

Could you take your clothes off

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How well do you need to speak the local language? Dr. Sibylle Plassmann, a linguist of Telc, studied this for foreign doctors who are going to work in Germany*. Many hospital colleagues (including physicians, management and staff) are not convinced of the need for a doctor to master the local language. A short overview of the conceptions of the colleagues followed by the response of the researcher*:

- “Doctors should just do their job” ... but for doctors language is a fundamental tool
- “Doctors need Greek, Latin and English” ... but the patients language is German
- “Doctors only need technical medical language” ... but how do you tell a patient to take their clothes off and other sensitive things (and stay polite)
- “Doctors need straight forward language” ... but doctors need to use different varieties of speech that differ per context
- “Doctors do not write” ... but documentation takes more and more time
- “Language learning is easy for doctors” ... is it? Even doctors need more than just three months to reach language comprehension at level C1

The initial conceptions have been refuted by the research data and based on the research the German health system now has a fit-for-purpose language test for foreign doctors. To the satisfaction of all stakeholders.

Do you really know how well workers need to speak the official language in your company in order to work safely? And is this a conception or researched fact? Global Work Talk would love to hear your example.

* *ALTE 5th International Conference, 10 – 11 april 2014, Paris*

- See more at: http://global-work-talk.eu/blog_detail.php?blogId=36#sthash.zwQfqDmo.dpuf