**The Human Value Proposition – presentation**

# Between Words and Body: Results from a study on psychomotor physiotherapists experiences from multilingual and multicultural communication

Associate professor Randi Havnen and Master Vilde Bagøien

Oslo Metropolitan University

## Abstract

This presentation is based on results from master dissertation, spring 2026, and work in progress co-writing an article connected to the findings.

Increasing linguistic and cultural diversity in Norway challenges communication and interaction in healthcare services. In Norwegian psychomotor physiotherapy treatment is grounded in the integration of bodily, relational, and experiential processes. Language barriers and cultural differences may complicate the development of shared understanding between therapist and patient.

This study explore how psychomotor physiotherapists facilitate when aiming for establishing mutual understanding in treatment situations across linguistic and cultural frameworks.

The study employed a qualitative design with a hermeneutic-phenomenological orientation. Data consisted of five semi-structured interviews with psychomotor physiotherapists working in primary care. Interviews focused on experiences of establishing understanding with patients across linguistic and cultural differences, both with and without interpreters. Data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2022). The findings was discussed in relation to research on interpreter-mediated interaction and knowledge of the interpreting profession, reflecting an interdisciplinary perspective.

The findings suggest that linguistic and cultural differences create challenges that extend beyond language, often resulting in a lack of shared understanding. Verbal agreement does not necessarily indicate shared meaning, creating uncertainty in clinical assessment and treatment decisions. Interpreters facilitate access to patients' narratives and experiences but also alter communication dynamics by redistributing responsibility and introducing new uncertainties. When language provides limited access to patients' experiences, therapists rely more heavily on the body as a source of clinical information, communication, and relational connection. This increases the therapist's interpretive responsibility and may risk attributing meanings not fully grounded in the patient's perspective.

The study indicates that understanding emerges through a dynamic interplay of linguistic, bodily, and relational processes, requiring continuous interpretation, professional judgement and careful balancing of power in such interactions – in other words, reflexive practice and knowledge based exercising of professional discretion.

## References

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2022). Thematic analysis: a practical guide. SAGE.