Learning Norwegian for Special Purposes. 
The perspective of a widened understanding of language

The welcome address to the European Year of Languages 2001 in Strasbourg, France, states that languages are our glasses for an encounter with and an experience of our environment. This article focuses on second language acquisition and argues that in language learning practice one has to establish a clearer view on the connection between verbal language and the situational and cultural frameworks all language use is embedded in. With language and context as a starting point the article presents an extended understanding of language, and one suggests that language—in particular functional language—is more than purely verbal language.

Abstract

The article presents small-scale research work focusing on how workers from Poland experience their second language ability (SLA) when they meet their workplace community in the country of the second language (Norway). “Finding” is based on a collection and analysis of data carried out as semi-structured interviews with four nurses (introduced below) that, before coming to Norway, had received a three-month intensive course in the Norwegian language as a prerequisite for a contract at a health care institution. One concludes that the loss in verbal skill gave rise to compensating communicative strategies to match the workplace challenges. One may sketch out a holistic competence profile made of cognitive based strategies, socially based and finally based on sensitivity to the workplace culture.

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