



► **1.4.002 – More than one language:  
multilingualism at work**

Research project: Abstract

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Term I/23 to IV/25  
Bonn, August 2024

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Evaluations of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) conducted by the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training and the Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health show that the need for foreign languages at work increased between 2006 and 2018. In 2018, 68 percent of LFS respondents stated that foreign languages were necessary in their occupation. This represents a rise in demand of 19 percentage points compared to 2006. English is the most commonly used language, but numerous other languages are needed too. Examples include French, Turkish, Spanish and Italian. These languages are used to a considerable extent at work by multilingual staff, including migrant persons.

When performing a job, the ability to express oneself in a technically competent way and in a manner appropriate to the situation is part of the employability skills set. During training, trainees are taught language and communication competencies. In Germany, this takes place with regard to the German language, and in many training occupations also in English. Little is known about corresponding offers in other languages.

Against this background, the research project focusses on the following questions. What is the demand for languages that are rarely taught at school and in which ways are they used at work? Which linguistic and communicative requirements need to be managed, and are the language competencies acquired – frequently via informal means – sufficient for this purpose? How is occupationally related language proficiency developed at work? How is this multilingualism handled, valued and embedded in companies, how in the vocational education and training system? These key issues will be examined at an individual and company level as well as at the level of the training system.

The study is explorative in nature. Qualitative methods will primarily be used.

The purposes of the project are to obtain new findings regarding multilingualism in occupational contexts and to help close research gaps in respect of demand, use, professionalisation, handling and assessment. The results of analyses will serve to derive recommendations for the occupational development and certification of multilingualism.