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Audiodeel

(Interview met Leon de Stadler)

Intro

I am the director of the language centre where I do both teaching and I have an administrative task, as director. And in the centre we run a number of units, one of them being the unit for document design, which explains why I am in Nijmegen at the moment, because in this particular department, document design is one of the important topics. So I teach a course in Nijmegen on intercultural aspects of document design.

- 1 Could you tell us something about this field of study – document design?

Document design, as, as the name would suggest is, is about creating effective documents. In a sense our lives are governed by documents.

I asked a question of a, a, a number of people from a private company the other day, when we were doing a workshop – I asked them, 'How much time do you spend either creating or reading documents?' And the percentage ranged somewhere between fifty-five and ninety percent. W-, Which is quite something to think about because that would mean that this particular company is spending that amount of, of, of money.

The field that I work in is an applied field where a number of other fields combine forces – for instance text linguistics, psychology, the business sciences, of course.

It's a field that's gaining a lot of ground at moment, both in, in, in the States and Europe, and now, fortunately in, in South Africa as well.

- 2 Could you give an example of the research that you are engaged in at present?

I have just written up a case that I sent to one of our journals this morning where I dealt with a policy document of a certain company – that was the case. And the policy document was really badly written.

And we did a focus group research project on this one single document, and what it boiled down to was that the document created such a large amount of dissension among the people in the company. They had a number of meetings for instance, they spoke to management, they had telephone calls, they – and in the end this document cost the particular company in South Africa more than a quarter million Rand in man and woman hours and so on.

- 3 Would you say that the case you described is pretty unique?

When you start analysing documents especially in, in, in institutions, – private institutions and public institutions – are that more often than not, they have a ... problem somewhere in them.

There is a solution. But the solution implies ... that, that you need knowledge at, at a, at a number of different levels. In our country for instance, in South Africa, a document designer should have very good knowledge of the intercultural differences that we have between the different peoples living in South Africa. Because quite often they think differently, they view things differently and if you do not take that into consideration then ... you will have problems.

I've been to The States a few months ago and even in this very sort of first-world, where people are highly trained, they still have problems. Communication is difficult.