



Universität
Basel

Research Project

Intercultural Relationships at Work

Project funded by own resources

Project title Intercultural Relationships at Work

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Organisation / Research unit

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Workplaces constitute spaces of encounters, where individuals meet, interact and collaborate with diverse others, often with little control over who these others are. Given the large amount of time most people spend at work, these relationships are crucial for employee wellbeing and job satisfaction, and effect both individual and organisational performance. Many people form close ties and friendships with their colleagues, and in an intercultural setting there is an immense potential for intercultural growth and learning through these relationships. On the other hand, relationships can also become problematic or even toxic, featuring discriminatory or bullying behaviour, with detrimental effects on the individual as well as their perception of intercultural relations more broadly.

Drawing on research in intercultural communication, workplace discourse, organisational behaviour and social psychology, this research project takes a pragmatic approach to intercultural relationships at work and examines how work relationships are negotiated through linguistic means, highlighting the multi-faceted, diverse and complex sets of relationships individuals navigate daily at work, and the crucial role these relationships play for workers' ability to complete tasks and function well as an organization.

The project explores this through analysing different types of workplace interactions including: Social support in the workplace and workplace friendships; Power negotiations in meetings and work encounters; Micro-aggressions and discriminatory behaviour in the workplace; and Interactions via different communication modes (face-to-face or online). Through an in-depth exploration of these interactions, this project will contribute to our nuanced understanding of the negotiation of relationships in the workplace, showcasing the tensions that workers often need to navigate between the social and the transactional, and the considerable and shifting relational work that this requires across the variety of interactional activities that occur in workplaces, while highlighting the critical role culture and interlocutor perceptions play in these negotiations.

Keywords interpersonal pragmatics, intercultural interactions, workplaces, professional communication, interpersonal relationships

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