a way that ensures that others can read and understand it. The teacher in question suggests a sort of mini dictionary, which employees could helpfully make use of for their descriptions, containing key terms and phrases, adjective etc.
- **Short texts**. All the teachers stress that written elements of the teaching materials must be simple and written with a vocabulary which is easily understandable, to ensure that the students can read it easily and without continued interruptions due to a lack of understanding of the words used. Questions should be phrased in concrete terms, rather than for example the phrase "*discuss how ...*" which is too vague.
- **Manageable materials**. The teachers agree that overall the materials should be designed so that they are presented in a manageable way. They should be clearly focused on one topic at a time, in a clear language, using illustrations.

Teaching methods

The teachers further express opinions on which teaching methods the materials should advocate. The main points are summarised below:

- **Cooperative Learning**. Some of the teachers interviewed employ a teaching method referred to as Cooperative Learning. Cooperative Learning is a new way of structuring teaching processes, which basically consists of organised class based activities into academic and educational experiences. It is a structured system, which prioritises joint learning. The method is based on the latest knowledge and understanding of motivation and learning, and creates a different and highly active universe. Research indicates that the students achieve a higher level of learning, and among other things they are able to improve their language, to great advantage for bilingual students⁸.
- **Variation**. All of the teachers stress that the material must support variation in the teaching methods, as they are used to employing a number of different methods. Methods currently

⁸ For further information, see www.cooperativelearning.dk

used include presentations, group work, role playing, computer based work, films, games etc.

- **Role playing.** The teachers all propose exercises which support role playing, as this method allows the students to train their language, body language, gestures, proverbs, and other communications skills in semi authentic situations. The emphasis is on inclusive and dialogue based exercises.
- **Games.** Games also feature as a proposed method, as they allow the involvement of all students, and offer a fun way to learn. This can also include computer games.

Situations for use of the materials

The teachers in the language centres all find it challenging to imagine situations in their general teaching work where such teaching materials could be employed. This relates to the fact that the standard classes have a large mandatory curriculum which must be covered, and which leaves little time for other topics. However, the teachers do feel that the materials may be useful for special projects, with a vocational and labour market focus. One of the language centres imagines using the materials as a type of bridging course for a class who are all targeting a specific sector after the language course ends, and where the basic skills are therefore already in place. A requirement for this use is that the level of the material is relatively high.

Teachers in the care assistant schools find it easier to envision making use of the materials – especially for the purpose of their basic introduction courses (which are also employed in many adult learning centres) as well as for the elective course "Vocational Danish as a Second Language".

5.3 Availability of teaching material

When the teachers look for new materials they employ a number of channels. They mainly seek inspiration from their daily life – for example on internal work sessions with colleagues, networks in their place of employment educational institutions, putting together bespoke materials from advertising materials, or taking inspiration from special interests in the class etc.

With the exception of one teacher, all the interviewees gather new knowledge via the internet, using pages such as the Department for Integration, the Department for Education, unions, Danish in the Work Place or similar. Some also use their local library, and all gain new knowledge from recently published books.

For the dissemination of the project teaching materials, the following avenues are suggested:

- The EU data bank
- The websites for the Department for Integration and the Department for Education (www.inm.dk has been closed down, www.uvm.dk)

- Links to the material, with options for downloading and printing on various websites – for example the Education Union, The Flying Carpet, FOA's membership magazine for care assistants, language centres, care assistant schools etc.
- Advertising the materials in various sector publications, newsletters and union magazines.
- Circulating the finished materials in physical copies to all language centres, care assistant schools and other relevant educational institutions.
- Circulating the materials to relevant companies.

5.4 Practical teaching experiences and suggestions

In conclusion, the teachers were requested to describe a successful teaching situation in relations to vocational training or training on labour market conditions. A general finding is that the teachers experience success in teaching which takes the students' interests as its starting point, whether teaching work place language or general vocational topics. The following quote illustrates this:

For example yesterday I included a picture of the body. Their interests are illness and health. And we then discussed the various parts of the body, and the fact that there are so many different sayings relating to parts of the body, such as "to cost an arm and a leg", "to give someone a hand", "having sharp elbows". You have to discuss things which interests them – when can you use the different sayings? For example, "to get your finger out" – when can you use this and with whom? They found this very interesting. The key is the nuances and to use real situations and experiences as your starting point. And it cannot be too text heavy, and should preferably be supported by pictures. And if I had had a video, that would have been good. So if you can produce that type of thing, then ... (quote from interview with teacher in a care assistant school).

The quote illustrates how teachers can take their starting point from a specific vocation, and relate the general education to that.

Furthermore, it shows that teachers can successfully employ techniques to involve students and activate them. Be that via presentations, where they are asked to discuss jointly, they can ask questions of one another, do exercises around genre where they are required to cut out newspaper articles in different genres, or it could be via playing games, for instance by designing a quiz. Such educational techniques, where the students are individually involved and activated, are apparently of great positive value.

One teacher also emphasizes visits to companies and language internships as useful tools. During the visits, the students take pictures and subsequently put their new knowledge to use in the class, while language internships allow them to practice language in a specific work related context.

One teacher describes successfully discussing the students' culture, and the issues, which can arise in a work place. This will usually be following on from apprenticeship placements, where a student may have difficulty setting boundaries with a resident who is "bullying" her,

because she is used to showing respect for her elders. The teacher has had great success using such issues as a focus for discussion in class.

In conclusion, teachers from a language centre point out that they have been most successful with teaching Danish in the country of origin, prior to the migrants moving to Denmark. This language school has a great deal of experience in delivering Danish education in other countries, in conjunction with companies recruiting foreign workers. In their experience, migrants gain the best possible linguistic skills through receiving their Danish training in an intensive course prior to arriving in the country.

The education topics, which have proven least successful for the teachers, are grammatical lessons, very theoretical topics such as technical terms, as well as long lectures. When the education becomes too theoretical and technical, the teachers feel that they lose the connection with the students.

The materials, which the teachers indicate as particularly successful are:

- *"Danish in the Work Place"*, which is a teaching material for foreign students, who are working and learning Danish simultaneously. It includes tasks on the themes *"pre-education"*, which prepares for the work placement, *"in the work place"*, where tasks are set for undertaking in the work place, and *"post-education"* with tasks which process the learning which the migrant got from the work placement.
- *"Into the conversation – everyday dialogues"* with corresponding CD and CD-rom by Lisbeth Thorborg as well as her pronunciation books. This material focuses on spoken language, with the purpose of providing the student with a linguistic basis for participating in everyday conversations.
- *"Manual for language support"* and *"Guide for internship supervisors"* by Laura Trojaborg. This material provides practical routes for organising language support training in school and internship settings, and has been developed as part of a project in the care assistant school SOSU-C. The purpose was to reduce dropout rates among bilingual students, provide teachers and internship supervisors with greater knowledge of active language learning, and to uncover the need for language support and test possible solutions.
- One teacher mentions language centre materials relating to "genre", but does not specify which.
- *"The Danish book for care assistants"* published by Gad. The book is the first basic vocational book in the Sosu Care series for care assistants. The book is recent, and according to one teacher it is more focused on vocational topics than its predecessor.

6 Summary

The present report is made up of an intelligence gathering around linguistic challenges for migrants in the sector Healthcare and Social Work Activities in Denmark. For this purpose, interviews have been held with 10 teachers from language centres or Health and Social Care schools, six employers from residential care homes or community services as well as five migrants employed in care homes or community services. In the following, the challenges and the suggestions for supportive activities are summarised.

According to employers as well as migrants, the challenges of the job include:

- **Written documentation:** Written documentation in the reporting system makes up a relatively large part of the work as Health and Social Care Assistant, and the migrants tend to be hesitant here. They express themselves briefly and in a simple language, and they request help from colleagues, and some try to get colleagues to perform the writing tasks for them.
- **Implicit information:** This relates to messages given between the lines. For example, the message “Today Mrs Jensen is going to a birthday” contains the implicit message that Mrs Jensen should be up, well-dressed, and be in a certain location at a set time etc., which is not made explicit. The same applies if a record states that a resident has had a fall. This means that follow ups should be undertaken, asking about well-being, pain etc., and reflecting on the incident.
- **Verbal communication:** The experience is that migrants are hesitant in verbal communication with colleagues, resulting in less influence on own tasks when distributing them in staff meetings at shift change – and failure to receive certain tasks altogether. Misunderstandings are also mentioned here as a cause of frustration. Verbal communication with residents, however, does not appear to cause issues, in particular not in relation to residents with dementia, who require simple communication as well as body language. Only pronunciation may cause problems here, but slow speech and reversed word position do not cause problems.
- **Collective messages:** Employers experience that migrants find it difficult to understand messages given collectively. For example, messages concerning putting holiday request on a notice board or “remember communal meal today”. Migrants fail to act on such messages, and employers therefore interpret this as migrants either not hearing the messages or not perceiving them as targeted at themselves.
- **Understanding of labour market characteristics:** Employers experience that migrants have difficulty understanding various labour market characteristics such as their pay slip, rights and duties in their employment, as well as work place culture. Employers sometimes find they spend a lot of time helping migrants filling in, understanding and explaining papers from public sector offices, in relation to personal affairs.

According to the language teachers, the following aspects offer challenges in the teaching of bilingual students:

- **Vocabulary and pronunciation:** Teachers from Health and Social Care schools experience that students with migrant background have problems with pronunciation, and need to expand their vocabulary.
- **Educational culture:** This relates to how to be a good student – does this involve sitting still and listening or about reflecting, participating, asking questions, giving presentations etc.? The latter form of learning is employed in Danish educational systems and migrants may find this difficult or unfamiliar.
- **Nuances and marginal language:** This relates to filler words, for example: “*she is feeling alright*”, where the listener is required to guess the actual meaning. Such descriptions can be difficult to relate to as they are expressed in an unclear way and are difficult to explain.
- **Contextual learning:** This is further emphasised by the teachers, and relates to an ability to communicate with different audiences as well as an understanding of how to act in a work environment. In addition, it relates to understanding expressions and unwritten rules, for example the saying “if you have time, please do check on Mrs Jensen”. This is in fact a command, which needs to be followed, regardless of whether the employee has time or not. Such “commands” can be difficult to understand, when couched in polite terms.
- **Rights and duties:** Teachers as well as employers further emphasise this element. Which entitlements and duties exist in an employment relationship, and how is the labour market generally set up?
- **Written Danish:** Here teachers emphasise sentence construction as a challenge for migrants.
- **Lack of understanding in work places:** A few teachers further point to a lack of understanding among employers as to what it means to be a migrant in a Danish work place – they fail to view the work place through the migrants’ eyes.

The following section summarises which activities employers and migrants point as being supportive of language learning:

Courses around cultural understanding for employers. The thinking is that a greater knowledge of different cultures and their labour market characteristics could limit misunderstandings. This includes knowledge of being a minority in Denmark – in an anthropological sense it view oneself “through other’s eyes”.

- Communication tools in the form of a question guide or conversational tool, where employers and employees in a basic, practical way can check if a message has been understood.
- Unions should become more actively involved, so that migrants can make use of them to help them understand and decode rules, and to help furnish them with an understanding of the Danish labour market.

- Migrants need to be better at asking questions and not be afraid to approach their managers and colleagues with questions or doubt issues.
- More Danish training focusing on pronunciation and understanding and decoding implicit messages, as well as the possibility of gaining access to a computer with a dictionary
- Language mentors as personal supporters in the work place, and with time assigned for exercises during work hours.
- Training on body language, as some have difficulties in understanding body language and using it themselves.

Employers as well as migrants agree that the deciding factors for a successful employment are support from colleagues, management backing, and the attitude of the migrants themselves, which in particular relates to personality, attitude and understanding more than language alone – empathy is more important than language skills in this type of job. Hertil kommer viden om samfundet for at kunne forstå og samtale med de ældre beboere om deres liv.

All the teachers were asked to reflect on and make suggestions for the specific teaching materials to be developed as part of the project. The following section summarises their main points:

- **Linguistic level:** It is important that materials allow the educators to differentiate in their teaching methods, as the students in their classes are often hugely variable in their levels.
- **Template:** Suggestion is made for the materials should be structured as a form of educational framework, with corresponding methodologies and approaches as well as standard templates, which can filled in with relevant content, depending on the situation and the vocation.
- **Image and sound:** There is general consensus that film clips and possibly also audio clips should be incorporated for this particular audience, including YouTube.
- **Internet based and interactive:** Film and audio clips can be internet based, forming part of an internet based and interactive educational offering, where exercises are undertaken individually or in groups at a computer terminal. The programme used must be simple and user-friendly.
- **Authentic materials:** Several teachers highlight that materials must be authentic. The students gain the most benefits from relating to realistic situations from their everyday experience, such as semi-authentic conversations between a care assistant and a resident.
- **"Back to basics":** One teacher suggest that the materials should take as their starting point very basic characteristics of the sector, for example words such as "pain", "well-being" or similar, and to focus on different exercises in relation to these terms. This is combined with basic courtesy phrases and instructions – how to use courtesy phrases, and how to encourage the residents to move without ordering them around. The sugges-

tion is to take the care sector as the overarching theme, and to centre the training on a variety of common phrases here.

- **Written documentation:** This relates to tools for how an employee can describe their observations in an objective manner and without employing subjective interpretations, and in a way that ensures that others can read and understand it. A suggestion is made for a mini dictionary for example with typical phrases, for the use of employees.
- **Short texts:** Written elements of the teaching materials must be simple and written with a vocabulary which is easily understandable.
- **Manageable materials:** Materials should focus on one topic at a time, in a clear language, using illustrations.
- **The material should advocate:** The learning form Cooperative Learning, varied teaching methods such as role playing, group work, games, presentations etc. In particular role playing and games are pointed to as good teaching methods for this target group.

7 Literature

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