

Bremen handouts for language awareness

A seven-part tool, developed in the IQ regional network Bremen, offers suggestions for working with linguistically heterogeneous groups in vocational education and training (VET)



IQ GOOD PRACTICE to the point

Addressees for transfer:

Subject teachers, trainers, instructors and German teachers in vocational education and training (VET)

Tool:

The “Bremen handouts for work-related German language” are considered to be a stimulus for the implementation of a language-sensitive subject teaching in working with linguistically heterogeneous groups in vocational education and training (VET). They offer practical suggestions and tips, didactical suggestions, lesson plans as well as check-lists and references for further reading. To date, seven handouts were published and other issues are planned.

Orders at iq@rkw-bremen.de and download under <http://bit.ly/29n6pHE>.

Project:

Six handouts, written by Heike Krautschun-Lindner and Iska Niemeyer, were created in the project “Tandem - Vocational qualification and language training”, a collaboration between the “Paritätisches Bildungswerk LV Bremen” and the “HandWERK gGmbH”, the Competence Centre of the Chamber of skilled crafts in Bremen. The seventh handout, “language-sensitive exam questions in nursing”, was developed by Natascha Buts, assistant in the project “QuaDobi” of the wisoak G - Kompetenzzentrum Gesundheit der Wirtschafts- und Sozialakademie der Arbeitnehmerkammer Bremen gGmbH. Both projects ran from 2013 to 2014 in the Network IQ Bremen.

Implementing organisation:

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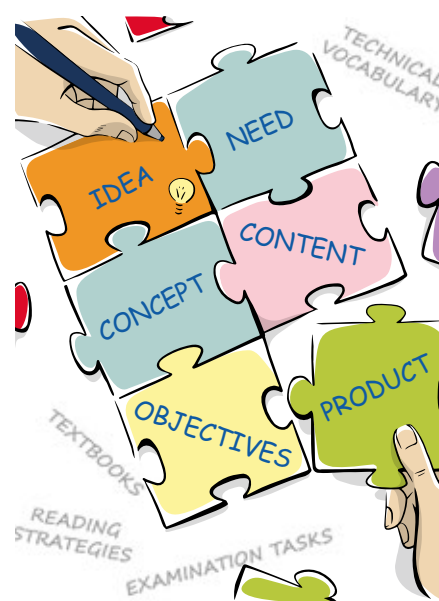
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Starting position/challenge

Participants with German as their second language are facing multiple challenges during vocational qualification, training, and retraining. Teachers and lecturers require the knowledge of basic educational and technical language in practice and theory. Participants must decipher complex technical texts, answer exam questions and lead professional discussions. But often, it is hard for particularly those who have acquired German as a second language to write professionally, express themselves verbally and to follow classroom activity. The series “Bremen handouts for work-related German language” provides background information and offers suggestions on how the teaching in practice and theory can be designed so that motivated and interested participants don't fail due to language barriers.

Implementation of the tool

Heike Krautschun-Lindner and Iska Niemeyer from “Paritätisches Bildungswerk LV Bremen”, teachers for German as a second language (GSL), had the opportunity to support the teaching of retraining various skilled craft trades for two years. They could thus very concretely observe which vocational language challenges the participants faced and what difficulties arose for the trainers and subject teachers based on the linguistic heterogeneity of the groups. By working closely with the educators, it became increasingly clear how important it is not to separate technical content from linguistic content. The experiences and results collected during the duration of the project formed the basis for the Bremen handouts, which demonstrate ideas on implementing language-sensitive methods to teaching as well as formulating recommendations and learning strategies based on authentic materials. Course contents should hereby not be simplified, but rather, language barriers should be recognised and practised. Participants should be able to acquire better ac-



cess to technical content in order to safely handle the tasks in their future professional life. The seven handouts deal, among others, with these topics: “Reading strategies in subject teaching”, “Developing specialised vocabulary”, “Exam questions and testing situations”, “Audit tasks in nursing” and “Communication in (re-)training and professional qualification”. The handout “The leap into reality” is aimed at teachers in work-related German courses who prepare the participants for the language requirements in real-life work conditions.

Summary

In German language courses, participants learn “standard language”. In vocational qualifications, trainings and retrainings, however, everyday and technical language is used in addition to set phrases, irony, shortened expressions, idioms, abbreviations and dialects. Subject teachers and trainers are often not aware of the hurdles that “normal” use of language represents for their retrainee students and trainees. The Bremen handouts draw attention to these obstacles and, at the same time, provide support resources.

Recommendation: language-conducive instructions

Bremen handouts provide tips for dealing with technical language

The interest of the expert community in the Bremen handouts is great, because the seven publications focus on the professional language requirements that are needed to understand technical content in qualifications, retraining and education. Textbooks should be regarded as a tool of instruction. With simple exercises, participants can practice using a table of contents and subject index. Already the confrontation with the structure of the table of contents as well as the introduction to the interpretation of text- supporting graphics and pictures are helpful.

Technical texts and terminology are characterised, among other things, by complex

sentence structures and educational linguistic grammar. To decrypt difficult texts, participants could divide the text into sections and look at subheadings, rephrase take-home-messages and highlight key words and signal words in colour.

The skills of the participants with respect to the “dissection” of words, which were already acquired in general German language courses, can be extended to technical terms. Particularly in the case of compounds (nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.), it may be difficult to identify the main concept. For example, the technical term “Klingengerät” may be divided into “Klinge” and “Gerät” and explained as a “Gerät mit einer Klinge”.

When words like “stromführend” are explained with “hat Strom”, or “farblos” with “ist ohne Farbe”, the technical context remains understood. In preparation of examination papers, it is helpful to bypass, if possible, impersonal formulations, passive, participle or conjunction clusters with the ultimate goal of concentrating on the content.

The practicality of the tool is documented in already 2,200 ordered Bremen handouts (individually or completely) by adult education centres, colleges, universities, charities, educational associations, publishers, associations, nursing facilities and lecturers.

Three questions for Iska Niemeyer and Heike Krautschun-Lindner, authors of “Bremen handouts”

“Vocational and language learning must be interlocked”



Heike Krautschun-Lindner



Iska Niemeyer

What is the innovative aspect of the handouts?

The handouts fill a void since language-sensitive teaching supplements were previously developed primarily for teachers in schools, but not for teachers in

vocational education and further training. The handouts are practical and combine elements of German-as-a-second-language lessons with those of the specialised classes. In addition, they also complement the work of German-as-a-second language (GSL) teachers who prepare their participants for further qualifications in their work-related German language courses.

Is the tool easily transferable?

The content of the handouts can be transferred to other professions, since the technical peculiarities of the professional fields are similar. The classroom examples can be adapted to the specific occupational requirements. The handouts are the first suggestions for

working with linguistically heterogeneous groups in continuing vocational education and training. For more in-depth lessons, we recommend interested teachers or institutions in establishing or implementing the “language-sensitive subject teaching” workshop. In addition, one or two lesson plans with a GSL teacher can be helpful. As a general rule, vocational and language learning must be interlocked. Technical and language teachers should have the opportunity to work together to plan the lessons and implement them more efficiently.

How applicable will the handouts be in the long-term?

The positive response from practice leaders, trainers and from GSL teaching staff proves the effectiveness and impact of the “language-sensitive subject teaching”. However, in order to permanently manifest this teaching in classroom activities, project, divisional and departmental leaders should also be familiar with the approach. Only when concepts and curricula provide the framework for this addressee-oriented teaching, can materials such as handouts have a lasting effect.

More information on the language-sensitive subject lessons is available at info@passage-hamburg.de of the IQ Competence Centre for Work-Related German Language.

Imprint

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Network IQ

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