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English translation
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Development programme for workplace language advocates



What is a workplace language advocate?

The workplace language advocate is a new, voluntary role for employees who want to champion communication and language development in their workplace.

The language advocate works with their manager and colleagues to

- Inspire and inform about language development at work
- Resolve any misunderstandings and conflicts that arise around language and culture
- Design language development activities and support colleagues take advantage of them
- Help colleagues with anything to do with language and communication, from everyday communication at work (including written communication) to supporting colleagues who speak Swedish as an additional language participate in meetings

In Project ArbetSam, care staff who volunteered to become language advocates received six days' training on second language development and second language acquisition. They received instruction and training in how to recognise and then support the opportunities that arise at work to develop language skills.

Background to the language advocate development programme

Between 2006 and 2008, the Stockholm Gerontology Research Center ran a project called *Work, the place for development* (APU¹), which aimed to promote workplace learning and reflection in elderly care in Stockholm County. APU itself was keen to reflect on learning from previous investment in skills development for care staff in Stockholm. Part of this learning concerned the importance of supporting the significant proportion of frontline care staff with limited Swedish language skills. To address this issue, the APU project brought together language researchers and consultants with expertise in elderly care to produce a development programme for workplace language advocates, with help from a reference group of learning and development specialists and managers and staff working in elderly care. The role of language advocate was quite new and during the first run of the development programme there was considerable discussion regarding about the nature and scope of the role. The programme consisted of expert input and group discussion.

The APU project was superseded by the SpråkSam project (2009–2011), also led by the Stockholm Gerontology Research Center.² SpråkSam aimed to create workplaces that promote language development and, in the process, to support migrant workers at risk of labour market exclusion due to their limited Swedish language skills. SpråkSam allowed further development of the language advocate programme.

In 2011, SpråkSam was itself superseded by the ArbetSam project (2011-13)³, led by the municipality of Lidingö, in Stockholm County. Combining the broader workforce development aims of APU and the language-specific focus of SpråkSam, ArbetSam's objective was to develop care workplaces that

¹ Translator's note: APU stands for *Arbete, platsen för utveckling*, in English: 'Work, the place for development'. APU was publicly funded through the Swedish central government's *Kompetensstegen* (Ladder of Competence) skills programme.

² Translator's note: For more on SpråkSam, see <http://www.aldrecentrum.se/Utbildning1/SprakSam/SprakSam-in-English/>

³ Translator's note: For more on ArbetSam, see <http://www.lidingo.se/toppmeny/omsorgstod/projektarbetsam/arbetsaminenglish.4.1df940d7136538bffd421.html>

promote learning. ArbetSam retained the language advocate role as a key mechanism and continued to run the language advocate development programme.

The language advocate development programme has been running now for over five years. During this period programme content has varied slightly according to circumstances and needs. The outline below is an authentic example of the programme in 2012.

Programme outline

Programme aims

The language advocate development programme aims to

- Create awareness and knowledge about the use of the language in the workplace
- Support more effective communication at work

Programme objectives

The objectives of the language advocate development programme are to

- Equip language advocates with tools and strategies to
 - Support and coach colleagues at work
 - Promote language development at work

Programme content

- Difficulties with written communication, dyslexia
- Communication and culture
- Effective and ineffective interactions
- How adults learn an additional language
- How to handle sensitive and difficult situations
- How to support Swedish language development at work
- Understanding the impact of limited schooling and/or low educational attainment
- Developing writing skills

Programme structure

This programme has been developed jointly by language researchers and project leaders with support from a reference group of representatives from providers of elderly care. Specialists from different disciplines, including language, communication and learning and development provide expert input. This expert input is supplemented by group discussions led by the project leaders responsible for the programme.

During the programme, participants will consider expert input, discuss the characteristics of a workplace that promotes language development and learning, and discuss and specify the role of the language advocate and the care manager in supporting language development at work.

Each specialist will lead a group discussion about their topic. The expert input is linked to participant tasks, e.g. to describe the characteristics of a workplace that promotes language development and learning and to define the role of a language advocate.

Participants are given homework assignments that involve colleagues and thus the entire workplace. The purpose of this is to cascade and then apply programme learning, engaging the whole workplace in the project. The time required by participants for these assignments is estimated at about one hour per week.

The programme includes six full days of classroom learning, with additional time for assignments and learning activities to be completed between classroom days.

Participants completing the programme receive certificates.

Reading list

Sundberg, Gunlög and Garlén, Claes (2011), *Handbok i svenska som andraspråk [Handbook for Swedish as an additional language]*. Stockholm: Nordsteds akademiska förlag

Lindberg, Inger (2009), *Andraspråksresan [The second language journey]* Stockholm: Folkuniversitetet

Tykesson, Ingela and Landqvist, Mats (2011), *Språkstimulerande övningar för personal inom äldreomsorgen [Language stimulating practices for personal in elderly care]*. Stockholm: Stockholm Gerontology Research Center

Programme leaders

Maj Berg, project leader in ArbetSam, and *Kerstin Sjösvärd*, senior project leader in ArbetSam

Lecturers 2012

Ingela Tykesson, researcher and teacher in Swedish as an additional language at the Institute for Communication, Media and IT, University of Södertörn. Ingela has lectured about written communication at work. She has also published a study on interactions between customers and checkout operators in supermarkets.

Mats Landqvist is a researcher and senior lecturer at the Institute for Communication, Media and IT, University of Södertörn. His subject is communication and he has a special interest in how people communicate at work.

Inger Lindberg is a researcher and professor at the University of Stockholm. Her field is bilingualism and she has a special interest in second language learning.

Gunlög Sundberg researches and teaches in Swedish as a second language at the Department of Scandinavian Languages and focuses on second language use in conversation, at work and in the assessment of language proficiency.

Catarina Persson teaches Swedish as a second language at the Institute for Nordic Languages at the University of Stockholm. For several years she has led professional development courses for teachers on ways to develop language in education contexts, and on communication at work.

Ingrid Skeppstedt worked for many years at the National Centre for Swedish as an additional language at the University of Stockholm. She now works as a consultant specialising in the development and evaluation of second language learning.

Inger Rålenius, who is herself dyslexic, is a social worker and counsellor on dyslexia at the Dyslexia association (Dyslexiförbundet FMLS, Skriv-Knuten).

Eva Stilling is a language consultant who specialises in teaching writing. She has worked for ten years as a creative writing teacher.

Programme schedule

Classroom days start at 9.00 am and continue to 4.00 pm.

There is a break for lunch from 12.00 to 1.00 pm.

Day 1

9.00 Welcome *Ulf Haraldson*, Human Relation manager, Lidingö city

9.15 Introduction to the ArbetSam project *Kerstin Sjösvärd*

9.45 Workplace Learning, language development and the learning workplace: Aims and objectives of language advocate development programme *Maj Berg*

10.15 Coffee break

10.30 Experiences from the SpråkSam project *Maj Berg*

10.50 Stockholm City care manager whose organisation participated in SpråkSam speaks about her experiences and shares some reflections on the project. *Agneta Hollingworth*, manager Skolörtens Supported living service.

Discussion on different roles of manager and language advocate

12.00 Lunch

13.00–15.00 Communication and culture: *Mats Landqvist*. Some different ways to look at similarities and differences between people that are often attributed to cultural background. Mats will also offer examples of other factors that result in different patterns of communication.

15.00 Coffee break

15.15 Reflective exercise in groups of three: Discussion on role of language advocate and possibilities at own work place *Maj Berg and Kerstin Sjösvärd*.

16.00 Close. Homework assignment: project

Day 2

9.00–12.00 What is it like for an adult to learn Swedish as an additional language? *Inger Lindberg*
Inger will also consider how one can judge another person's communicative competence, with group discussion and reflection

Including coffee at 10.15

12.00 Lunch

13.00 Project work follow-up: participant discussion and reflection on experiences in own workplace

14.00 Coffee

14.15 Problems and opportunities: Can you be intellectual if you can't spell it? *Inger Rålenius*

Expert input on reading and writing problems and dyslexia. What can you do? What rights and obligations do you have as a dyslectic person?

15.45 Close. Homework assignment: project

Day 3

9.00–10.15 Follow-up and reflection on expert input given earlier: *Inger Lindberg, Inger Rålenius*

Inger Lindberg on *Andraspråksresan* [*Second Language Journey*]. (If you have not already received your copy, you will get it now).

Inger Rålenius on reading and writing problems

Briefing and discussion on how the role of language advocate links to the objectives of project ArbetSam. Feedback on own project work and the role of language advocates in workplace learning.

Including coffee

10.15–12.00 How to support colleagues with reading and writing tasks at work *Ingrid Skeppstedt*

Expert input on supporting people with limited schooling/low educational attainment and on the importance of reading and writing for language development. Ingrid will also discuss the strategies second language speakers adopt to manage communication in Swedish. Briefing from Ingrid on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)

12.00 Lunch

13.00–15.00 Concrete examples of how to support language development at work *Catarina Persson*

Catarina leads a seminar where the group tests different types of oral communication skills in role play. The group then discusses the extent to which the dialogues tested in the role plays are supportive of language development: how could we change the dialogue to be more supportive? The group also works with examples of written communication at work and how to make texts more accessible to second language speakers and those with writing and reading difficulties.

Including coffee at approx. 14.00

15.00–15.30 Discussion in groups about the language- and learning-supportive workplace with reference to the day's expert input.

Assignment to prepare for next gathering: How can the language advocate cooperate with teachers and reflective discussion leaders?

15.30–16.00 Mid-point programme evaluation and close.

Day 4

9.00–10.45 Examples of effective and ineffective interactions *Ingela Tykesson*

Ingela explores the concept of communicative competence, using examples from interactions between supermarket checkout operators and their customers. (It's all about attitude!) Ingela also gives examples of interaction between care assistants and care recipients and shares her experience of working to create ways to support language development in care work.

Including coffee at 10.00

11.45–11.15 Reflection and discussion after Ingela's lecture: identifying examples of communicative competence.

11.15–12.00 Project work follow-up: participant discussion and reflection on homework assignment

Project work: How is it going in your workplace?

Reflections on Ingrid Skeppsted's input on the CEFR. How can we use the language scale as a tool later on?

Activity from Catarina Persson

12.00 Lunch

13.00 Developing writing skills *Eva Stilling*

15.30 Close

Homework assignment: Follow-up on project work. Written task for next gathering related to communication in sensitive situations. Note: Instructions for written account prepared by Gunlög Sundberg (responsible for expert input on Day 5)

Day 5

9.00–11.00 Sensitive communicative situations – how to handle them linguistically *Gunlög Sundberg*

Gunlög gives examples of sensitive spoken and written communication situations at work, including situations when you have to be polite or careful, for example when you make a request or when you send an e-mail. How to write in these situations. Examples are taken from *Handbok i svenska som andraspråk [Handbook for Swedish as an additional language]*

Participants bring the homework assignment from Gunlög (see Day 4 homework assignment)

The objective of the session is to give examples of spoken expressions that you can use when caution is needed in various sensitive situations at work

11.00–12.00 Group discussions

12.00 Lunch

13.00–16.00 Care work taboos. How we talk to each other in care work. *Kerstin Sjösvärd*.

Day 6

9.00–12.00 Communication in elderly care. *Mats Landqvist*

12.00 Lunch

13.00–13.50 Developing writing skills: follow-up and extension with activities *Eva Stilling*

15.30–16.00 Programme evaluation and close