

## **Abstract**

Gunnarsson, Britt-Louise (ed.), 2005: *The Immigrant and the Workplace*. TeFa nr 41. Uppsala universitet. Uppsala.

*The Immigrant and the Workplace* contains five articles on the issue how immigrants communicate in Swedish workplace settings. The introductory article discusses various linguistic and sociolinguistic approaches to the study of immigrants' communication at work. The second article elaborates on the societal frame for studies of the immigrant and the workplace in the Swedish context. In three following articles, communicative competence and strategies are discussed and placed in their interactional and social contexts. Based on data from job interviews with a Swedish recruiter and non-Swedish job applicants, an analysis of reformulations as a resource and a constraint is discussed. Another article presents an ongoing project on immigrants' communication at work and outlines the model for the case studies at a hospital and a large company. The last article presents data from an analysis of the interaction of non-Swedish physicians at work.

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# Preface

In the 2002 parliamentary election campaign in Sweden, one of the central issues proved to be not only the integration of immigrants, but also the language issue in relation to that process. This turned out to be a topic that generated much heated debate. Questions like: ‘Should there be a compulsory Swedish language test for citizenship? Would this help to promote integration?’ were discussed from a variety of angles. The debate revealed a divide between, on the one hand, people who regarded this suggestion as indicative of a positive attitude to immigrants and an attempt to promote their integration into Swedish society, and, on the other, those who saw it as a sign of hostility towards foreigners.

Not surprisingly, this debate revealed a traditional view of language competence and communication. What was assumed was that knowledge of Swedish was the most important factor in the integration of immigrants into Swedish society and the Swedish job market, and that successful communication was related to the qualities and skills of immigrants, and not to those of the other people involved.

The articles in this report take a broader view of the issue of how immigrants communicate in Swedish workplace settings. Communicative competence and strategies are discussed and placed in their interactional and social contexts. In the introductory article, Britt-Louise Gunnarsson discusses various linguistic and sociolinguistic approaches to the study of immigrants’ communication at work. In her second article she presents the societal frame for studies of the immigrant and the workplace, focusing on Sweden’s migration history, demographic and economic conditions, and the current situation. This forms the historical and demographic background to the study of immigrants in the workplace. Gunlög Sundberg, in her paper, presents an analysis of reformulations as a resource and a constraint, which forms part of the research she is conducting for her PhD thesis at Stockholm University. Her data are job interviews with a Swedish recruiter and fourteen non-Swedish job applicants. Helena Andersson and Marie Nelson present interview data from the ongoing project on immigrants’ communication at work which they are undertaking at Uppsala University. They also outline the model for the case studies on which they are currently working at a hospital and a large company. Nataliya Berbyuk, who is writing her thesis in the framework of a research project entitled ‘Communication and Interaction in Multicultural Health Care’ at Gothenburg University, presents in her article data from her analysis of the interaction of non-Swedish physicians at work.

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