



Alternative Ways to Learn a (Second) Language Toolkit Manual

Belgium
France
Germany
The Netherlands

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1. Preface

Welcome to our website and thank you for taking an interest in the manual of our toolkit.

In this manual you will find general information about our project, guidelines for the use of this toolkit, specific tips & tricks and extensive background information. We sometimes refer to articles with information resulting from research and our own experiences. Although this information is not required to use the toolkit, it might help you to set up good language lessons. You can use this manual as a reference, according to your needs.

We hope you will enjoy reading and working with our toolkit!

2. Project description

2.1. What?

The Alternative Ways to Learn a (Second) Language (AW) project aims to offer a toolkit consisting of experiential and creative informal learning tools brought together in [6 Stepping Stones](#). These Stepping Stones are primarily intended to enhance and stimulate pleasure in learning (fun), increasing self-confidence and communicating. This creates the conditions for further learning (e.g. a language).

This alternative and innovative toolkit enables you, as instructor, to create tailor-made lessons for adults who have difficulty in learning a language using formal learning tools. However, the informal tools in this toolkit are also great fun and suitable for everyone else who wants to learn a language.

What is 'Alternative' in this toolkit:

- This toolkit is based on [8 neuroscientific principles](#).
- These 8 neuroscientific principles are the base for the creation of [6 Stepping Stones](#).
- Every Stepping Stone consists of many experiential and creative exercises, in which working with the mind, the body the heart and the senses are strongly connected.
- By using and combining exercises from each Stepping Stone, all different learning styles are covered.
- No book is used and the tables and chairs are often put aside.

2.2. Why?

Whilst working with different language-groups, both in formal and informal ways, the partners in the Alternative Ways project experienced that there is a significant number of learners that succeeds in learning a new language. However, they also noticed that the drop-out rate is relatively high. It is because of this high drop-out rate that we started this project and developed the toolkit.

Some of the learners who have dropped out never or barely went to school, not even in their own country, and are illiterate or low-literate in their own language as well. In addition to this, some suffer from psychological problems (like a depression or Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome). Others deal with physiological problems or are suffering from learning disabilities (like dyslexia or other cognitive difficulties).

Based on our experience in working with learners who are dealing with these problems we can state that it is often not the learner's intelligence that blocks him or her. More often than that a mismatch between their learning skills and the learning tools that are used to teach them is the culprit. We believe that learners who face the aforementioned challenges are in need of high quality, structured language learning tools that imply informal teaching. That is why we, the partners in this project, decided to join forces in a project in which we could share our knowledge and tools and to develop together a toolkit for which informal learning is the starting point, involving tools we know from our experience to be effective.

2.3. By who?

This toolkit has been developed by GO! onderwijs van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap (Belgium), Elan Interculturel (France), Arbeit und Leben NRW (Germany), De Talentenschool (The Netherlands) and Storytelling Centre (The Netherlands).

The project is co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

2.4. For whom?

This toolkit aims primarily at instructors (primary target group), both beginners and experienced, who work with the secondary target group. These can be (language) teachers, educators, coaches, but also volunteers. In the design of this toolkit we enable every instructor to create his or her own tailor-made (series) of lesson(s).

A few examples: the volunteer at the neighbourhood centre, the language teacher at a formal language school, the sports teacher who wants to incorporate language into his / her lesson, et cetera.

→ [Read more about 'Inclusion of volunteers'](#).

The secondary target group are adults who want to and/or have to learn a new language but have difficulty learning that language using formal learning tools. However, the informal tools in this toolkit are also great fun and suitable for anyone who wants to learn a language.

A few examples: a person who has been in a country for 20 years but never had to learn the language before, a newcomer, an expat, et cetera.

→ [Read more about 'Second language learning for adults'](#).

Part of this group consists of refugees. We have collected and created some background information about the particularities of this specific group based on research and various studies.

→ [Read more about 'The particularities of the situation of refugees'](#).

2.5. How did we develop this toolkit?

We developed our informal language learning tools by doing research, using our own experiences and knowledge and by testing the result: a toolkit that consists of profound background information, guidelines and exercises that are very useful in (series of) language lessons for adults who want to and/or have to learn a new language.

The first draft of the toolkit was tested extensively by the first target group in each partner's country. Based on their feedback and the outcomes of these tests we improved the toolkit and developed the final version which is suitable for different language levels and tailored to the particular features of the secondary target group.

3. How to use this toolkit?

3.1. Guidelines

In this chapter we will give you some directions on how to use this toolkit. But first, we would like to point out what you can find in it. This toolkit consists of the following 'parts':

1. Manual (*you are in the manual right now*)

In the manual you can find:

- Project description: general information about the project
- How to use this toolkit?: guidelines for the use of the Stepping Stones, exercises and elaborated themes
- Tips & Tricks: for the instructors
- Background information about language learning and social-emotional skills

2. Stepping Stones

This toolkit consists of experiential and creative informal learning tools brought together in [6 Stepping Stones](#) that are primarily intended to enhance and stimulate pleasure in learning and communicating. This offers you, as instructor, different tools to compose a lesson according to your own insight and experience in order to stimulate the learners and create the conditions for further learning (e.g. a language).

The 6 Stepping Stones are:

- Teambuilding & Empowerment
- Art & Culture
- Media (audio/video/images)
- Body, Movement & Senses
- Expert & On The Go
- Storytelling

The basis of the 6 Stepping Stones is formed by a variety of neuroscientific principles which we consider to be very important and which have a positive effect on the learning process of the learners.

1. Create a positive learning environment
2. Stimulate attention
3. Move the body and feed it
4. Include positive emotion triggers
5. Talk about topics relevant to the learners
6. Let the learner recodify in her/his own words what s-he has learned
7. Evaluate through immediate feedback
8. Reinforce information

We believe that the 6 Stepping Stones are the ideal mix to provide a lesson that takes into account the group process and dynamics, the participants' different learning styles and especially non-traditional learning tools. The 6 Stepping Stones are interconnected. Combining exercises from these six parts provides a basis for a lesson or a series of lessons, but the stones can perfectly be used separately and interchangeably in a language programme. It is our intention to offer you as many exercises as possible from which you can choose as they see fit for your lesson(s).

The Stepping Stones are described separately in the next paragraph.

3. Exercises

In every [Stepping Stone](#) we have collected a great variety of exercises, in which working with the mind, the body, the heart and the senses are strongly connected. In order to simplify their use, we have labelled them. As a result you now can see at a glance for what purpose the exercise can be and how long it will take. The labels also indicate which language skills, linguistic competences and social-emotional skills and competences the learners will develop with the exercise.

The labels are:

- Social-emotional skills and competences: communication skills, cultural awareness/expression and identity formation, digital competences, empowerment, fun, imagination/creativity and learning to learn, intercultural understanding, narrative thinking.
- Language skills: speaking and listening, reading and writing.
- Linguistic competences: grammar, vocabulary, spelling, sentence construction, rhyme/poetry, expressions/sayings, memory, oral language skills (monologue and conversation) and pronunciation.
- Online proof (for digital teaching).

→ [Read more about 'the labels in Chapter 5 and the Foundation Bricks'](#).

We challenge you to combine different exercises from each Stepping Stone to create the ideal (serie of) lesson(s) in the time available!

4. Elaborated Themes

Besides the central part of the toolkit, [the Stepping Stones](#), we have also by way of example developed a series of lessons for [6 themes](#). These so-called elaborated thematic lessons can be useful for those of you who do not have a lot of experience with the target group yet, or can serve as inspiration for the more experienced instructors. To every theme we added exercises from each of the 6 Stepping Stones. When you follow the steps, you can be sure you deliver a strong and varied (series of) lesson(s) which will help the learners to learn a new language in an informal and alternative way.

5. Tips & Tricks

We can recommend the Tips & Tricks section, which offers lots of useful information, based on research and our own experiences with the ways in which adults learn better, intercultural learning, working with and in groups, methods and various instructors' attitudes.

6. Background information

For those of you who would like to have more background information before designing your own lesson(s), for example about teaching this specific target group, we have added a chapter providing for this.

Please, do feel free to use the toolkit to your needs and – even more important – to the needs of the learners. That is what we designed the toolkit for!

Last but not least: If you have experienced that a specific exercise works better after you have adjusted it or have used it in another way: please, let us know. We are always open to improving the tools we have developed for you!

3.2. Stepping Stones

In this paragraph we describe the [6 Stepping Stones](#) separately. These Stepping Stones are primarily intended to enhance and stimulate pleasure in learning (fun), increasing self-confidence and communicating. This creates the conditions for further learning (e.g. a language). Under each Stepping Stone we have brought together many experiential and creative exercises, in which working with the mind, the body, the heart and the senses are strongly connected.

3.2.1. Teambuilding & Empowerment

We underline the importance of teambuilding. If you do not manage to build a strong team, your lesson(s) will be an agony. That is why we strongly advise you to spend sufficient time on teambuilding exercises, certainly when you are working with groups in which mutual trust is not a given fact. It is obvious that creating a positive environment will stimulate the learners in the process of learning a language.

We make the following rough distinction in the teambuilding exercises and activities:

- Exercises focusing on the creation of a safe environment
- Exercises focusing on collaboration
- Exercises focusing on building trust

In the toolkit you will find a variety of exercises (teasers) you can use to build a team and to empower the learners in a creative and meaningful way. We advise you to start every lesson with a teaser to inspire and challenge the learners in their learning process.

➔ [Read more about 'Teambuilding & Empowerment'.](#)

3.2.2. Art & Culture

It is important to use different tools when teaching a language. Working with art and culture expressions is one of them. A visit to a museum can not only serve to learn words in a different way, but also to give the learners more information about the country and the culture in which they now live. Also, focusing on a work of art during a lesson can contribute to an increase of the learners' vocabulary in a creative way. The same applies to the use of music during the learning process. Listening to music as well as making music requires brain activities other than via a regular language lesson. Music stimulates emotions which has a positive effect on the learning process.

Theatre is also an excellent medium for learning a language in a informal way. Performing a play in a foreign language enables a learner to play a character in a particular situation. When it comes to an already written play, one needs to learn the lines and understand their meaning, including the meaning of the separate words. Thus the learner enriches his/her vocabulary, which afterwards will make expressing oneself easier. Also an improvisation theatre course helps to enrich one's vocabulary.

Art & Culture will stimulate attention in the learning process by learners in an alternative way!

- [Read more about 'Museum'](#).
- [Read more about 'Theatre'](#).
- [Read more about 'Music'](#).

3.2.3. Media (audio/video/images)

People learn in different ways, but it is well known that visual cues help to retrieve and remember information (new words) better. This makes sense when you consider the fact that our brain is mainly an image-processor. Therefore, when teaching a new language, oral explanation with direct support of images (pictures, illustrations, symbols, video, et cetera) works best.

Not only visuals help learners in learning a new language, but as stated before, music is also a very good and pleasant tool to use. Every language has its own phonological system marked by its rhythm, intonations and accents. Music promotes the perception of sounds and therefore helps to become acquainted with foreign sounds.

The role of e-learning (learning with the help of information and communication technology) in language learning is becoming increasingly important. E-learning will always be part of the learning process, because it enables learners to study outside the 'classroom' and thus they can spend more time on their studies. A combination of face to face and e-learning has our preference.

- [Read more about 'The power of images'](#).
- [Read more about 'Music'](#).
- [Read more about 'E-learning'](#).

3.2.4. Body, Movement & Senses

Studies of the positive effect of movement and sports on the functions of the brain have shown that the positive hormones that are triggered by physical activity promote learning processes. Differentiated motion and sensory experiences support the connection of the cells in the human brain, enabling the processing of information.

Performing movement exercises ("We all jump left off the chair!") encourages accurate speaking and listening. Pantomime, in which words, sentences or stories are depicted, can also improve language proficiency.

Another way to help learners learn a language is the multisensory learning method. This method not only helps them to learn a language, but also to become familiar with new cultural codes and new culturally defined mind-sets. Using their senses will strengthen their long-term memory and ensure that what has been learned remains in place.

Knocking on all sensory doors has a significant impact on language learning. Let's hear, see, smell, taste and feel new languages and cultures!

- [Read more about 'Sports and language'](#).
- [Read more about 'Multisensory learning'](#).

3.2.5. Expert & On The Go

Tell me, I will forget.

Show me, I will remember it.

Let me experience it, I will make it my own...

- Confucius

The exercises 'on the go' are based on playful and contextual learning. This methodology assumes that people learn more effectively if the learning is linked to a specific situation or experience. It is been known for some time that motivation, enjoyment and a connection to the 'real world' influence learning tremendously.

People learn a language because they need it to communicate with others and achieve their goals. One learns a language by using it and having fun with it. Learning a language without context is not conducive to successful language learning.

Learners will learn more effectively when new knowledge is linked to 'previous' knowledge. Especially in the context of work you can stimulate the learners to combine their new knowledge to the words they already know and apply the newly learned words directly to their working environment.

Another example of contextual learning is to invite an expert in a certain field or profession in which the learners have shown an interest. They can prepare for such a visit, including by preparing questions.

- [Read more about 'On the go'.](#)
- [Read more about 'Learning at the workplace'.](#)

3.2.6. Storytelling

According to many storytellers, but also to a growing number of educators, storytelling is a 'complete' tool to develop language skills. It deals with almost all aspects of language learning: grammar, vocabulary, structure and rhythm and it can be used for the development of listening and understanding skills as well as verbal and reading skills. If used properly, it can even contribute to the development of writing skills.

Working with stories is a very clear and strong example of chunking (the process of taking individual pieces of information and grouping them together according to some logic), mainly for enriching one's vocabulary but also for teaching grammar. By telling a story you offer words in a context and structure, which makes it easier for a learner to remember them. Also, if the story is accessible for the learner (in accordance with his/her language skills), he or she will remember not only the narrative, but also the meaning of the words and their place in the sentence. This allows the learner to learn a language faster.

We have experienced the power of storytelling for the learning process, which is why it is one of the main tools we offer in the Alternative Ways toolkit. You will find various storytelling exercises in the toolkit.

- [Read more about 'Storytelling as a transversal approach'.](#)

3.3. Elaborated themes

If you do not have much time and/or experience yet, you can use these [elaborated theme](#) lessons. We have made a selection of different exercises from each of the [6 Stepping Stones](#) per theme, that offers a variety of informal learning tools and take into account the learners' different learning styles. Thus, Alternative Ways are guaranteed!

Themes:

- Communication
- Food
- Me & My family
- Time
- Transport
- Work & Money

We chose these themes, because they are very useful in the context of the different participating countries. The thematic lessons are explicitly intended as examples. It is possible to link the exercises to other themes than the 6 mentioned above, such as health or friendship. The choice of a theme is up to you and will be partly determined by the group of learners you are dealing with.

4. Tips&Tricks

In this chapter you will find tips & tricks based on research and our own experiences gained in workshops and other types of teaching environments. They have to do with the ways in which adults learn better, intercultural learning, working with and in groups, methods and the attitude of you as an instructor. To some of you this might be common knowledge, but for others it might be useful to read this chapter before starting a lesson.

4.1. How do people learn better?

The group you work with consists of adults who want to and/or have to learn a new language but have difficulty learning that language using formal learning tools.

In this paragraph we want to emphasize the importance of knowing and understanding how this particular group learns and what they need to develop their language learning skills.

Below we will give you some tips and extra background information including some tricks.

1. Build up a warm and welcoming atmosphere based on trust and respect. In a positive learning environment, the brain is more likely to release endorphins, which stimulate the frontal lobes of the brain: the thinking command centre.
2. Offer information in limited segments spread over a longer teaching period. Newness is attractive to the brain and by offering it in small amounts this will increase the learners' attention and their capacity to remember. To optimize their learning process, you should switch between different types of tasks during short timed intervals.
3. Facilitate positive emotional triggers during your lesson. This will improve the learners' learning ability.
4. Make sure your students get enough water, oxygen – by exercising two short minutes – and glucose. Human brains need these three elements to function optimal.
5. Use relevant subjects that the learners can link to their own lives and to previous knowledge.
6. Let the learners reproduce the information in their own words. They will remember much better what they have produced themselves.
7. Reinforce information. Present the same information in different ways and in as many varied contexts of learning processes as possible in order to consolidate the information in the long-term memory.
8. Evaluate through immediate feedback.

These 8 neuroscientific principles form the basis of our toolkit.

→ [Read more about 'Neuroeducation: basis of the learning process'.](#)

9. Most of the time you will be dealing with a group of learners whose learning abilities and levels of knowledge will differ. Use multiple tools, different working methods and creativity in your lesson(s) in order to give the learners the right tools to acquire and develop skills. Mix and match the exercises in our toolkit!

→ [Read more about 'Different learning styles'.](#)

→ [Read more about 'The need to use a diversity of methods and approaches'.](#)

→ [Read more about 'Adaptation to personal needs'.](#)

10. Ask if the learners are familiar with the formal European school system. This can help you to get an indication of the learners' knowledge and the necessity of adjusting your lesson(s). This may imply more explanation of the objectives and the structure of your lesson(s).

→ [Read more about 'Challenges'](#).

4.2. Intercultural learning

The learners in your group are probably learning a new language as part of their integration process. They are new in the country and are inevitably exposed to intercultural situations and relationships. Their learning process goes beyond just learning a new language. It will most likely also include learning how to shop, what to wear according to the climate, how to seek for healthcare, how to interact with people from various (ethnic) backgrounds, et cetera. By learning the language, they certainly will be better equipped for life in their new country, but to fully integrate they will need to understand all sorts of cultural aspects as well and be willing to learn how to deal with their own and this new culture, which in today's society is a combination of various cultures.

This is the reason why we strongly recommend intercultural education: a comprehensive educational approach that allows to develop one's willingness and ability to live in a diverse society. Thus, the learners and yourself will be better equipped for the challenges of life to come.

Below we will give you some tips and extra background information including some tricks.

11. Give the learners access to the local culture by giving them tools by which they can comprehend the local culture. For example: use literature, poems, music, sports, voluntary work from your country.
12. Respect individuality and diversity, approach everyone's culture positively and meet 'the other' equally. This will add value to the language learning process.

→ [Read more about 'Intercultural Learning'](#).

4.3. Working with and in groups

We believe that collaborative working (working in groups) is the most effective and beneficial way of conveying knowledge in a learning process. Working collaboratively contributes both to the development of mastering a new language as to the personal development of the learners.

Below we collected some tips, information and tricks to facilitate and encourage this collaborating process and on how to deal with emotions and disabilities.

13. Create a safe environment by doing some exercises with the entire group. Also make some agreements with the group to build mutual trust. Three fundamental agreements are:
 - All that is said within the walls of the classroom will stay there unless permission to share with someone outside the training space is explicitly requested and given.

- A person who shares a personal story is the owner of that story. No one is allowed to share it without this/her explicit permission.
- Everybody, including you as instructor, is equal. Some people might have a specific role, but that does not make them more important than others. The group agrees to respect and obey the responsibilities that come with the role.

You could write these agreements on a flip chart and place them in a clearly visible place in the room.

14. Get out of your comfort zone and show some vulnerability. You have to be prepared to come out of your comfort zone yourself. If you ask the learners to act silly, you have to be willing and able to act silly yourself. If you ask the learners to tell a personal story, you have to be willing to share something personal and show some vulnerability as well.
15. Do exercises to build trust and to encourage collaboration (25% of the whole (series of) lesson(s)). We stress the importance of preparing this step with dedication. These exercises will familiarise you with the group and its dynamics as well.
16. Guarantee equality. In every aspect of the lesson you have to be careful not to bias too much to one side and to keep the common ground and interest always in mind.
17. You should be aware of the fact that you are (most of the time) no therapist and should be sensible enough to refer the learner to an expert if strong emotions evoke.
18. Never allow a situation to happen in which a disabled learner (mentally or physically) cannot join and has to sit aside. At the same time, never compel a learner to participate to a game or an activity if they are not willing to. This project is about inclusion for all!
19. Build in some flexibility in your lesson. Keep in mind that you have to build in quite some flexibility and that you are prepared to change the program on the spot if the dynamic in the group ask for it.
20. Work with relatively small groups, so you can give the learners the attention they need and to create an optimal group dynamic.

→ [Read more about 'Working with and in groups'](#).

4.4. Methods

Learners in your class probably have a diverse range of learning abilities and different levels of knowledge. This is why it is really important to use multiple tools, working methods and creativity in your lesson in order for the learners to acquire and develop skills.

We have collected some information about the use of experiential and creative tools to learn a language, like 'laugh and play', 'role play', 'collaborative learning' and 'peer to peer learning' and some tips and tricks.

21. Make learning fun! When you use various activities that make learning engaging and fun, learners are more willing to participate and take risks. Having fun while learning also helps learners to remember information because the process is enjoyable (it triggers positive emotions) and thus memorable.
22. Work with nice and entertaining games, songs, theatre tools or role plays to encourage learners to interact and to relieve the pressure they often feel to speak perfectly.

→ [Read more about 'Laugh and play' and 'Role play'](#).

23. Working in groups contributes both to mastering a new language as to the personal development of the learners. Examples of collaborative learning are: working together in smaller groups, learning from each other and working together towards one goal. Everybody can do what suits him/her best and contributes to the tasks the group needs to perform.
24. Facilitate peer to peer learning and feedback sessions. It helps people to develop their self-confidence and language skills, to being critical in a constructive way and to collaborate.

→ [Read more about 'Collaborative learning'](#).

4.5. Attitude of the instructor

We have a lot of tips that will help you to become a good instructor for these specific language lessons. These tips are based on our own experiences as instructors and on working with this specific target group.

Before the lesson

25. Make sure your classroom is ready for the learners. Are there enough tables and chairs? Do you have all the material you need? Is the room clean and inviting? Is coffee and tea available? You have only one chance to make a good first impression.
26. Be aware that you are the role model! if you expect certain behaviour from the learners, show them that behaviour yourself.

Welcome and introduction

27. Greet the learners when they enter the classroom and welcome everyone before you start your lesson. You could consider using name cards.
28. Explain the purpose of your lesson, the program, what time you will start, have a break and will end the lesson. And ask the learners to switch their phones off.
29. Tell everyone that it is okay to make mistakes, that this is part of the learning process.
30. Do a check-in. Check how everyone is doing, what their expectations are, if they want to learn something specific?

During the lesson

31. Reward good behaviour and show appreciation for a learner's input.
32. Give the learners the opportunity to ask questions.
33. Set the example. It will make it easier for the learners to enter the activity and to understand the rules.
34. Emphasize contact, enjoyment, relaxation and accessibility.
35. When you talk to the group or to one learner look people in the eyes.
36. Speak and articulate clearly.
37. Don't correct all the time.
38. Repeat your sentence, question or answer when you suspect a learner does not understand you or when a learner says s-he does not. If s-he also does not understand it the second time, try to reformulate your sentence, question or answer.

End of the lesson

39. Ask if there are any questions or uncertainties.
40. End your lesson with a short evaluation. Ask the learners if they have enjoyed the lesson. Did it meet their expectations? Do they have tips for the next time? What do they take home?
41. Write down the learners' feedback, using their words. By asking for feedback from the learners you involve them and the feedback will be useful for improving your lesson(s).
42. Use WhatsApp to stay in touch with the learners outside the classroom. This medium helps to communicate, participate, motivate, collaborate and enhances your digital competences and those of the learners.
 - Send an inspiring, accessible, funny reminder before you start a training
 - Share pictures of the notes on the blackboard
 - Use voice messages to practice pronunciation
 - Share links, images, music, video's, etc. before or after each training.

5. Background information about language and social-emotional skills and competences

The language and social-emotional skills and competences we discuss in this chapter are important, because they play a significant role in the language learning process in general and in that of adults who have difficulty learning a language using formal learning tools in particular. In teaching these adults you have to take into account the different skills and competences that are needed to learn a language. Besides it is important to differ as much as possible in your lesson(s) to challenge the learners to develop a variety of skills and competences. By means of labels we have indicated for each exercise which skills and competences will be strengthened by doing them. In case you would like to know more about one or all the different skills and competences, we have inserted a link to an article which will provide more background information.

5.1. Social-emotional skills and competences

In addition to the language skills which we describe elsewhere in the manual, we would like to emphasize the importance of the development of social-emotional skills and competences in the process of learning a new language. These skills and competences are related to cultural awareness, empowerment, identity formation and social relations. We have selected a number of social-emotional skills and competences that we believe are best suited to the toolkit we offer and more specifically to the storytelling tool we use. We will describe our selection very briefly in the following paragraphs. All of these skills and competences are connected to our exercises. You can select exercises according to the needs and wishes of the learners and create your own tailor-made lesson(s).

5.1.1. Communication skills

Teaching learners a new language in an informal way and using storytelling tools in particular will offer learners great opportunities to become acquainted with new words and their significance. This enhances the process of understanding the 'sense of a story', encourages exploration and experimentation with a language (words, sounds, intonation, rhythm) and can be an aid in developing reading and writing skills.

5.1.2. Cultural awareness, expression and identity formation

In the process of learning a new language, a new culture, new people, customs, values and historical background, it is very important to investigate how one has become the person one is today. This will provide insight into what one thinks is important and valuable to him or her. Expressing yourself by sharing stories makes you aware of your own culture, customs, values and historical background. This might also give insight into (the value of) cultures and cultural perspectives of others and can foster empathy, cultural understanding and a sense of belonging to a community.

5.1.3. Digital competences

In a time in which digital competences are more important than ever before we thought it would be wise to include digital competences in our toolkit as well. Not only do the exercises involve working with the internet or social media to retrieve, assess, store, produce, present and exchange information, we also recommend the use of social media like WhatsApp to stay in

touch with the learners outside the classroom. You can use this medium to communicate, participate, motivate, collaborate and to enhance the digital competences of yourself and the learners.

5.1.4. Empowerment

We underline the importance of empowering the learners in a creative and meaningful way. Empowering is about getting to know yourself, gaining more self-confidence and getting more self-direction. Empowering the learners will help them to better participate in your lesson(s), and also in society.

5.1.5. Fun

This is not the first time we say this and it will not be the last time: make learning fun! When you use various activities that make learning engaging and fun, learners are more willing to participate and take risks. An enjoyable and memorable learning process also helps learners to better retain information.

5.1.6. Imagination, creativity and learning to learn

By developing their imagination learners can come up with new and inventive ideas which may contribute to their self-confidence and personal motivation to accomplish their hopes and dreams. Working with storytelling tools really helps to develop and use one's imagination and creativity, both by telling a story and by listening to one.

Learning to learn has to do with taking risks and not being afraid of being vulnerable in a group. That is why it is essential to create a safe environment. Learning to learn is about adapting oneself constantly, trying new things, not being afraid of making mistakes and practicing all these efforts every day.

5.1.7. Intercultural understanding

Other than in 'Cultural awareness, expression and identity formation', in which we focus on the learners' exploration of their own cultural roots, in this paragraph we emphasize the exploration and understanding of the cultural roots of the people in their new 'home country'. You, as instructor, will play an important role in this, because you are one of those people. By sharing personal stories or by doing exercises which are connected to customs, values and the history of your country, you will give the learners insight into your culture and cultural perspectives and by doing so foster their empathy, cultural understanding and sense of belonging to a community. It develops curiosity and motivation to learn a new language and it increases awareness of diversity, identity and self-consciousness.

5.1.8. Narrative thinking

Every (short) story is a narrative and its structure reflects the way we give meaning to (or make sense of) personal experiences. Offering content through narratives is considered to be beneficial to the learning process in many ways. It acts as a 'sense making tool', supports the imagination and capacity to memorize and contributes to identity development.

5.2. Speaking and listening

Speaking and listening are central skills in learning a language, which are in line with each other. Being able to speak and understand a language gives people more self-confidence and pleasure. If you master a language, you can play with it and make serious matters more manageable. Speaking and listening not only offer learners understanding, but also a lot of social-emotional benefits. The toolkit contains many exercises in which both speaking and listening are stimulated in a creative way.

5.3. Reading and writing

Reading is the basis for writing, for sentence construction and spelling. It is well known that reading is one of the most complex cognitive processes in language learning. In order to be able to read one must first learn to recognise the visual characteristics of letters, then the letters themselves and the order in which they are written before one can recognise the word they form together. Understanding a text largely depends on one's vocabulary.

Adults who have difficulty learning a language, will not be very proficient in reading and writing in the new language. Therefore, the toolkit does not contain many exercises that have reading and writing as their main goal. In the end it might, of course, also for the learners be possible to become readers.

→ [Read more about 'Reading and writing'](#).

5.4. Grammar

To be understood in a new language, mastery of a substantial part of the relevant grammar is essential. Learning the grammar rules of a language is therefore important. For our target group learning the grammar rules might be a bridge too far.

We want learners to be able to communicate, express ideas, experiences and dreams, to tell and share stories without having to worry about grammatical accuracy. Therefore, our toolkit is aimed at language acquisition without putting too much stress, and far less than is the case in more formal language learning methods, on grammar rules.

Nevertheless, in the toolkit, you will find several lessons in which attention is paid to grammar. And, it is important for you, as instructor, to use correct language all the time and never repeat errors.

→ [Read more about 'Grammar'](#).

5.5. Vocabulary

Vocabulary is the collection of words that a language includes, or a person knows. We distinguish two types of word knowledge: qualitative and quantitative. The first is about: how well the learner knows the words, how many significant aspects s-he assigns. The second is about: how many words the learner knows. It is obvious that the more words the learner knows, in both ways, the better s-he can express her/himself: oral expression.

→ [Read more about 'Vocabulary and oral expression'](#).

5.6. Spelling

Error-free spelling is an important skill to express yourself well and correctly on paper and in the digital world. But how do you make sure your students are able to spell correctly? Being able to spell well is important, because spelling mistakes can lead to confusion when others read a text. Also, spelling mistakes lead to a, often negative, judgement about the writer of the text. Pupils who cannot spell well are more likely to feel insecure and therefore write less often. Having the right spelling rules ready for use means that learners have to look up less, so they can better focus on the content of the text. But mastering spelling rules is often not easy, even for native speakers. The toolkit therefore contains simple exercises for a first introduction to spelling in the language to be learned.

5.7. Sentence Construction

Sentence construction is making sentences by combining words. Correct sentence structure is very important. If you make errors in the syntax of sentences, this will seem sloppy to many people. You create the impression that you have paid little attention to your text. So it is smart to check your text for errors in sentence structure. Although learning the right order is not easy for our secondary target group, the toolkit includes exercises that can be played with.

5.8. Rhyme / Poetry

There are many ways to learn a new language, but creativity will always help to have more fun in learning. Playing with rhyme words can help to memorize new words. Speaking rhyme words aloud will stimulate the learning process. They can also be combined with learning by movement. Reading poetry together is a different way to discover a new language. The learners will enjoy finding the meaning of words in a poem and will remember these words better.

In the toolkit you will find specific exercises in which rhyme and poetry are the main method.

5.9. Expressions / sayings

As spices flavor food, idioms color language. It is perfectly fine to use only salt and pepper, it keeps the dish simple and easy for most. Just as it is perfectly fine to use language in a straight way. But if you want to take your cooking to a higher level, spices are useful. In the same way, you make your language more attractive and evocative by adding expressions, metaphors, similes, hyperboles, personifications and other figurative types.

Figurative language evolves from historical and social backgrounds, both in the cultural and personal domain. Exchanging sayings in different languages which describe the same situation is an interesting and instructive exercise. Many times wisdom and humor are involved.

Figurative language can be introduced at all levels, from beginners to advanced learners. Some expressions are easy and universally understood; others need a lot of memorizing. Just as with spices, don't overdo it. Choose idioms directly related to the treated topic or situation. Look them up while preparing your lesson, analyze form and content together, ask if there is an equivalent in the language of the learners, hang nice ones on the wall and use some of the exercises on this site to consolidate them.

5.10. Memory

By playing games with words or expressions you will learn in a different, but effective way. Young children love to play games like Memory; it trains their memory and it is a nice way to learn new words. We work with adults who don't learn a language very easy, using different ways to train their memory is part of our Alternative Ways project. It helps to repeat words in a lesson or in a series of lessons. If you use creative ways to learn and repeat, the students will remember more and have fun in learning new words.

In the toolkit you will find different lessons focused on memorizing words or expressions in the new language.

5.11. Oral language skills

Oral language skills are important to be able to engage in conversations. In the toolkit you will find a variety of exercises about oral expression: group conversations, one to one, storytelling and presenting and debating.

→ [Read more about 'Vocabulary and oral language'](#).

5.12. Pronunciation

Oral skills are crucial in learning a new language. It is very important for adults who come or came from abroad to be able to communicate. One of the central issues is pronunciation. In the lessons we stress you as instructor to help the learners in a friendly way to pronounce the words in a right way. Not to criticize them, but to help them be understood.

In the toolkit almost all the exercises contain speaking tools. Pronunciation is a learning aspect that is present in the whole toolkit.

5.13. Online proof

Because we had to deal with COVID-19 during the development of this cabbage kit, Alternative Ways has been worked with online a lot in recent months. And with success: Many of the exercises in this toolkit prove to be very useful to use online! Also then these exercises connect, they provide an accessible learning environment in which mistakes can be made and learning is a pleasure. Remarkable is how 'Expert & On The Go' online can be a less time consuming yet very inspiring stepping stone than in a physical lesson: you can invite an expert online to tell something or digitally visit a museum. This is now easily achievable and it makes the lessons very dynamic!

General tips for teaching online:

- Share the link to the online environment such as Zoom with the students well in advance.
- Work with an online presentation program such as Power Point, in order to allow the different forms of work to be presented in a natural way.
- genial.ly as a presentation application has two major advantages: after the lesson the link can be shared with the participants, without them having to register. The link is easy to open and therefore easy to work with. It is also very practical that the

trainer can add audio. This can simplify a lot for less literate people and people with low learning skills. Moreover, it is a simple and indispensable tool for practicing pronunciation.

- Don't forget to take a break: digital teaching is, if possible, even more intensive.
- Provide a simple question or small energizer to ensure that participants have something to do if not everyone is online yet.
- Make use of the opportunity to work in break out rooms: people talk easier when they are together or in a small group than in a large online environment.
- In case the emphasis in the lessons is on speaking skills, the trainer can take notes (e.g. via the white board) and later add them to the presentation, which can be shared with the participants.

5.14. Evaluation of the learning

The evaluation (or assessment) of any learning process and of language teaching in particular is important. By thinking about what has been learned, learners remember what they have learned better. Evaluation of the entire learning process offers you, as instructor, the opportunity to monitor your working method and to adjust it where necessary.

An evaluation takes place on different levels. In the toolkit we have ways to evaluate linked to exercises, (e.g. how to end an exercise with an evaluation moment) and to lessons or series of lessons (e.g. asking learners to look back in pairs on what they have learned during a lesson or series of lessons). In paragraph 4.5. we offer a number of tips & tricks to evaluate and conclude a lesson.

In the background information (see the link below) you will find more information about the evaluation of the entire learning process, on a more general level.

→ [Read more about 'Evaluation of the learning'](#).