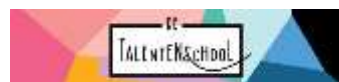




ALTERNATIVE WAYS TO LEARN A SECOND LANGUAGE



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ALTERNATIVE WAYS TO LEARN A SECOND LANGUAGE

Migration has always been part of our common history. In Europe, emigration and immigration has occurred throughout time for all sorts of reasons, be it war, famine or religious persecution. More recently, public attention has been focused on the influx of asylum seekers. After taking care of their basic and most urgent needs, such as finding a community, a place to stay (usually temporary) and dealing with official procedures, asylum seekers or migrants (those with a complex migratory background) often start learning the language and culture of their new 'home' country.

For this reason, many organizations are working with language learning possibility creation. Many newcomers, but also those with an earlier migration history who want to learn the common language of their host country, can benefit from this and learn the language and culture. Some can reach a reasonable level within a year (A2 or B1), which then serves as a good basis for further development.

However, for some of these newcomers, the classical learning method (learning in a classroom, learning from a book, learning grammar rules, etc.) is not easy. Some may be illiterate in their own language and have never had the opportunity to attend school. For this group of people, or for people who have only attended primary school, regular classes can be a great challenge leading to discouragement. The absence of “formal learning” throughout their life, does not of course disqualify all their competences learned by other means, but it does shape their cognitive abilities differently. Focusing on one grammatical subject, in a closed room for two hours, without moving, can be the worst way to learn. There can be a mismatch between their learning skills and the existing learning methods. As a result, this group of people can quickly face the prospect of failure, in terms of language learning and integration process.

The partners in this project have experience in working with this group of people. Although different partners have already developed some alternative learning methods, they see the need for a compilation of high quality, structured, language learning methods for this group with fewer opportunities. This is why they have decided to join forces and start a project in which they can share knowledge and design new tools together, with non-formal learning being the starting point. Thus, the goal of “Alternative Ways” is to develop new, alternative and innovative tools to learning a second language using storytelling and other non-formal learning methods, for students that have difficulties acquiring language skills using the existing formal learning methods.

Before elaborating on these, the partners of this project led some research into adult language learning. Based on this research, they wrote the document, the “Foundation Bricks” of the Alternative Ways project, which answers the following questions:

What is the existing knowledge around how adults learn?

What are the implications of language learning by adults (culturally and neurologically)?

At which stage if any, presently, is there a reflection on non-formal teaching methods?

Because the project does not pretend to invent what has already been worked with in the past, it seemed important to define the clear definition and borders of this project. The present document, is the compilation of all the knowledge acquired by the partners through their experiences and readings, and sets the foundation upon which the “Alternative Ways” toolkit was developed.

The primary target group of this document and of the Alternative Ways project overall is, those professional or volunteer language instructors. This document and the activities created within the project, will serve as a trigger to finding new tools for inclusion in their teaching sessions. The instructors of this target group work with the secondary target group, composed of people who want to/have to learn a new language but who lack the (so called) classical learning skills, to acquire the language through existing formal learning methods. The focus is on refugees and migrants with a complex migratory background, but the activities can be used for the language acquisition of others as well.

Classical education implies and contains a strong connection with neurological processes: How does the brain work, and how does it learn? Non-formal education goes further than this by asking what are some ignored aspects that the brain uses to learn, such as senses, movement and context. Throughout this project, there will be a great many references to neuroscience, as a guideline to the creation of efficient learning tools for the above mentioned group of people, i.e. those of a **low (formal) education background** who will be referred to in this document as “low education background” people or students. Because neuroscience allows us to understand so much about the brain’s functioning and abilities, it seemed relevant to start this compilation of knowledge, with a chapter dealing with what neuroscience can bring to the subject of language learning process and how it justifies the need for non-formal learning tools.

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01

INTRODUCTION: HOW DO PEOPLE LEARN?

1. Neuroeducation: the basis of the learning process (ELAN INTERCULTUREL)

Between 1999 and 2007, the OECD¹ (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) conducted a comprehensive study to answer the question: *'Is there a connection between knowing how the brain works and better learning (for students) or teaching better (for teachers)?'*² The answer was YES. This report is considered to be the official birth certificate of educational neuroscience.

A. What is educational neuroscience?

Educational neuroscience is a relatively new and highly interdisciplinary research front. It relates to the fields of education research, psychology of learning and the neuroscience of learning. Its objective is to improve educational practices by applying findings from brain research.³

Based on this international research, here are some guidelines to teaching according to brain function, in a more efficient and cerebrally friendly way.

B. Advice n°1: create a positive learning environment

When a person feels physically or emotionally threatened, their body releases a hormone called 'cortisol' which has a long term negative impact on the learning process and memory. This is why, teachers and trainers should promote a warm and welcoming classroom ambience based on trust and respect.

¹ <https://usoecd.usmission.gov/our-relationship/about-the-oecd/what-is-the-oecd/>

² OCDE (2007)

³ Bruer (2016)

In a positive learning environment, the brain is more likely to release endorphins, the hormones which are responsible for a sense of euphoria and pleasure and which stimulate the frontal lobes of the brain - the thinking command center. Educators need to diminish different kinds of threats by monitoring classroom policies and their own behavior towards students as well as student-to-student interactions.⁴

C. Advice n°2: stimulate attention

To learn, we need to be attentive and attention is not unlimited. According to Leslie Wilson⁵, whilst children and adults have different attention spans, both are limited. To optimize learning, educators should switch the types of tasks during timed intervals. Teaching in limited segments within a longer overall period increases student attention and retention. For instance, in the case of older students during a 40 minute period, their retention and attention will increase if tasks are divided into 10-20 minute segments. Preadolescents need more frequent changes at 5-10 minute intervals.

Roberto Rosler⁶, who is both a teacher and a neurosurgeon, suggests presenting some curious facts to the learners given that newness is attractive for the brain. The brain stem filters the sensorial information and when it perceives something new, it releases noradrenaline to awaken the brain. Thus, one can use unusual sounds or visual accessories when introducing information to participants.

D. Advice n°3: move your body and feed it

In order to function at optimal levels, the human brain needs a constant supply of water, oxygen and glucose. The lack of any one of these has a negative impact on the learning process⁷. Exercising for two minutes, keeps oxygen flowing to the brain and makes it possible for our brain to generate more neural connections. Furthermore, drinking a glass of water not only hydrates the brain, but delivers the glucose and oxygen in the blood faster to the brain. Finally, eating fresh or dried fruit provides glucose, which is an essential fuel for optimal brain function.

E. Advice n°4: include positive emotional triggers

The brain regions dealing with emotions (amygdala) and memory (hippocampus) are very close and connected. This is the reason why emotions have a strong impact on the learning process (including perception, attention, memory, reasoning and problem solving)⁸.

⁴ Leslie Owen Wilson is a professor in the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point_at <https://thesecondprinciple.com/teaching-essentials/>

⁵ Wilson (1994)

⁶ Rosler (2014)

⁷ Brinke (2015)

⁸ Tyng (2017)

Trainers should facilitate positive emotional triggers during teaching and presenting. Making connections with students' interests, sharing anecdotes and talking about things that are relevant in daily life - these actions will stimulate emotions and improve learning capability.

F. Advice n°5: talk about topics relevant to the learner

Topics must be relevant to the learners, which implies that they can associate the content with important facts for them, facts that can be related to their daily life. This will allow the learners to quickly link the content to previous knowledge. Learners more easily remember information directly connected to their own lives.

G. Advice n°6: let the learner recodify in their own words what they have learned

We generally remember much better what we have produced ourselves. If students can create their own explanation of a newly introduced concept, if - in other words - they can recodify new information, they will find it much easier to retain the information in their long-term memory (Rosler, R. 2014).

H. Advice n°7: evaluate through immediate feedback

When a mistake is made by a student and that mistake is corrected immediately, an error signal will be sent to the brain. This error signal will stimulate surprise within the brain, due to the clash between what was predicted by the student and what was actually correct (according to the teacher). This surprise response will trigger the learning process in a better way than learning about mistakes later on in a different context.

I. Advice n° 8: reinforce information

In order to consolidate information in the long-term memory system, information should be presented in as many ways as possible. If information can be stored via different ways, learners will have access to it and draw from it in a larger number of situations.

Considering this information coming from educational neuroscience, will help trainers and teachers to transfer knowledge in a more *cerebrally friendly way*. This is even more important when we teach vulnerable adults, such as in the Alternative Ways project, where immigrant and refugee adults are involved. Apart from language classes, they can have many stressful situations to cope with (lack of housing, lack of work or loneliness), which can generate a deficit in cognitive functions, such as attention and memory.

Indeed, the secondary target group of the Alternative Ways project, i.e. low education background immigrants, face specific challenges in their daily lives and their administrative

situation. Some of them, also face past experiences that cause trauma and lack of attention. These particularities influence their availability to learn the language of their host country.

2. “Unique factors in the situation of refugees”

(ELAN INTERCULTUREL)

According to current UNHCR figures, there are 68.5 million displaced people in the world. 40 million of them are internally displaced and 25.4 million of them are refugees (under UNHCR mandate) with an additional 3.1 million asylum-seekers. Just under half of the refugees in the world are adults (classified as over 18)⁹. This suggests that, there are no less than 12 million adults worldwide that are recreating an adult life somewhere or have done so at some point. For some of them, building a new life means getting an education, whether they have or have not previously received one in their homeland.

Getting an education as an adult carries its own potentialities and struggles, including clashes with workdays, specific ways of learning, interests and family life, but what are the uniqueness's in the situation of adult refugees when talking about education?

After their arrival in a host country, refugees face several stages of hope and despair¹⁰. After the shock of losing a home, possessions and a social life, displaced people find themselves in a state of uncertainty and worry about what is ahead of them. They can show signs of confusion, drastic fatigue and absentmindedness. Adult education in this context must focus on orientation and the immediate information they need upon their arrival¹¹. After a varying period, refugees enter an acceptance and response stage¹². They reorganize their priorities with integration, health and autonomy becoming the most important. Integration is considered a two-way process and can only be successful when the host society is open and inclusive towards cultural diversity. For this, refugees should be provided with equal access to housing, health care and education¹³.

At this stage, an adult education responding to these priorities would be one that helps refugees to better understand their new environment and to identify the inner resources they possess to develop their integration process. Then, comes a stage where refugees start seeking economic stability through work. Very often, job opportunities do not fit with their previous professional experiences and the struggle of finding a legal way to work creates new sources of worry and insecurity.

⁹ <https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>

¹⁰ Klingenberg (2016)

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Robila (2018)

Therefore, to respond to this stage's needs, education should be focused on hard and soft skills for the professional environment. This is because, adults learn better when their education responds to concrete and immediate needs (unlike children who can easily learn theoretical concepts)¹⁴. Also, this is a good time to encourage mutual exchange between refugees and their host society – the exchange of knowledge and experiences can lead to cooperation and mutual interest¹⁵. At this stage, more and more of the priorities of the refugees are similar to those of the host society. Therefore, it is important to mix participants as much as possible in order to encourage social linkage and mutual exchange.

In addition to these different stages that define refugees' abilities and ways of learning, practical aspects (that are different in every stage) play an important role. Indeed, administrative and asylum-seeking issues demand that they focus a great deal of their time going to institutions, gathering documents and looking for translation. They also dedicate their time looking for accommodation and dealing with obtaining basic social rights through governmental services. Appointments are randomly assigned to them and they cannot be absent in any way if they want to carry the process further. Several barriers to attendance have been identified by different authors such as a lack of childcare, financial barriers, need to attend employment including shift work, access to public transport, gender barriers, etc.¹⁶ Consequently, irregularity of attendance can be a uniqueness of adult education for refugees. This is unfortunate, because among other things, the regularity of educational activities is vital¹⁷. Everyday life, for example in an initial reception facility, implies a lot of commotion and having regular activities every day at the same time can be a pillar of integrations initial steps. This paradox and the incompatibility of needs and practical reality is certainly one main characteristic of the situation of refugees in terms of access to education.

The number of tasks refugees have to face, translates into a very high number of things to learn and comprehend at the same time (in addition to language theory) with these elements relating to language, cultural norms and codes, administrative entities and procedures, health care system procedures, etc., sometimes leading to stress. Acculturative stress is a concept describing the fact of having to learn how to function in a culture different from the one an individual is born and raised in. This includes ways in which people relate to each other - simple tasks such as how to shop for food or ask for directions become challenges involving potential cultural misunderstandings, possibly leading to an identity crisis for the individual¹⁸. Therefore, the needs of refugees in terms of education can only be satisfied by a holistic approach.

¹⁴ Alliance Française training (2018-2019)

¹⁵ Benseman (2012)

¹⁶ Klingenberg (2016)

¹⁷ Benseman (2012)

¹⁸ Klingenberg (2016).

A psychosocial analysis considers the individual as an organism in constant interaction with external elements (family, society, legal order, educational system, professional life, etc.). Therefore, when addressing language education for adult refugees, it is insufficient to focus solely on the person's language skills - only an approach covering other factors will produce an effective result¹⁹. According to the VHS language institute in Germany, focusing only on language can never go far enough. A far-reaching integration is only possible, with comprehensive education that involves cultural and socio-political aspects²⁰. The question that then follows is, can this approach be established by one organization or can partnerships between organizations be effective? It goes without saying that organizations are generally oversubscribed with demand for education and people have to be on waiting lists before having access to any kind of education. In these conditions, it would be hard for one organization to provide all the aspects of a comprehensive education.

Another aspect that shapes the situation of refugees relating to the way they learn, has to do with prejudice and assumptions. Assumptions that students and teachers have of one another significantly condition the quality and consequences of their interactions²¹. For instance, the teacher might assume that students do not know how to learn in a formal framework, are not skilled or do not have specific political opinions, etc. Students can assume that their teacher knows everything or represents the whole host society or is supposed to help them in other aspects of their life other than language learning. Prejudice also influences refugees' view of themselves as learners and can lead to a decrease in motivation or lack of confidence.

In the meantime, some refugees have to deal with mental health issues and trauma. The circumstances of a forced migration have deep effects on people's health and integration in the host society²². People who fled from armed conflicts or persecution present higher rates of PTSD, for example. Moreover, a correlation has been shown between difficulties in acculturation, which is necessary for education, and mental distress²³. Experiences and evaluation of language integration programs show the need for psycho-social support for migrants by social workers during their attendance at language courses. If there is none, teachers are confronted with questions and problems resulting from the difficult living conditions of migrants which teachers are not usually trained to deal with²⁴. In addition, stress and worrying directly affects the ability to concentrate and memorize. Thus, facilitating social inclusion and integration of refugees require not only a focus on formal and non-formal education provision but also a support system that will allow learners to deal with their other struggles, one of these is the lack of recognition of informal skills²⁵.

Indeed, refugees often present skills and abilities gained in their home country but also during their migration process. They have had to adapt in every way possible along their

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Alfred (2004)

²² Robila (2018)

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Krumm (2008)

²⁵ Robila (2018)

journey and to learn subsequent codes and norms to make their way through, whether they stayed or travelled on in each geographical location.

Also, many migrants are able to use more than one language as they come from multilingual countries²⁶ or because they have had contact with other languages in their migration process (it is not rare to meet refugees in France who speak Swedish for example). Because of their personal experiences with multilingualism, many of them are much more aware of linguistic issues, language learning challenges and different communication contexts. Valuing these aspects in an education program could be of great effect in performance. Clearly, all the constraints that refugees face in their new environment shape their motivation for learning²⁷ and can be a source of energy as long as these constraints are identified as challenges and not threats. Therefore, refugees could present a high potential for learning given the immediate use they will make of their learnings, allowing their memory to better register information through practicing learned elements.

Refugees and immigrants with complicated migratory backgrounds learn the host society language in a very different framework than traditional foreign language learning. They are well aware that they need to master the language in order to integrate and be successful, which is a very different motivation than the one felt by a traditional student of foreign languages. They have very concrete linguistic needs: being able to communicate within the healthcare system, the school system and the professional environment. The different situation of these learners has to be taken into account in terms of learning programs²⁸.

In terms of access to education and completion of degrees, studies showed that in 2017, in Europe, roughly one third of non-EU born adults had completed lower secondary school, one third had completed upper secondary school and one third had completed tertiary education. If we look at figures concerning the European population as whole, we observe roughly the same figures (20% completed low education, 46% completed medium education and 34% completed higher education)²⁹. This fact goes against the stereotype that non-EU migrants are much less educated.

All in all, the situation of refugees presents uniqueness's including successive emotional stages, practical everyday commotion and appointments, the need to learn a wide range of elements in order to further integrate (holistic learning), prejudice and discrimination, sometimes mental health but also the presence of unique informal and formal skills for learning and adaptation promising great potential, linked to the direct motivation of building a new and better life.

3. Second language learning for adults

(ELAN INTERCULTUREL)

²⁶ Krumm (2008)

²⁷ Alfred (2004)

²⁸ Krumm (2008)

²⁹ Eurostat: Educational Attainment Statistics.

Language learning for low education background adults is the focus of the Alternative Ways project. We have studied the uniqueness's of the situation for refugees who constitute an important part of the secondary group of the project. Now, we will study a more general idea concerning adults and the learning process.

Language learning is something children do from their youngest age by learning their mother tongue. In many countries, they start learning a second language by the age of 12 at school. Learning a second language when being a child is said to be much easier. The idea that children learn languages better than adults is very common and quite universal. However, what are the implications of 2nd language learning for adults? What kind of context is necessary for them to develop their language learning skills?

It seems to be common knowledge that children learn languages better than adults. Some even think that it is impossible to pick up a language as an adult. Humans have two long-term memory systems: the declarative memory, which is the one we use to actively learn and remember things (vocabulary or facts for example). We are aware that we know of the things we learn and store in the declarative memory (names of capitals, precise memories of our lives). The second memory system is the procedural memory, which is the one we use to learn naturally, without trying (habits and skills that seem natural) and the one where we store performance skills that we do not forget (such as riding a bike, skiing or playing an instrument)³⁰. This kind of learning happens rather unconsciously. In early life, humans use procedural memory to learn complex things like grammar. Children use the procedural memory without being distracted by the declarative memory, which makes them more likely to pick up complex skills with less effort³¹. As adults, we have a higher tendency to use the declarative memory and that is why it is harder to remember what we learn.

Researchers have looked through data and found that there is indeed a statistical advantage to learning at a young age. However, looking at data about learners from the age of 20, a lot of them are able to outperform native speakers in terms of language level (in formal academic language)³². Actually, adults are much better than children at understanding complex syntax concepts and rules and can therefore more easily reach an academic knowledge of the language. This research also showed that one has a better likelihood of reaching native-like mastery of language if one starts learning before the age of 18 which is far older than the maximum age that common opinion assumes to be the limit.

³⁰ Suchan (2018)

³¹ Dickerson (2014)

³² Chacon (2018)

The study does not deny that children learn faster and better, but it points out the reasons: children are more social, learning a language they will probably be in a classroom all day and interact in that language, which can only increase the learning rate.

Some aspects of language learning can change with age. Older people can potentially learn vocabulary easier (compared to other skills like accent acquisition) because words can relatively easily be mapped on to a learner's pre-existing knowledge and life experiences, which are more numerous in adults, children can link new words to their experiences, but they have fewer. However, adults are less likely to reach a good pronunciation or accent: phonemes and sounds are more naturally picked up by children³³.

It has been shown that language learning is beneficial to the adult brain. With age, most people experience a decline in mental functions such as memory and attention. In some cases, people experience an acceleration of this process with the development of Alzheimer's disease or others forms of dementia. Recent studies show, that learning a language can slow down the process and delay the development of cognitive decline and even the onset of dementia. These studies go as far as saying that, for the brain, it is more beneficial to learn a language later than earlier, because it takes more effort as a whole³⁴. Learning and using a foreign language improves what are called executive functions, these refer to a mental process that enables us to change thoughts and behaviors from one moment to the next. Research even shows that bilingual children use the same brain regions for both languages whereas learning a language later in life requires different regions in the brain from those involved when using the first language³⁵.

Another aspect of language learning tackles more of a social and psychological dimension, especially amongst adult learners with a complex migratory background. Language is one of the main elements of one's identity. The first language is a language in which people start to realize themselves (personal identity), as members of a social group (social identity), and in which they build values for their lives (cultural/religious identity)³⁶. It is important to notice that the mother tongue is an important basis for learning another language. It was also observed that adult immigrants adopt basic interaction communication skills quite quickly in the second language they learn. However, reaching a satisfying cognitive academic second language proficiency (more complex ways of communicating including reading and writing) depends to a large extent on a corresponding competence in the first language³⁷. Indeed, it is empirically verified that adult language learners make more or less conscious comparisons in terms of language structures between their first language and the one they are learning.

³³ Costandi (2014)

³⁴ Chacon (2018)

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Krumm (2008)

³⁷ Suchan (2018)

Therefore, it is easier to learn a second language for adults who have a high proficiency in their own language in the first place. Moreover, a lot of migrants speak several languages before settling in a host country, they can therefore be highly aware of language usage and how to jump from one language to the other, depending on the level they have in those languages.

There is also evidence that socio-psychological factors are as important as linguistic abilities in developing a second language. In the case of migrants with a complex migratory background, it has been shown (by a study in Canada, Norton, 2000) that the status of migrants in the host society (a status linked to loss of power and social opportunities) has an impact on their learning process³⁸.

Adults present different motivations to learning a second language. Language acquisition and attitude towards language learning (motivation, a will to learn) in the host society is highly connected to personal history and to motivations of migration. For children, the acquisition of a second language is natural, for adults, it will depend on many factors, such as trauma and persecution faced, not having chosen the country they find themselves in, worrying about family, etc. All these factors will have an impact on the motivation to adapt and learn the language. One factor that also has an impact on motivation is the relationship to one's own native language. Interestingly, very often, migrants' native language represents a form of stability in their new life, which is essential for the willingness to go towards a new culture on a strong foundation built by their own culture and language.

All in all, language learning for adults comes with several stereotypes that are not always true and often discourage adults from even trying. In addition to not being as impossible as one imagines, learning a second language as an adult is very beneficial for the brain when compared to learning it in childhood. As for adults who learn a language for reasons that are linked to survival, several aspects enter into account to understand the uniqueness's of language learning for them: identity issues and struggles, importance of mother tongue, social factors to enhance learning and past experiences.

4. Challenges in teaching a second language to adults

(ELAN INTERCULTUREL)

Language learning for adult immigrants in a host country is a central aspect in their integration process and it is essential that the host society proposes different opportunities in response to this need. Language classes for adult refugees or immigrants with a difficult migratory experience behind them presents a few challenges.

As mentioned previously, adult learners are different than children³⁹:

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Emeodi (2014)

- Adults arrive in the classroom with an important amount of life experience
- Adults learn best when they are self-motivated
- Adults learn best if learning relates directly to their reality and immediate needs
- Some adults might be experiencing formal education for the first time

How do these differences influence the challenges learners and teachers face during the language learning process by adults?

A. Heterogeneity in the classroom

One of the main difficulties teachers and learners will face is the heterogeneity present in the classroom. As said earlier, every adult comes into the classroom with a different story and diverse experiences. Adults have a more diverse approach to life and learning than children who have not yet finished building their personalities. This heterogeneity is a richness but also a barrier.

Adults who learn in language centers are very different regarding learning skills, way of thinking, motivation to learn, modes of communication and expression, socio-cultural environment, culture, beliefs, family history, values, age, personality, capacity of attention, curiosity, energy, rhythm, objectives, etc.⁴⁰ All learners have their own identities and personalities. They speak one or more languages and possess different levels of knowledge regarding various disciplines, they have their own individual competencies.

That is why it is essential to implement a diversified and comprehensive pedagogy. This pedagogy needs to be interactive, in order to allow the exchange of experiences and use the differences between learners as an inspiration and not an obstacle⁴¹.

One of the first barriers to a teaching method that would be uniform is the difference in levels of instruction. If the teaching method is provided towards highly skilled learners, the complexity of the instruction will exclude low education background students. On the contrary, if the instruction is given in a very simplified way, it will not be suitable to the high education background students⁴². In addition to unequal levels of education, there is the challenge of level of instruction in the target language. Very often, in language centers, especially those run by volunteers, students of different levels (of target language proficiency) are in the same classroom.

The challenge of heterogeneity linked to levels of instruction is most visible in the teacher's behavior towards the class. Some teachers will treat students in a different way according to their level of competence and thus will be increasing the risk of emphasizing the disparity between them. On the other hand, such attitudes provide learners with a pedagogy that meets their individual needs.⁴³

⁴⁰ Pango (2015)

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Cohen (1990)

⁴³ Pango (2015)

Another challenge is heterogeneity represented by native languages. Language classes are full of students who speak different native languages. This means that the teacher cannot teach the new language against a common linguistic background. On the one hand, it is an important restriction. However, on the contrary, it is an opportunity to allow the students to improve their communication: in such classes, students are compelled to use the target language to communicate with each other. So, opportunities to practice are much more frequent⁴⁴.

At the same time, when several individuals speak the same native language, if the pedagogy is very formal and classical, self-segregation might take place and lead to the absence of interaction between groups. It is the role of the teacher to implement interactions and peer to peer learning. In such classrooms, linguistic basis (the knowledge of one or more languages which are not always learned properly and sometimes without literacy), the linguistic context (use of different languages in families and outside the classroom) and the motivation and pressure to learn the language differ from a traditional foreign language learning process⁴⁵.

Language heterogeneity is stronger among migrants who have had a complex migration context. They have extremely diverse linguistic biographies, depending on the status of their mother tongue in their native country, the other languages they have used during migration and their contacts with different communities in the host society⁴⁶. This is a challenge for language teachers, but it is also an interesting fact to consider: language awareness, their ability to code-switch and their readiness to mix languages are more developed.

Classrooms are also heterogeneous in terms of the objectives of students. In language centers like Alliance Française, students have diverse objectives: some need to improve their communication skills and others want to improve their writing to write letters and texts⁴⁷. In language schools that welcome students with a complicated migratory background, students generally have more homogeneous objectives: to get the knowledge that they need to be able to manage the administrative, healthcare related, shelter and educational aspects of their lives and adaptation process. However, these students can find themselves at different stages of integration in the home country and might present slightly different needs (learn a language for basic administrative tasks or learn a language to be able to communicate at work). This issue is usually addressed by differentiated workshops with targeted subjects ("Language for work" or "Language for mathematics").

All in all, barriers linked to heterogeneity in the classroom are numerous but are creatively addressed in these organizations thanks to their experience. Heterogeneity, especially in classes welcoming students who have had a complex migratory experience, is mainly expressed by differences in terms of level of education, the native languages and

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Krumm (2008)

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Cohen (1990)

cultures present as well as motivation and objectives of the learning process. It is possible to implement a flexible and adaptive pedagogy, using the advantage that there is in teaching such a diverse class by enhancing peer learning and interactions and also creating spaces dedicated to specific needs and objectives.

B. Difficulties in concentration

Depending on their background, learners can face issues relating to their cognitive abilities. This is true for children but also true for more disciplined adults. Learning difficulties arise when specific tasks or circumstances in the environment inhibit one's ability to learn. It is mostly psychological (unlike neurological in the case of learning disabilities)⁴⁸. They can be triggered by cultural barriers and cultural shocks, poor teaching methods, frustration, precarious environment and trauma. We will focus here on the concentration challenges faced by complex migratory background immigrants.

Researchers have identified three types of stress that refugees face after trauma and that can affect their learning process. Migration stress which results from forced forms of migration and losses during this process, acculturation stress which results from the direct and permanent contact with other cultures upon arrival (when daily tasks such as shopping for food or asking for directions become extremely hard) and traumatic stress resulting from harm, accidents, injury, death and assault. Research shows that individuals who face such events are changed in a psychological, social and physical way⁴⁹.

Mental health amongst refugees affects their potential access to information. Unlike other types of newcomers, refugees and illegal immigrants may have faced detention, torture, war, disappearance of family members and the lack of food, medicine and/or shelter. Post-migration traumas are also frequent – with immigration detention, failure of family reunification and uncertainty about their immigration status potential sources of worry. Therefore, learners who find themselves in this kind of situation can experience vulnerable emotional states and cognitive consequences, such as insomnia, extreme fatigue, memory problems and lack of concentration in processing of information⁵⁰. These struggles, in some cases, may be expressed through stress disorder, anxiety and depression. Self-esteem is also an issue, as these people may have been put in humiliating and degrading situations which can affect their sense of agency and control. All these traumas can sometimes have consequences on their ability to overcome educational barriers. For example, in the “Komm Rein!” program in Germany, the experience has been that some learners who had experienced traumatic displacement were rarely able to concentrate for more than three lesson units⁵¹.

⁴⁸ Emeodi (2014)

⁴⁹ Benseman (2012),

⁵⁰ Bajwa (2017)

⁵¹ Brössler (2016)

Lack of concentration was also listed as a common issue by an experienced teacher in New Zealand⁵².

Lack of concentration also comes from constant worrying. In a report by the UK Refugee Council and Oxfam dealing with family separation and its challenges, authors tell the story of different people dealing with family separation. Refugee Council staff describe that people dealing with worry about separated family members and with depression, guilt and anxiety often struggle to concentrate on learning English and socializing. They constantly worry about children who fled military conscription for instance and who are alone in another host country. They also worry about children who stayed in the home country with no possibilities to travel. It is stated in this report that these learners' sadness and despair make it hard for them to find the energy to go to language classes and study. One of them said *"When I think of my children, I am always sad, and I cannot enjoy life or take any part in anything ... I'm doing my best but I can't fully concentrate on anything I do, all the time I am stressed thinking about the day when I will be reunited with my children."*⁵³ The report underlines the fact that when one is worried about a family member's safety, education in the host country can seem meaningless and there is often a feeling of guilt that affects greatly the ability to concentrate.

All in all, it is relevant to say that the ability to concentrate on learning a language when in a complex migratory situation is limited. The factors affecting the learning process are related to migration stress, acculturation stress and traumatic stress as well as constant worrying about the past, present and future affecting family members or close friends. These elements provide a challenge for the welcoming institution and teaching methods that allow the release of stress and worry are essential. Laughing and playing, are powerful tools to unlock the ability to learn and are vital to an efficient pedagogical method for learners with a complex migratory background.

C. Lack of mutual adaptation between learners and the formal learning system

Amongst the many challenges faced by 2nd language learners who have experienced a complex migration path, one challenge involves cultural, systemic and administrative aspects - many of these students come from extra-European countries and have never experienced the very formal European school system before. They often lack information on how to navigate this very specific educational pathway⁵⁴.

Many adults who enter language education in their host country have had interrupted educational trajectories and face a range of unfamiliar cultural norms in terms of educational systems⁵⁵. Representations of learning and teaching can be a source of cultural shock. Usually,

⁵² Benseman (2012)

⁵³ Refugee Council ; Oxfam (2018)

⁵⁴ Bajwa (2017)

⁵⁵ Salant (2017)

the teacher is considered as a serious figure and is hierarchically superior. At the same time, informal pedagogy is being used to unlock motivation and release stress which can lead to mistrust from students who are not used to laugh and play during classes.

After their migration, and in the process of settling in a country, one will face the challenge of adapting to a certain method of sitting in a classroom, interacting with the teacher, getting information, learning and working in a way that might be different than the methods they have experienced before.

On the other hand, the formal educational school system lacks the specific framework for so-called low education background adults. The system is not built to be able to transfer existing skills, qualifications and competences of newcomers to their new context. Informal knowledge and even official degrees are not recognized by the system even though validating prior knowledge (both formal and non-formal) has been recognized as a tool for migrant inclusion in the labor market⁵⁶.

A very formal way of teaching, is not always the best way to involve adult learners who are much more stimulated by a bottom-up dynamic and an informal environment that fosters their involvement and engagement⁵⁷. One cannot forget that it is also a matter of balance: formal education is a part of what learners expect when they have a rigid representation of how school and a teacher should look and behave.

In terms of mutual consideration and representation, the usual educational system lacks some sensitivity. We can say that there are two types of learning contexts in the workplace (which is where informal learning sometimes takes place): workplaces where a hierarchy of experiences and skills from different cultural contexts exist and workplaces where two-way intercultural learning is enabled. It was shown that migrants who had felt that their culture and identity were not valued tended to show an “assimilated” face in certain contexts (integrating fully in the host country’s culture whilst rejecting their culture of origin) whereas they would present themselves differently in contexts in which they felt their previous experiences were recognized.

So, it is important to understand in which context a person had the opportunity to learn when meeting them or trying to assess their past experiences (for example in a recruitment interview⁵⁸).

Indeed, awareness has been recently raised about how educational programs for refugees and extra-EU newcomers (where most of the students with low education backgrounds will be found) are participating in the racial and cultural domination by Western society. There is a need for innovation in questioning the Eurocentric cultural order that permeates educational programs.

Generally, Europe is missing the perspective from the original countries – painted as conflict ridden, poverty stricken and in environmental disaster or just as transit countries and

⁵⁶ Morrice (2018)

⁵⁷ Diversity of Development Group (2014)

⁵⁸ Morrice (2018)

migration routes. Thus, the focus of adult education is mostly from a Western perspective. To explore innovative pedagogies, it would be interesting and essential to learn from non-Western practices and integrate them into our local methodologies⁵⁹. Indeed, the host society has to be better educated in order to welcome migrants as full members of society⁶⁰.

In this introduction, we have had the opportunity to tackle the functioning of the brain and how neuroeducation can bring knowledge and inspiration to better adapt teaching tools to low education background students. We also studied how the situation of some of these students who are refugees can influence their learning process and why neuroeducation is even more important in this context. This learning process is adult specific and involves the understanding of what the challenges are in teaching to grownups. Next, we will explore what learning a language means and what concrete subjects are taught

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Diversity of Development Group (2014)

02 WHAT DO PEOPLE LEARN?

Language learning is often classified as four competences to be acquired, these are listening, speaking, reading and writing. It is commonly said that a good teaching session must include at least one exercise for each competence. In this chapter we will study these four competences and how they can be learned, we will also see what other dimensions exist, such as grammar, cultural and intercultural aspects of language learning.

1. Learning vocabulary and oral expression (TALENTENSCHOOL)

Language is a complicated concept. In order to be able to comprehend and subsequently teach this, language has been split into distinct parts. The language skills children and adults learn, are traditionally divided into the four different domains discussed in the next paragraph.

Language comprehension usually comes before language production, and oral language skills develop earlier than written language skills. Learning to read and write (becoming literate) is a cultural process that begins from the moment children receive a structured education, starting with the beginning of primary school. Language elements learnt during primary school include:

- Oral language skills (adequate use of speaking and listening skills, such as monologues and conversations)
- Vocabulary
- Beginner and advanced level literacy
- Spelling and sentence construction (writing a text)

The way adults with low education background learn a language, corresponds with the process mentioned above. However, an important difference is motivation, the way the adults want to be considered and their ability to learn. These aspects must be taken into account when teaching and creating lessons⁶¹.

⁶¹ Stichting Basisvaardigheden.

A. Learning vocabulary

Vocabulary is the collection of words that a language includes, or a person knows. There are two types of word knowledge: qualitative word knowledge and quantitative word knowledge. Qualitative word knowledge refers to how well someone knows the words, or how many significant aspects they assign to words. Quantitative word knowledge refers to how many words someone knows.

Words can be introduced in a variety of ways. Experts agree on the importance of repetition when learning vocabulary. Words that are only mentioned once will almost surely be quickly forgotten. Words need to be repeated multiple times in different contexts, in order to stimulate different areas of the brain and allow the storage of these words in the long-term memory system (see the chapter “Multisensory learning” p.68). Learning words is a cumulative process in which word knowledge continuously expands, deepens and strengthens. In general, it is assumed that a word needs to be learnt an average of seven times before it becomes anchored in a person’s memory. In this context, repetition means that a student must be able to practice with the words⁶². Knowing a word is not simply a matter of knowing or not knowing, but rather continuously getting to know a word better in terms of its different meanings in various contexts. A well-known method for teaching vocabulary is the ‘Four Steps’⁶³:

1. Preparation: introduction of the words and their definitions.
2. Semantics: clarification of the words and their definitions in context.
3. Consolidation: practice of new words and definitions using word games and other activities.
4. Control: the goal is to check whether the words and definitions have been acquired.

B. Learning oral expression

People with strong linguistic skills use language often and with pleasure. Consider how tempting it is to have a chat with someone in daily life: once you have mastered the language, you can start playing with it. You can use oral expression to control the world around you and align it with your goals; you can even manipulate it! Thanks to language there is humor; we often laugh because of language. Language also helps us deal with serious issues and makes them more manageable. Language is valuable.

Just think of an example of how a young child develops language. Children normally learn their native language within a period of just a few years. At about five years old, they have mastered the core principles of their native language, can adequately express themselves and make themselves understood, and understand what they are being told. It is

⁶² Vermeer (2005)

⁶³ Nuft (2009)

fascinating to see how quickly children learn the basic principles of language and do so at a very early, immature stage of their cognitive development. Perhaps the most intriguing aspect is that the language acquisition process takes place during these first years of life without the involvement of any formal education or instruction whatsoever.

Adults learning a second language follow a different process, but we can take the principles of basic language learning by young children into account, like the fact that informal learning is very important in the language learning process by children and therefore adults. We must focus on ways in which we can stimulate informal learning processes by adults.

Oral language skills are important to be able to engage in conversations. Lessons have to provide built-in opportunities to participate in all kinds of conversation, including group conversations, one-to-one conversations, telephone conversations, cooperative activities and presenting and debating, because it is important to have simple conversations about familiar topics in daily life and to learn to express personal opinions, to exchange information and to express feelings in words.

2. Language acquisition and grammar

Linguists tend to differentiate between the way we acquire and the manner in which we learn languages.

The “acquisition method” of acquiring a language is one by which every child learns their mother tongue. Here, they are not taught grammar in the manner they are given lessons when they ultimately go to school. However, it is easy to see that, even without any formal instruction, children learn their native language and do not make grammatical mistakes during conversations. They learn the language through a subconscious process where they know nothing about rules of grammar but know intuitively what is right and wrong or learn through a trial and error method.

The basic tool needed for language acquisition is a source of communication that is natural.

The “learning of a language method” is the formal teaching methodology that can be seen in the form of instructions explaining the rules of the language. Learners are happy that they are getting a command of the grammar, and they can even take grammar tests in the language they are learning. However, knowing grammar rules is not a guarantee of a good command over the spoken language even if the learner might ace standardized language tests.

A. Alternative ways & grammar

What Alternative Ways aims to achieve is language acquisition. We want learners to communicate, to express ideas, experiences and dreams, to tell and share stories, without

having to worry about grammatical accuracy, which can sometimes be the case in more formal language education that focuses on “language learning”.

As long as the communication between sender and receiver is not disturbed, there is no need to stop the communication flow in order to correct or explain grammatical errors and rules. Let the learner speak freely. Only interrupt when the message is not understood.

On the other hand, if an instructor thinks it opportune or necessary to insert a “grammatical moment”, there are some guidelines.

B. Correct whilst repeating

In most situations, simply correcting whilst repeating someone’s words will do. In any case, it is important that the instructor uses correct language at all times. Never repeat mistakes. It is possible to use the same words or rephrase.

Example: Learner: *My husband like football.*

Instructor: *Oh, your husband likes football?*

Some learners will notice the correction, others will not. Which brings us to the second guideline.

C. The just in time principle

Grammatical knowledge is not always essential for eloquence. Some people have excellent communication skills without knowing any grammatical terms or applying the necessary grammar (e.g. the ability to conjugate verbs or use the right tense). They will talk freely without ever giving grammar a thought.

The just in time principle begins from the premise that a learner is ready for the answer only when they ask the question. A learner who notices a grammatical feature and asks for explanation, is ready to assimilate the new knowledge. The instructor will supply the necessary information solely to the person asking.

A learner who does not question the form might be bothered and become hesitant in their communication if informed of their grammatical flaws.

D. Teach grammar as lexicon

Highly educated learners have grammatical frames of reference in their mind, which they complete whilst listening or reading.

Example:

The frame of the possessive pronouns *my/our your/your his-her-it/their*

A learner says: '*This is he book*'. The instructor repeats correcting '*This is his book*.' A grammatically strong learner will write '*his*' next to 'the third person singular male' in their mind frame.

Responding with giving the entire framework of possessive pronouns, when a learner says, '*he book*', can be useful for stronger learners but will confuse weaker learners. They do not have the framework in their mind, so they will not know what to do with this abstract information ('abstract' as it is not related to a specific context). It is better to treat the word '*his*' as just another word to memorize, as the word needed to point out possession by a man (this is called lexical explanation).

When all possessive pronouns have been used, over several lessons, in different contexts by most of the learners, the time has only then come to give the complete framework because only then will there be enough context to link **form** to **function and use**.

E. Limit the use of grammar terms

Sometimes grammatically weaker learners are not familiar with even the simplest of grammar terms, such as 'verb' or 'subject'. It is clear from our experience that the knowledge of grammar terms is not necessary to produce correct phrases. Try to explain without using grammatical terms.

Example: when explaining about '*his*' (see above) there is no need to talk about 'the possessive pronouns'.

F. Rules of thumb

A recurring topic of discussion between language teachers is whether to instruct grammar to (grammatically) low education background learners. The answer is yes, if the grammar corresponds to an **important communicative need**. For instance, the conjugation of verbs, the tenses, the singular versus plural concept.

Choose if the grammar point is communicatively relevant according to these rules of thumb: does the grammar point respond to the following criteria?

1. Strong communicative implications
2. Broad range
3. Frequent occurrence
4. Few thinking steps
5. Few exceptions

6. Striking form of appearance
7. Easy to memorize

G. Example

Simple past: 'verb + ed'

1. Are we talking about past or present events?
2. All regular verbs.
3. Every time one speaks about past events
4. One thinking step.
5. Some spelling rules that can be treated as an exception (see below).
6. '-ed' is very easy to recognize.
7. The rule is easy to memorize: '*verb + ed*'

When a grammatical rule cannot be described in a rule of thumb, it is better to instruct the grammatical item in an implicit way, e.g. by repeating the structure in which it occurs.

H. Treat exceptions for what they are: exceptions

When giving a general rule, refrain from giving the exceptions at the same moment. The brain treats them as equally important. Better to call attention to the rule only. Make it simple and clear; do not complicate it by giving the exceptions.

When and only when an exception pops up, point it out as an exception, without any further explanation or other examples. Your learners will be surprised or even a bit indignant because you instructed them otherwise (*You taught us so!*) which will focus their full attention for the exception.

3. Learning, reading and writing (TALENTENSCHOOL)

People need to have oral language skills, including vocabulary, in order to express themselves and to read. Reading forms the basis for writing, sentence construction and spelling. This approach is depicted below⁶⁴.



It has been known for quite some time that motivation, enjoyment and a connection to the ‘real world’, influence learning tremendously. It is often difficult to create a meaningful lesson when focusing on these separate aspects as if in a vacuum. People learn their language precisely because they need it to achieve their goals and to communicate with others. You learn language by using it and having fun with it⁶⁵.

Reading is one of the most complex cognitive processes in language processing⁶⁶. In order to read successfully, learners must first recognize the visual characteristics of letters, then the letters themselves and the order in which they are written, to use this for visual word recognition. Next, they need to use the orthographic (letter) code to access the lexicon, and then search for the meaning of the words before they can understand them. Finally, they must also understand textual relationships. When it comes to reading, the brain is active on all fronts.

The educational system recognizes the following five phases of reading development:

1. Emerging literacy, is the phase in which toddlers are introduced to written language and books.
2. Beginning literacy, is the phase in which preschoolers develop phonological awareness (sentences consist of words, words consist of letters and sounds, and you can make a word with sounds) as well as phonetic awareness (sounds can be linked to letters and vice versa) and finally letter recognition.
3. Initial reading begins in school year 2 for most children, which is when formal reading instruction begins. In this phase, elementary reading principles, such as connecting sounds to letters and turning letters into words are important.
4. Technical reading starts from school year 3 when children are becoming increasingly competent in fluently reading increasingly difficult material.

⁶⁴ Noorden (2004)

⁶⁵ Stichting Lezen (2015)

⁶⁶ Broek (2009)

5. Reading comprehension, is the process in which children learn to attach meaning to written language. This development starts in the pre-school years and continues throughout their entire life⁶⁷.

Learning how to read and write covers different aspects. It is important to comprehend a text. Texts are, therefore, always read aloud in their entirety with the correct intonation or in silence by themselves. Text has a specific structure (a beginning, middle and end) and all kinds of information is woven through it. The text ends with an outcome that refers back to the beginning.

Complete understanding of the text is largely dependent on knowledge of vocabulary. This can be expressed with the concept of 'text coverage' – the percentage of words that a person knows in the text. Reading materials often include words that students do not immediately recognize. Text coverage of 90% is considered 'reasonable comprehension'. It is only when text coverage reaches 95% that students can comprehend the text very well with some cognitive effort expected. It is important for students to know how they can decipher the meaning of an unknown word, without stopping their reading or getting stuck. One can derive the meaning from the context, from the part of speech, by breaking the word into pieces or finally by using a dictionary.

If you experience the pleasure of reading and discover which books you like, this will have a positive effect on the reading motivation, and with that on the language performance.

It is important to read a lot. If you enjoy reading, you read more. People who read more, read better and people who read better have a better language development.

Research shows, that reading skills of weak readers are reduced when they stop reading. This has an effect on their participation in society and their socio-economical position⁶⁸.

Writing is a part of the language learning process that can greatly contribute to text comprehension. By putting your own text on paper, you can get more insight into texts.

It is important to emphasize creative playful writing activities. When adults with low education background learn a second language, writing is subordinate to the other language areas, for example vocabulary, oral language proficiency or reading.

Although part of the description above is based on the process of learning a language by young children, it can be compared to the way language is learned as an adult⁶⁹.

⁶⁷ Noorden (2004)

⁶⁸ Willms (2007)

⁶⁹ Houtkoop (2012)

4. Learning cultural aspects

(ELAN INTERCULTUREL)

Learning a foreign language allows a learner to communicate in the target language. For this communication to happen in a realistic and idiomatic way, it is necessary that the learner learns the customs and traditions of speech native to that community. The communicative competence is acquired by the speaker's socialization⁷⁰. Indeed, the relationship between language and culture is dynamic: language is one of the most important vehicles by which a culture expresses its beliefs, values and norms. Language is influenced by culture and we could argue that culture is in some respects influenced by language.

Why is it important to learn cultural aspects? Very often, language learners use what is called linguistic transfer to learn a foreign language. This refers to the process of applying native language patterns and rules to the language being learned and results in mistakes and unidiomatic forms – it is then called interference; this is because language is inextricably bound up with culture. Cultural values are reflected in language and therefore it is unavoidable that a learner's way of thinking in their native language is transferred to the target language during communication. That is why exchanging and learning cultural aspects is decisive to a proper foreign language acquisition. It allows the learner to switch from one linguistic thinking frame to another - once they acquire a certain amount of cultural knowledge, the learner does not feel the need to transfer anymore. They learn a new way of building their speech, not through transfer but directly from the thinking framework of the target language.

Language competences and culture are intimately connected. It has been shown that learners who are exposed to the culture associated with the language, engage themselves better and in a more authentic and practical usage of the language and do it for meaningful purposes⁷¹. Indeed, learning cultural aspects creates new motivations to learn the language. Learners often discover that they can understand their own culture better by learning about another culture as it triggers curiosity and helps with learning.

So, what are these cultural aspects? One way in which they are often understood is that they are a body of knowledge that learners have of a society: knowledge about cultural artefacts and pieces of art, about places and institutions, about events and symbols and last but not least about ways of living and thinking. It is possible to consider these cultural aspects as information and teach them as if they are a set of rules to be learned.

⁷⁰ Sun (2013)

⁷¹ Nguyen (2005)

One of the first cultural aspects that students learn are customs. They notice the habits and traditions that are most visible and those that form daily life actions and interactions such as greeting someone, expressing gratitude or apologies and leaving a location. Another aspect that learners will learn quite early on has to do with values and morals, such as individualism, collectiveness, family, religion and so on in this specific cultural context. Historical background is also one aspect that teachers can easily teach and covers historical development of culture as well as the accumulation of cultural ethics⁷².

It is important to acquire some knowledge on the historic and political context in which the target language developed and evolved. Knowledge about the historic and cultural dimensions of the present socio-political situation of the country is essential to understanding sociological, cultural and political differences⁷³.

Learning cultural facts in a classroom setting however is not the only way to learn those aspects and is certainly not enough. One mainly learns these aspects through socialization, in a framework where people communicate using shared meanings⁷⁴. Indeed, knowing cultural aspects of a target culture involves much more than just knowing facts about that culture - it involves learning to understand how one's own culture shapes our perception of ourselves, of the world, of our relationships and furthermore learning how to engage with the culture internally. To learn and let those aspects sink in, learners need to learn beyond the classroom and the school system because culture is diverse and variable⁷⁵. The essence of language is to be a social action, it exists through use and communication. Thus, it is considered to be made of linguistic resources whose meanings are constitutive of our everyday communicative activities and practices⁷⁶.

As one learns a language, through repeated participation in these activities with native members or just more capable learners (in terms of the target language), one acquires the sociocultural knowledge and competences considered to be essential for full social participation. One does not learn only grammatical and lexical components but also the communicative intentions and specific perspectives that are implied in words and meanings.

How can one learn cultural aspects of a language? Beyond learning about facts and trying to remember them, a teacher can teach cultural aspects in an intercultural way, by pointing out cultural similarities and differences between the target culture and the students' cultures, by comparing what one learner notices about the target culture and language with what another learner already knows, by talking about and enhancing the diversity present in the room and how that affects the classroom positively or negatively, by noticing how the group engages with diversity, by studying together cultural shocks that students experience while adapting in their host country (if we are specifically talking about immigrants and refugees). It is through the exploration of the interactions between

⁷² Sun (2013)

⁷³ Krumm (2008)

⁷⁴ Scarino (2009)

⁷⁵ Krumm (2008)

⁷⁶ Hall (2008)

language and culture that this awareness and ability to learn cultural aspects can be developed.

To conclude, we can say that learning cultural aspects is not only key to developing communication skills and the ability to socialize and integrate but also to develop curiosity and the motivation to learn the language. The consequences are an increased awareness of diversity and an increased self-consciousness in terms of one's own culture. These aspects are to be learned in the classroom when applied to customs, values and historical background, but they are also to be acquired outside the classroom, in human interactions and by applying an intercultural approach to one's everyday discoveries.

All the above-mentioned aspects are dimensions that can be learned throughout the language learning process. Teachers must have them in mind in order to develop adapted and comprehensive sessions that include all of them. Often however, a class can be more advanced in one or the other skill and it is important to balance the teaching according to the students' needs. To be able to know what balance is the right one, continued evaluation can be of help. Moreover, evaluation can allow students to assess what their level is, to see their progress concretely and to have a sense of pride when obtaining a certificate after an evaluation process.

5. Evaluation of the learning: Common European Framework Reference for languages

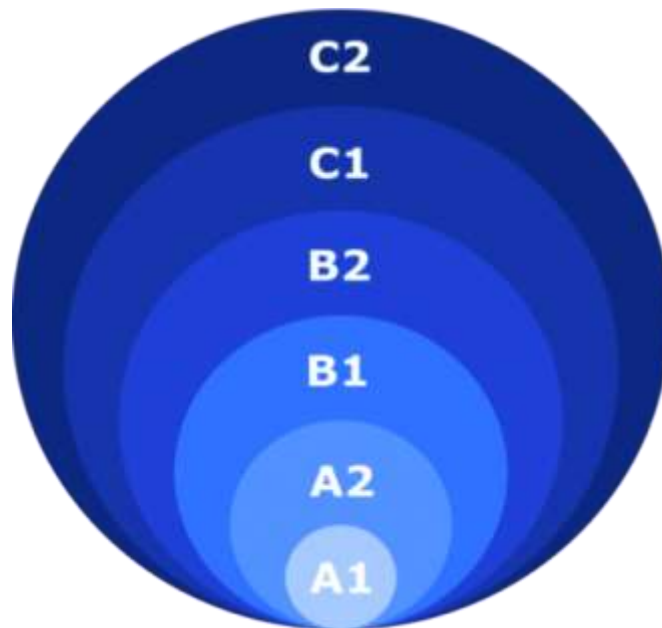
(GO!)

The CEFR (Common European Framework Reference) was designed to provide a transparent, coherent and comprehensive basis for the elaboration of language syllabi and curriculum guidelines, the design of teaching and learning materials, and the assessment of foreign language proficiency. It is used not only in Europe but also on other continents.

The stated aims of the CEFR are:

- To promote and facilitate co-operation between educational institutions in different countries.
- To provide a sound basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications.
- To assist learners, teachers, course designers, examining bodies and educational administrators in situating and coordinating their efforts.

The CEFR organizes language proficiency in six levels, A1 to C2, which can be merged into three broad levels: Basic User, Independent User and Proficient User



This scheme makes the following forms of working on language evaluation possible.

- Establishing learning and teaching objectives
- Reviewing curricula
- Designing & teaching material
- Providing a basis for recognizing language qualifications thus facilitating educational and occupational mobility.

The levels are defined through ‘can-do’ descriptors. These descriptors do not refer to any specific language, which guarantees their relevance and across-the-board applicability. Individual languages are not addressed. For example, some can-do descriptors in A1 are that “I can present myself, my family and my country” or “I can write a postcard”.

Three tables (see below) allow us to clearly understand the construction of the CEFR.

Proficient user	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarize information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent user	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected texts on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanation for opinions and plans.
Basic user	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions as well as very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Table 1: Global Scale

C2	I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent.	I can read with ease virtually all forms of the written language, including abstract, structurally or linguistically complex texts such as manuals, specialized articles and literary works.	I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. I can express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. If I do have a problem I can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly that other people are hardly aware of it.	I can present a clear, smoothly flowing description or argument in a style appropriate to the context and with an effective logical structure, which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points.	I can write clear, smoothly flowing text in an appropriate style. I can write complex letters, reports or articles, which present a case with an effective logical structure, which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points. I can write summaries and reviews of professional or
C1	I can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. I can understand television programs and films without too much effort.	I can understand long and complex factual and literary texts, appreciating distinctions of style. I can understand specialized articles and longer technical instructions, even when they do not relate to my field.	I can express myself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. I can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. I can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate my contribution skilfully to those of other speakers.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.	I can express myself in clear, well-structured text, expressing points of view at some length. I can write about complex subjects in a letter, an essay or a report, underlining what I consider to be the salient issues. I can select style appropriate to the reader in mind.
B2	I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programs. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.	I can read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular attitudes or viewpoints. I can understand contemporary literary prose.	I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.	I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and
B1	I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programs on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is	I can understand texts that consist mainly of high frequency every day or job-related language. I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters.	I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events).	I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.	I can write simple connected text on topics, which are familiar, or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions.
A2	I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment). I can	I can read very short, simple texts. I can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus and timetables and I can understand short simple personal letters.	I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I cannot usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.	I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms my family and other people, living conditions, my educational background and my present or most recent job.	I can write short, simple notes and messages relating to matters in areas of immediate needs. I can write a very simple personal letter, for example thanking someone for something.
A1	I can recognize familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.	I can understand familiar names, words and very simple sentences, for example on notices and posters or in catalogues.	I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I am trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or	I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.	I can write a short, simple postcard, for example sending holiday greetings. I can fill in forms with personal details, for example entering my name, nationality and address on a
Listening		Reading	Spoken Interaction	Spoken Production	Writing
UNDERSTANDING			SPEAKING		
			WRITING		

Table 2: Self-assessment grid
(© Council of Europe/Conseil de l'Europe)

	RANGE	ACCURACY	FLUENCY	INTERACTION	COHERENCE
C2	Shows great flexibility reformulating ideas in differing linguistic forms to convey finer shades of meaning precisely, to give emphasis, to differentiate and to eliminate ambiguity. Also has a good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms.	Maintains consistent grammatical control of complex language, even while attention is otherwise engaged (e.g. in forward planning, in monitoring others' reactions).	Can express him/herself spontaneously at length with a natural colloquial flow, avoiding or backtracking around any difficulty so smoothly that the interlocutor is hardly aware of it.	Can interact with ease and skill, picking up and using non-verbal and intonational cues apparently effortlessly. Can interweave his/her contribution into the joint discourse with fully natural turn taking, referencing, allusion making, etc.	Can create coherent and cohesive discourse making full and appropriate use of a variety of organizational patterns and a wide range of connectors and other cohesive devices.
C1	Has a good command of a broad range of language allowing him/her to select a formulation to express him/herself clearly in an appropriate style on a wide range of general, academic, professional or leisure topics without having to restrict what he/she wants to say.	Consistently maintains a high degree of grammatical accuracy; errors are rare, difficult to spot and generally corrected when they do occur.	Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly. Only a conceptually difficult subject can hinder a natural, smooth flow of language.	Can select a suitable phrase from a readily available range of discourse functions to preface their remarks in order to get or to keep the floor and to relate his/her own contributions skillfully to those of otherspeakers.	Can produce clear, smoothly flowing, well- structured speech, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
B2	Has a sufficient range of language to be able to give clear descriptions, express viewpoints on most general topics, without much conspicuous searching for words, using some complex sentence forms to do so.	Shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control. Does not make errors, which cause misunderstanding and can correct most of his/her mistakes.	Can produce stretches of language with a fairly even tempo; although he/she can be hesitant as he/she searches for patterns and expressions. There are few noticeably long pauses.	Can initiate discourse, take his/her turn when appropriate and end conversation when he/she needs to, though he/she may not always do this elegantly. Can help the discussion along on familiar ground confirming comprehension, inviting others in, etc.	Can use a limited number of cohesive devices to link his/her utterances into clear, coherent discourse, though there may be some 'jumpiness' in a long contribution.
B1	Has enough language to get by, with sufficient vocabulary to express him/ herself with some hesitation and circumlocutions on topics such as family, hobbies and interests, work, travel, and current events.	Uses reasonably accurately a repertoire of frequently used 'routines' and patterns associated with more predictable situations.	Can keep going comprehensibly, even though pausing for grammatical and lexical planning and repair is very evident, especially in longer stretches of free production.	Can initiate, maintain and close simple face-to-face conversation on topics that are familiar or of personal interest. Can repeat back part of what someone has said to confirm mutual understanding.	Can link a series of shorter, discrete simple elements into a connected, linear sequence of points.
A2	Uses basic sentence patterns with memorized phrases, groups of a few words and formulae in order to communicate limited information in simple everyday situations.	Uses some simple structures correctly, but still systematically makes basic mistakes.	Can make him/herself understood in very short utterances, even though pauses, false starts and reformulation are very evident.	Can answer questions and respond to simple statements. Can indicate when he/she is following but is rarely able to understand enough to keep conversation going of his/her own accord.	Can link groups of words with simple connectors like 'and', 'but' and 'because'.
A1	Has a very basic repertoire of words and simple phrases related to personal details and particular concrete situations.	Shows only limited control of a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns in a memorized repertoire.	Can manage very short, isolated, mainly pre-packaged utterances, with much pausing to search for expressions, to articulate fewer familiar words, and to repair communication.	Can ask and answer questions about personal details. Can interact in a simple way but communication is very dependent on repetition, rephrasing and repair.	Can link words or groups of words with very basic linear connectors like 'and' or 'then'.

Table 3: The qualitative aspects of spoken language use

TABLE 1: Global scale

This table communicates the CEFR system to non-specialist users and will provide teachers and curriculum planners with orientation points.

TABLE 2: Self-assessment grid

This grid helps learners to profile their main language skills and decide at which level they might be, according to a checklist of more detailed descriptors in order to self-assess their level of proficiency. It presents 30 scales of listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production and writing activities

TABLE 3: The qualitative aspects of spoken language use

The chart in this table is designed to assess spoken performances.

The Council of Europe has developed the toolkit presented on its website (available in seven languages) to support member states in their efforts to respond to the challenges posed by unprecedented migration flows. The toolkit is designed to assist organizations, and especially volunteers, providing language support for adult refugees. Throughout the toolkit, “refugee” is understood in a broad sense and includes asylum seekers as well as refugees.⁷⁷

AN EXAMPLE OF A SYSTEM OF EVALUATION: CVO BRUSSEL

Orientation and evaluation of our students is based on the CEFR-scales. Beginners are asked to take a cognitive ability (non-linguistic) test. According to their score on this test, they will be orientated towards either adult basic education or adult education (of which we are part).

During the course, students are evaluated continuously. There is no final exam, tests are given regularly.

Students fill out their scores in a portfolio, so that they can assess, evaluate and improve their learning at any moment in the course. The portfolio is a personal document of the student. In this document the student records their language learning at school for the five competences (listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production and writing).

As our approach is communicative, we first and foremost evaluate the written and oral production on content. The student gets feedback on what they say.

- Is the message delivered in a clear and understandable way?

⁷⁷ <https://www.coe.int/nl/web/language-support-for-adult-refugees/home>

- Does the receiver get the message in a coherent way or do they need to mentally adapt to get the message?

In the second place, the supporting elements - vocabulary, grammar, coherence (idea level), cohesion (sentence level), orthography and pronunciation - are evaluated. The student gets feedback on how they say it. The feedback on the supporting elements is comprehensive and customized.

At the end of every level and if every basic competence has been reached, the student receives a certificate and can move on to the next level.

The evaluation methods have to be adjusted to the target group, evaluation is not only important to know the progress in learning a language, but also in strengthening the self-confidence of the students, their pleasure in learning, their creativity and other more personal issues.

Until now, we were able to study the process of learning and the content that students receive when learning a second language as adults. We will now discuss the methodological pillars that the partners of Alternative Ways chose, to build the tools and activities of the project. Before creating the tools, the partners identified several aspects and techniques of teaching that are to be pillars in the process of creating the tools. These aspects are diverse and include intercultural learning, storytelling, the use of the body, media and context. The tools and activities of Alternative Ways consider all these aspects in order to be innovative.

03

METHODOLOGICAL PILLARS 1:

INTRODUCTION

One of the objectives of this project is to create efficient, innovative and non-formal education tools, this can be done by blending a diversity of methods that require different parts of the brain to work at the same time, in order for the learning to be stored in the long-term memory. In this introduction we will see why it is important to use several methods in teaching.

1. The reasons behind using a diversity of methods and approaches?

(ELAN INTERCULTUREL)

One of the reasons that justify the use of diverse methods and approaches is the fact that teachers are, most of the time, responsible for students with a diverse range of learning abilities and different levels of knowledge. This is where differentiated instruction and a balanced mix of teaching styles can help reach all students in a given classroom, not just those few who respond well to one particular style of teaching.

In addition, most learning processes involve simultaneous skills. For example, according to Leslie Wilson⁷⁸, reading is not a natural ability, it is a process of fusing three systems (visual, auditory, and understanding). To succeed in learning how to read, learners must develop all these skills.

This is why we would like to introduce the concept of “learning styles”, which implies that every student learns differently. Scientists and psychologists have developed a number of different models to understand the different ways that people learn best. One popular theory is the VARK learning style model introduced by Fleming⁷⁹, identifying four primary types of learners: **visual, auditory, reading/writing and kinesthetic**.

⁷⁸ Wilson (2014)

⁷⁹ <http://www.vark-learn.com/english/page>

Each learning type responds best to a different method of teaching. Auditory learners will remember information best after reciting it back to the presenter, while kinesthetic learners will jump when they have the opportunity to participate in a hands-on activity.

Another famous theory developed by Branton Shearer⁸⁰ and based on the *theory of multiple intelligences*⁸¹, proposes eight different learning styles: the linguistic learner, the naturalist, the musical or rhythmic learner, the kinesthetic learner, the visual or spatial learner, the logical or mathematical learner, the interpersonal learner and the intrapersonal learner⁸². Kolb also described different learning profiles (for more information, see the chapter “Different learning styles” starting on p.52).

It is important for educators to understand the differences in their students’ learning styles, so that they can implement best practice strategies into their daily activities, curricula and assessments. In the *Alternative Ways Toolkit*⁸³, you will find a variety of methodologies (based on art, peer education, neuroscience and more) which will enable you to easily create tailor-made language courses for people with low language learning skills. Take the time to explore different tools, to be creative and to enrich yourself and your students with diverse methods and approaches, respecting and stimulating different styles of learning and teaching.

2. Adaptation to personal needs in terms of learning

(STORYTELLING CENTRE)

Whilst working with different language groups, both formal and informal, the partners of this project experienced a significant number of students that succeeded in learning a new language. However, they also noticed that the dropout rate was relatively high. The students belonging to the target group of the Alternative Ways methodology may face multiple challenges⁸⁴. Some of them never or barely attended school, not even in their own country (in this case, they may also be illiterate or low literate in their own language). In addition to this, they can have psychological problems (such as depression, Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome and unfortunately many more).

Others who went to school in their own country might also be dealing with physiological problems that lead to cognitive issues in their learning abilities. Some of the learners in the Alternative Ways target group are refugees and this status implies several unique factors. For more information, see the article “Unique factors in the situation of refugees” on p.7 in the Introduction.

⁸⁰ Shearer (2011)

⁸¹ <https://www.tecweb.org/styles/gardner.html>

⁸² <https://visme.co/blog/8-learning-styles/>

⁸³ <http://aw.millerpreview.nl/>

⁸⁴ <https://www.werkwijzervluchtelingen.nl/opleiding/vragen/welke-knelpunten-komen-vluchtelingen-tegen-bijvolgen-opleiding.aspx>

All of these problems interact⁸⁵ with each other and may lead to these students getting frustrated by formal language learning methods, as they are not able to keep up with the goals which are set, increasing the chances of dropping out. However, that can often be avoided, when a more personal and non-formal approach is applied.

Firstly, students facing the challenges described above do have the ability and the will to learn the language. However, multiple problems make it hard for them to use or develop their cognitive skills. They will learn in a much slower or just a different pace. Informal learning, such as storytelling and other tools of language learning, might be one solution for this problem, since this method emphasizes psychological concepts as well as didactical theories and it adapts well to personal needs. Students will feel taken seriously and this allows them to start learning (see the chapter “Storytelling as a transversal approach” p.54).

At the start, it is important to take great care when beginning group formation (see the chapter “Collaborative learning” p.66). If everyone feels comfortable and knows what to expect, an atmosphere is created, whereby students feel free to experiment and to make mistakes.

This is important for every new group, but especially for groups composed of students with multiple challenges. This means that a trainer or teacher puts effort in creating the best circumstances for the students to learn, for example by stating: ‘This is a laboratory, when things go well: okay! When things go wrong: even better!’.

It is advised that the trainer starts with some team and trust building exercises. We would like to underline the importance of teambuilding. When there is a failure to build a strong team, the rest of the training can become nothing short of a nightmare. It is important to spend sufficient time on team building exercises (25 per cent). It may seem that this takes away precious time for actually working on the acquisition of language, but the partners of the project know from years of group experience that teachers will be gaining time because working with a strong team significantly expedites the next steps, that become immediately faster with a group that is mutually trusting⁸⁶. Being part of a good working and trusting team will provide space in the students’ minds so that they are capable of learning and feel free to experiment. Many team and trust building exercises can be found online and are also provided in the Alternative Ways Toolkit.

When some of the students maybe struggling, it is important that the subjects on offer be linked to the world that the students live in⁸⁷. Talking about Shakespeare, for example, will probably not ring a bell. A better subject would be going out for grocery shopping. They have done that in their own country and will do that in their host country as well. This will make the students feel secure, they know what the teacher is talking about and they can add new information to knowledge they already possess. Then they can connect the new words and phrases in their minds, to previously learned items.

⁸⁵ <https://news.ubc.ca/2016/02/16/refugee-children-face-unique-educational-challenges/>

⁸⁶ See the Share to Connect Method of Storytelling Centre, www.sharetoconnect.org

⁸⁷ <http://facingtoday.facinghistory.org/addressing-the-real-challenges-refugee-students-face-in-the-classroom>

As said before, not all students developed learning-skills in their childhood. Therefore, not all students are comfortable with the formal way of learning, which only emphasizes the cognitive aspect. It is important to know, that everyone has their own preference in style of learning (Kolb) (see the chapter “Different learning styles” p.52). Some people prefer reading and writing, others like to listen, whilst the next will draw. It is important to use a variety of exercises in the lessons, so that all the different learning styles will be triggered. Tell a story, listen to some music, draw and try to make sure that all senses of the students are used (see the chapter “Neuroeducation: basis of the learning process” p.3). In this way, everyone will be capable of learning and picking up new words. This makes all students feel welcome and can even have an impact on attendance levels.

Since not all students went to school in their own country, it is important to explain what is being done and why. Why do the students have to repeat items? If homework is given, it is important to explain what it is the students need to do and when. Just to illustrate this point: once, one of the partners worked with a Turkish woman. In her youth, after a few years of primary school, she had to stop going to school to do “homework”! So, explain that ‘doing homework’ means something else in a school context.

To make this method work, teachers should study in depth how people acquire a new language, but also understand group dynamics. Since this teaching might bring difficulties and challenges, it is hard to overstate the importance of all the members of the group feeling comfortable before starting to learn.

3. Different learning styles (STORYTELLING CENTRE)

Students who have difficulties acquiring language skills through the existing formal learning methods, present multiple types of intelligence and have different learning styles to be taken into account - this is relevant for all profiles, not only people with a low education background.

Most (European) school systems are very formal and abstract. Many language courses are also offered in the same way: “Here is a book, learn the words and complete assignments”. This is frustrating for adult learners who might never have experienced such a school system. They are missing the learning skills needed to acquire the language in this formal and abstract way. This leads to high rates of dropping out and quitting, not because they cannot or do not want to learn, they drop out because their cognitive learning skills are not developed enough. Storytelling is an informal way to develop learning skills and to learn a language, not only in a bland theoretical manner.

Here is an example of different learning styles: when a new device comes into the house that needs to be connected, one type of person will start with reading the user manual. The

other presses buttons to see if and how they work, and a third one will ask the neighbor to help, there are many ways of getting a new device to work.

The American professor Howard Gardner talks about *multiple intelligences*. He states that everyone acquires skills and knowledge in different ways. One learns by doing, the other must see it first and the third has to organize the information before they can fully understand it. If we want to train students and give them the tools to acquire skills, we need to take into account that there are differences between the students in how they will learn and understand. As a trainer, you should use multiple tools and working methods, to get all of the students involved in your lessons. Using creativity, offers many possibilities for working with students of different capabilities in acquiring knowledge and skills.

Howard Gardner describes eight types of intelligence, also called talents. These talents are musical-rhythmic, visual-spatial, verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalistic. Every human being has these eight types of intelligence, however, often only a couple of them are well developed. These strongly developed types of intelligence, determine the way one acquires knowledge and determines the preference for certain activities.

Intelligence tests only measure cognitive intelligence. If someone scores low on an IQ test, this does not necessarily mean that they are not intelligent. It only shows that they have fewer verbal talents or are less talented in thinking logically, which is only one aspect of intelligence.

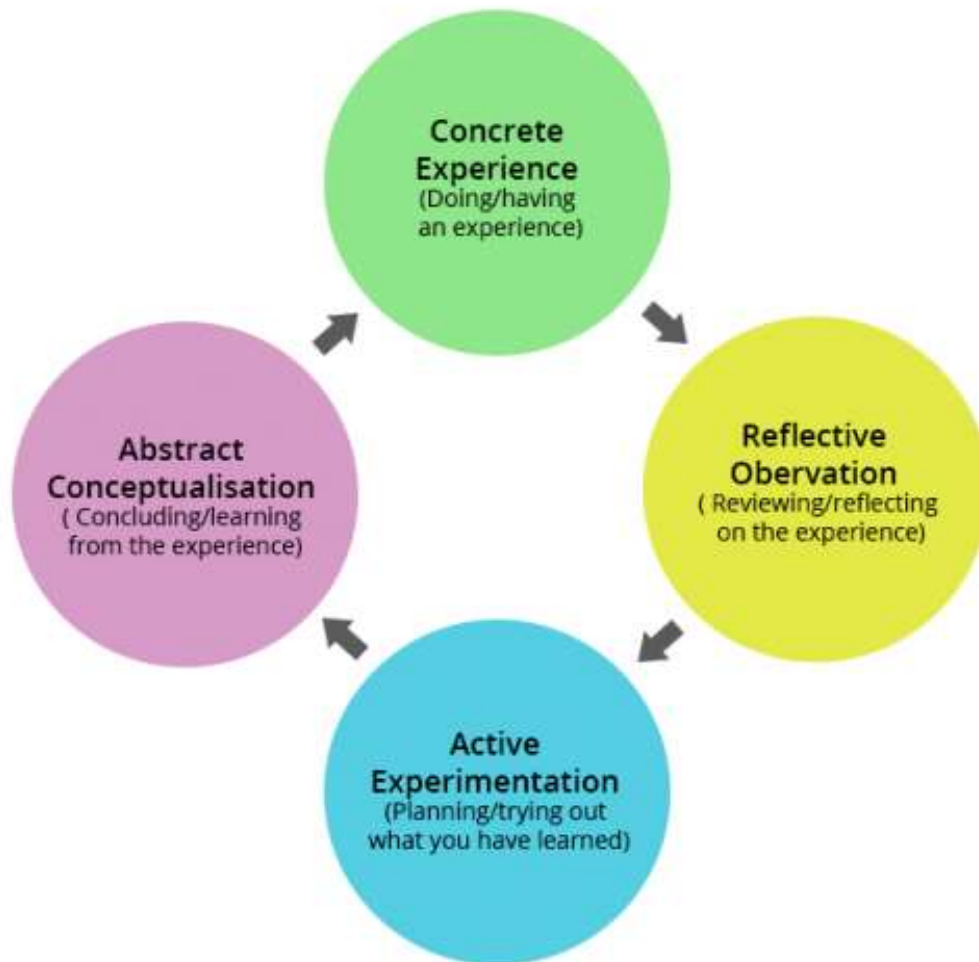
Alternative Ways involves this multiple intelligence theory to appeal to all available qualities of the students in order to guarantee the best results for them, in finding the activity that fully meets their expectation, passion and – most importantly – talents.

Logically, when there are eight types of intelligence, everyone has a different favorite learning style. Kolb has distinguished four different styles. These styles move along two dimensions: the first goes from concrete to abstract, the second from active to reflective. Whilst one prefers observing, the other prefers experimenting.

Everyone has a personal learning style, their own way of dealing with educational material and learning activities. To motivate someone, it is useful to connect with their individual learning style.

Here are the different learning styles described by Kolb⁸⁸:

⁸⁸ <https://medium.com/proactive-learning/kolb-learning-style-e56162c48d43>



The above learning styles correspond to the phases that can be distinguished in the learning process. The whole circle needs to be addressed during the learning process, in order to get a good learning experience and meet all the types of intelligence someone has. By practicing, other types of intelligence and learning styles will be further developed. Storytelling is a technique that applies these theories and allows the use of all of these approaches.

4. Storytelling as a transversal approach (STORYTELLING CENTRE)

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

So, can we just name storytelling as the miracle tool? Yes and no. Proper usage of storytelling in language education has many benefits, which we will highlight below. However, storytelling is not always the solution for everything, especially when working with students from a low education background. Let us start by exploring the boundaries of storytelling.

Two years ago, Storytelling Centre started providing (Dutch) language lessons to a group of men with a low education background, mostly with a refugee history. In the first meeting, the trainers started telling a story, a Chinese fairy tale. All they saw were big eyes staring at them, with clearly no clue as to what they were talking about. This story, that seemed quite simple to the trainers, was too difficult for the group to comprehend at that moment in time.

This experience, immediately taught them to look for different ways to use stories and narratives in their lessons. They dropped most of their ideas and went to the core idea of sharing stories, the fact that, in true connection, information is conveyed in a logical way using uncomplicated and straightforward narratives.

In this process they used several strategies that are linked to using stories and that are already described in the chapter 'How do people learn?' in this Foundation Bricks document. The main strategies are chunking and recodifying new information by associating it with previous knowledge.

A. Chunking

Chunking is a mental strategy to increase the capacity of the immediate memory, to allow it to hold onto things by giving sense and logic to a group of items. Chunking occurs when the working memory perceives incoming data as a structure, a system. Associated information is easier memorized than disassociated information⁸⁹.

Working with stories is a very clear and strong example of chunking, mainly in vocabulary learning but also in teaching grammar. Instead of offering individual words, in

⁸⁹ Thalmann M., Oberauer K., Souza A., (2018) How Does Chunking Help Working Memory? In Journal of Experimental Psychology Learning Memory and Cognition

telling a story, you offer words in a context. The student can remember these words more easily because you offer them within a structure.

If the story is accessible (so probably very simple), the student will remember both the narrative as the place and meaning of the words. This double 'storage' will enable the student to learn words faster. This is the basis of using stories in language learning and it is up to the level of the students which stories can be used in this process.

B. Recodifying new information

Recodifying new information is linked to the opportunity that learners have, to 'speak' about the information given in their own words. We generally remember much better what we produce. If students can create their own explanation of a concept, this will allow them to keep this information in their long-term memory⁹⁰.

Humans are storytelling beings; we are used to listening to stories and telling them over. We can use this awareness in setting up language lessons, by constantly looking for a connection with previous knowledge or with current issues.

C. Associating new information with previous knowledge

Concerning previous knowledge, we can explore stories that exist in many cultures and that are recognized by the students from their own culture and background. For example, we found out that the story of Little Red Riding Hood is told in many cultures, sometimes with small differences. In some Arabic countries she is called Leila and in some Eastern European societies she has to cross the mountains, while in the Netherlands she just has to cross the woods⁹¹.

It is important that all students can relate to this story and that this fact be used in better acquirement of new information (vocabulary and grammar structure). In that sense, traditional stories usually offer a more extended vocabulary and a more complex grammar than plain conversation⁹². However, as we described above, when choosing which stories we will use we have to keep the target group in mind, some stories might be too complex. In the toolkit we will try to collect some famous (simple) stories that are told in multiple cultures.

We can also link the lesson to current issues of the students. Through cultural and social references conveyed by storytelling, the following themes can be brought up and used as a way of gaining vocabulary⁹³:

⁹⁰ Thalmann M., Oberauer K., Souza A., (2018) How Does Chunking Help Working Memory? In Journal of Experimental Psychology Learning Memory and Cognition

⁹¹ You can use these differences as well in opening a discussion about cultural differences and similarities!

⁹² Fromelt (2011)

⁹³ See also Foundation Bricks of the Aladdin Project at <http://aladdinproject.eu/>

- Daily life: food, time management, etc.
- Interpersonal relationships: relationships between genders, structure and family relationships, the connections between different generations.
- Values and behaviors towards social class, socioeconomical groups, etc.
- Manners: conventions on given and received hospitality (gifts, drinks, meals), behavioral or spoken taboos.
- Rituals tied to birth, marriage, death or any other life experience, whether religious or not.

A final strategy we have good experiences with, is working with the personal memories of students. Talking about recent happenings, relates the words they use to memories they have. They store the words in two ways, as a word and as a memory, which enables them to store the information in a more efficient way in the long-term memory.

D. Working on rhythm and structure

Using storytelling as a tool in language acquisition, also contributes to a better understanding of the rhythm and structure of a language, in addition to the growth of vocabulary and the grammar knowledge.

Before students perform their stories, they will listen to other stories being told for the first time. Language lies at the root of one's culture and in that sense, it is important to give students rich experiences with words, sounds, intonation and rhythm whilst constructing meaning through the use of language⁹⁴.

Moreover, listening to stories is a social experience that will help develop oral narrative skills. Listening to and sharing stories can give adults an awareness that will help them speak, listen and even read and write⁹⁵.

To sum up:

1st principle: Information must be grounded and make sense to facilitate the learning process

2nd principle: New information is consolidated better when it is associated with previous knowledge

3rd principle: We easily remember what we produce ourselves and what we learn in alternative ways

4th principle: We experience better intonation and rhythm of a language when listening to it in a story setting.

⁹⁴ Fromelt (2011)

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

E. What students learn through storytelling: How the use of storytelling in language learning contributes to other competences

So far, we highlighted several benefits of listening to storytelling in order to improve language skills. The following advantages of storytelling, primarily concern what other skills the student will acquire whilst telling a story, however, can also be applied when students are listening to others' stories.

In delivering storytelling workshops and trainings to various target groups, multiple trainers and facilitators have learned that storytelling can lead to personal growth.

Using storytelling as a tool in non-formal learning methods also adds to the personal development of the students. Not being able to understand a language – which is often the case with new-comers of low education backgrounds – has a severe impact on self-esteem and self-respect, as the person is not able to fully participate in everyday social life. Even when there is a basic level of speaking, a learner might experience that natives do not have the patience to listen or worse, they start talking to the person in a very childish way.

Being able to share a simple or a slightly more complex story will lead to being heard, which has a huge effect on self-esteem and self-respect. Being heard means that you belong, and a sense of belonging has a very positive effect on the well-being of the student. Additionally, there is pride, when someone experiences a growth in their ability to express themselves, they will feel proud. Feeling proud makes someone stronger and more able to face other adaptation challenges.

Even a small confirmation of the fact that someone can participate, can 'make someone's day' and will lead to more courage in conversation.

In addition, storytelling can contribute to self-reflection⁹⁶. Inviting someone to make a story (even an uncomplicated story) means inviting someone to structure their mind. The student must decide what is really important and what is less important to share. Many participants of previous storytelling workshops of the Storytelling Centre⁹⁷ stated afterwards, that they knew way better what they wanted and what they found important. This process was stimulated and supported solely by creating a story and not by someone else telling the participant what to do. In advanced groups, with students who have a certain level of understanding and using the new language, this principle of self-reflection can be used in working on the student's personal growth.

With these transverse aspects in mind, the importance of using diverse methods, the fact of knowing about different learning skills and styles and the benefit of using storytelling, the teacher can be more aware of how their teaching method reaches their students. These aspects are to be applied together with each facet mentioned below, thanks to their

⁹⁶ <https://www.sharetoconnect.nl/>

⁹⁷ See projects and workshops at www.storytelling-centre.nl

transversality. Bearing that in mind, the first important facet to be introduced into the teaching approach (and into the tools of the project) is intercultural learning and how this can shape the dynamics of learning for students.

04

METHODOLOGICAL PILLARS 2:

INTERCULTURAL LEARNING

Adults who learn a second language because they find themselves on an integration process in a host country, are necessarily exposed to intercultural situations and relationships. Their learning exceeds language learning and goes beyond understanding how to shop, what to wear according to the climate, how to administrate their lives, how to seek healthcare or how to interact with people. By learning the language of the host country, they respond to needs that they have, with some of these skills being deeply related to cultural aspects, and, by definition, these adults learning a second language evolve in an intercultural environment.

In 2007, UNESCO published its Guidelines for Intercultural Education which promotes three main principles⁹⁸:

- Intercultural education respects the cultural identity of the learner, through the provision of culturally appropriate and responsive quality education for all.
- Intercultural education provides every learner with the cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to achieve active and full participation in society.
- Intercultural education provides all learners with cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills that enable them to contribute to respecting, understanding and empathizing with other individuals, ethnic, social, cultural & religious groups and nations.

Intercultural education is a holistic educational approach, that allows the development of people's willingness and ability to live in a diverse society. It intersects with democratic citizenship and human rights education, promotes respect of human rights for majorities and minorities alike. It clarifies the fact that equal opportunities for all social groups is aimed at reducing injustice.

Intercultural learning is not a separate reality from regular education, it promotes diversity whilst constantly challenging power structures. It bears potential for social transformation and represents a framework for the analysis of political realities, by giving students the possibility of learning skills and competences, that allow them to deal with the reality of diversity⁹⁹.

How do we manage intercultural learning? What are its different dimensions and what are the tools necessary for its implementation?

⁹⁸ <https://www.unesco-sole.si/doc/teme/medkulturno-ucenje-guidelines.pdf>

⁹⁹ Sandu (2018)

1. Giving access to local culture

(Elan Interculturel)

Language classes provide students with grammar, syntax and vocabulary skills that are useful for the integration process into their host country. However, students also need to learn a lot of other things, to be able to interact with the local society and manage their administrative life. Language classes are a specifically dense place in terms of learning related to local culture. However, we would like to exclude here the values aspect as described in *“The making of “good” citizens: German courses for migrant refugees”* by A.M.B. Heinemann, where he discusses the teacher giving access to local culture through what is commonly called “civilization sessions”. This statement is very questionable in terms of reciprocity, as well as the hierarchy of the one giving and the one receiving.

What does “teaching culture” mean though and how can a teacher open up access to local culture? Are there specific methods and processes?

Several language education researchers have mentioned different approaches of integrating culture into language teaching. For example, Piątkowska (2015) distinguishes three approaches: the knowledge-based approach, the contrastive approach and the intercultural communicative competence approach. The knowledge-based approach aims at providing learners with facts about the target language culture, such as customs, habits, literature or arts (cultural knowledge). The contrastive approach allows learners to be aware of similarities and differences between their own culture and the target language culture (cultural awareness). The intercultural communicative competence approach, expects learners to develop their communicative and intercultural skills, which allow them to interact in any intercultural context (intercultural competence).

We can view culture teaching as responding to three main objectives: knowledge about the target cultures, skills for intercultural relationships, and empathy. Cultural knowledge as “pure information” (knowledge-based approach) is useful but not enough. It does not help the learners in developing critical thought towards the target language culture and their own. This means, that beyond the interesting but very factual information about cultural ways of living and thinking, learners can acquire skills to be prepared for future intercultural encounters and be ready to adapt themselves to a foreign culture (intercultural competence approach). Cultural awareness is a type of sensitivity, defined by researchers as a sensitivity to the impact of culturally induced behavior on language use and communication. Many times, cultural awareness is gained from personal experience. Unlike cultural knowledge that can be transmitted, cultural awareness can also be raised in a class setting by pointing out similarities and differences whilst talking about cultural aspects. As for intercultural competence, it is gained by learning to be aware of what underlies cultural differences and the emotional

aspects of culture shocks, it is about analyzing why one feels what they feel in their personal experience of cultural awareness.

With these three types of approach, learners can reach a level of knowledge and skills that lead them to work against stereotyped and prejudiced views of other cultures (the target language culture and the other learners' culture). It implies that learners do not necessarily agree with every aspect of the target culture but they are able to understand underlying values, sustaining the aspects they disagree with but are respectful of.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, cultural knowledge, awareness and competence lead to better understanding of the target culture as well as the learners' own cultures¹⁰¹.

It is important for the teacher to balance teaching linguistic and cultural aspects and to be able to select what has priority and when¹⁰².

Giving access is not necessarily understood here as "teaching" cultural aspects (even when we are talking about the knowledge-based approach). It is understood rather, as giving the tools through which the learners can comprehend the local culture. In that sense, the literature of a country is a good reflection of its culture and starting with very simple poems can influence learners to look for more literature as they improve their language skills.

Also, in language institutions such as the Français Langue d'Accueil (FLA) in Paris, specific workshops are dedicated to discovering French culture whilst practicing French. For instance, FLA provides workshops as diverse as "Singing in French", "Myths and Legends" or "Reading and Theatre" in which participants are invited to learn about different aspects of French culture by mobilizing their skills in French and their intercultural competences.

Such contact with art gives a voice to participants, discussing differences among populations and art can become a powerful tool in these situations¹⁰³. These tools are typically part of the cultural knowledge approach.

As for cultural awareness and intercultural communicative competences, it is important to look for tools and activities that allow learners, to learn about the concept of culture and the underlying values behind what is visible, tools that lead to conscious thought on their possibly biased view of a culture and some individuals (both in a positive or negative way). Many games and artistic tools exist to train those skills such as playing with names and their stories, playing with stereotypes, storytelling, learning about the iceberg metaphor and the theory of cultural shock management¹⁰⁴. It is also essential to notice that going back and forth between the target culture and the learners' cultures is a way to "give access to local culture" in a more horizontal way and to practice cultural awareness.

To conclude, one can say that giving access to local culture is about giving the tools to communicate with the local culture, whether it is for cultural knowledge or cultural awareness and intercultural communication competence skills. The three types of approach described

¹⁰⁰ Nguyen (2005)

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Sun (2013)

¹⁰³ Pasikowska-Schnass (2017)

¹⁰⁴ Cohen-Emerique (1980)

here, all allow access to local culture for learners in different ways (through facts, through experiences and through deep understanding of intercultural dynamics - which allows them to better understand local cultures and other cultures in general). However, there is one condition for this learning process to happen: the teachers must be trained themselves to be able to apply this approach to their own lifestyles and transmit it to the learners.

2. Acknowledging and valorizing own cultures

(Elan Interculturel)

Giving access to local culture is one aspect of intercultural learning. Education can promote cohesion, as long as it takes into account the individual and group diversity without provoking their marginalization or social outcasting¹⁰⁵. The respect for individuality and diversity represents a main principle that intercultural learning bears within itself. Intercultural education leads to interpersonal relationships which involve members from different cultures¹⁰⁶.

Intercultural learning, which implies giving access to local culture but not only, is about plural perspective and acknowledges that there is no single perspective of reality. It takes a clear stand against discrimination, by allowing one to raise their awareness of stereotypes and prejudices and how these affect their and others' lives. It brings learners the tools to deconstruct ethnocentric perspectives and denies any idea of a hierarchical distribution of ethnic groups¹⁰⁷. It is an alternative to multiculturalism, by facilitating dialogue between socio-cultural groups as a way to learn from each other it goes beyond simple cohabitation. It is also an alternative to cultural relativism; it takes a stand against practices that do not respect human rights even when they are presented as culturally traditional.

Cultural diversity is a reality to be comprehended. In an educational process, one has the opportunity to recognize, that everyone can contribute to enriching the human experience and each person with their own culture constitutes a particular experience that others can potentially identify with. That is why it is important to positively underline everyone's culture within education.

Valorizing each culture present in the classroom within a learning process, can tackle subjects as wide as language, religion, traditions, social links, social practices of communication, networking, art or even food. The teacher can initiate an intercultural dialogue about the home countries of the learners, helping them to become aware of their new surroundings. All those involved meet here on an equal footing¹⁰⁸. Moreover,

¹⁰⁵ Danescu (2014)

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Sandu (2018)

¹⁰⁸ Klingenberg (2016)

intercultural learning should also provide a glimpse into the differences that exist within a culture, avoiding the generalization and stereotyping of a culture as only one entity.

In 1998, C. Bennet identified four dimensions of practical realization of intercultural education¹⁰⁹. One of them, according to him, is the *intercultural approach of contents* and refers to being curious about and understanding cultural differences, using elements of civilization for each group present. This requires integrating multi-ethnic dimensions in a traditional syllabus and leads to the valorization of own cultures.

Valorizing own cultures is also a way to work on the very individual dimension of the concept of identity. Indeed, according to E.T. Hall, identity is “moveable” and continuously transforms with the cultural systems that surround an individual¹¹⁰. Indeed, identity is formed by one’s self identification and by one’s identification by others. At an individual level, identity is strongly connected to the need of relating to others, to society at large and to the perception of one’s own autonomy. Thus, an education process where each person can feel valued in their own culture strengthens their sense of identity. They can then move at ease within their new cultural surroundings, experiencing less of a threat to their identity.

All in all, acknowledging and valorizing own cultures is a key element to learners’ adaptation to their new environment. It brings an added value to the language learning process, by strengthening learners’ confidence and building a conversation on equal footing, amongst learners and between the learners and teacher. Thus, learners who feel valued through their culture will be more willing to learn to adapt to their new environment.

3. Valorization of diversity

(Elan Interculturel)

Intercultural learning does not simply mean learning about cultural differences, it means engaging with them to create new narratives. For that, an educational process needs to value not only each culture but diversity itself as a concept. Valuing diversity means understanding the complexity of cultural groups and power relations between them. That is why respect of diversity is strongly connected to human rights, promoting the arts and traditions of a culture whilst its members do not have access to full human rights is a superficial way of valuing diversity¹¹¹.

The current perspective on diversity has shifted from celebrating it to the development of a deeply intercultural society. It goes beyond organizing folkloric events¹¹² and it allows us to reverse from a binary vision in terms of us and them. When a teacher stops labelling the classroom in a binary way, students who experience valorization of diversity also refrain from

¹⁰⁹ Danescu (2014)

¹¹⁰ Sandu (2018)

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

labelling¹¹³. This process is reciprocal, meaning that the ability of valuing diversity that students already very often have through their past experiences, influences the teacher to do so as well.

In this framework, teachers are expected to develop an appropriate and balanced attitude towards diversity, to strengthen their confidence in their own cultural background and openness to others¹¹⁴. This is where we can understand the direct link between the valorization of each culture and the valorization of diversity. Indeed, valorization of diversity requires an intrinsic ability to comprehend cultures individually. There is a *cognitive competence* that allows one to discover their own culture and the culture of the people they enter in contact with, with this leading to an *emotional competence* of being available to adapt and to empathize. Then, one can develop an *operational competence* and a certain way to experiment with diversity and value it through actions¹¹⁵.

Valuing diversity is also a way to build mutual support between communities. Through a true dialogue and a positive image of diversity, relationships between communities are strengthened¹¹⁶. An intercultural society, goes beyond a multicultural one that tolerates diversity but does not value it. Therefore, valuing diversity is a process that needs to be enhanced during the learning process, along with the valorization of each culture present in the room. The concept itself is then valued and considered as a tool for empowerment and a faster and easier learning process.

4. Learning during an acculturation process (Elan Interculturel)

Intercultural learning, happens quite naturally when one finds themselves in an acculturation situation. Acculturation, is defined as an exchange process between people belonging to different cultural groups and it leads to cultural, linguistic, religious and psychological changes¹¹⁷. The metaphor mostly used to picture acculturation is a collision between two icebergs. Each iceberg represents the visible and hidden parts of culture within an individual. The visible part is made up of all the cultural manifestations that are visible: how we greet each other, how we dress, what language we speak and what we eat. The hidden part is made up of values and beliefs and is linked to the visible part (we greet each other in a certain way because we believe in respect and this type of greeting represents respect for us, or we eat a certain way because we believe it is healthy). In the acculturation process, visible parts collide and reveal how hidden parts are related. Sometimes, similar values in the hidden part lead to opposite visible cultural manifestations of these values and acculturation can be

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Danescu (2014)

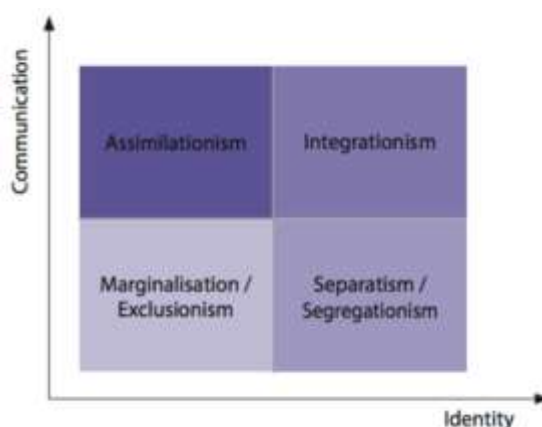
¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Sandu (2018)

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

a painful process if the incident is not analyzed. For example, if X wants to greet Y by shaking their hand but Y refuses, X can be shocked and can feel undermined because shaking is a sign of respect for them. Y however, believes that shaking hands is a sign of familiarity and informality and does not want to seem like they disrespect X. Both are shocked and under stress but the value that is being shaken is the same for each of them: respect.

In 1980, Berry designed a table (see below) that simplifies different strategies of acculturation. The vertical axis represents the degree of communication with and learning from the host culture, the horizontal axis represents the degree of preservation of one's own culture within themselves. For example, if a person is able to learn from the local culture as well as preserve their own cultural identity, they are in a process of integration. If they deny their original culture and learn from the local culture, they are in a process of assimilationism.



Berry's table of acculturation (1980)

The model above provides a theoretical framework to understand how one subjectively experiences acculturation. The underlying assumption is that difference can be experienced in various ways, but it must be processed in order to increase the potential for intercultural awareness¹¹⁸. The model below is a continuum of six stages of intercultural awareness, even though there is not necessarily a linear progression during an acculturation process leading to integration. Three stages are ethnocentric (avoiding cultural difference) and three stages are more ethno-relative (seeking cultural difference).

Ethnocentric stages			Ethno-relative stages		
Denial	Defence Reversal	Minimisation	Acceptance	Adaptation	Integration

Stages of Acculturation

The classroom is, for some students, the only place they can experience acculturation (both with the teacher and with participants from other cultures). Indeed, in some cases and

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

for a varying amount of time, students live within their own community, using a kind of separation strategy of acculturation (see Berry's tab above) and their language class is the only place they can enter into contact with local and other cultures. Slowly, and involving other factors, they might "choose" another strategy of acculturation like integration.

In any case, intercultural learning eases the acculturation process and participates in giving students a choice from the different acculturation strategies, as long as the host society is also ready to participate in this process.

To conclude, one can say that intercultural learning includes learning about the local culture, valorization of each culture present, valorization of diversity as a concept and getting the best out of acculturation. These lessons are very important, to trigger and maintain motivation, self-esteem, curiosity and can help building the flexibility that eases the integration process of the students.

Another element that fosters motivation and efficiency of the learning is the group. How do group dynamics influence the learning process? How can we use the relationship between students to serve the goal of teaching?

05

METHODOLOGICAL PILLARS 3:

RELATIONAL LEARNING

1. Group dynamics (ELAN INTERCULTUREL)

When learners and teachers enter classrooms, they bring their own cultural glasses, which implies specific ways to perceive and to expect hierarchies, gender, class, sexual orientation and roles. Because the social context is duplicated in the microcosm of the classroom¹¹⁹, the trainer can reproduce the power structures that privilege some, silence some, and deny the existence of other learners¹²⁰. If all learners are to thrive, adult educators must go beyond the facilitator's role, to directly negotiate the power dynamics in the classroom and to create new cultural codes, which will facilitate the learning process of all students.

With this in mind, understanding group dynamics is important because the human being is a social being. Humans live in groups: they are born into a first group (family), go to school in groups (class group, friends group), work in groups (organization, formal project group, social group) and worship in groups (places of worship, activism)¹²¹.

According to Zulay P. Pérez from the National University of Costa Rica¹²², the interactive dynamics that are developed in the classroom, determine whether or not an environment is appropriate for the teaching and learning process, which must be considered, if someone chooses an integral education of quality.

How to choose the right group dynamics?

The dynamics for different groups have variable characteristics, that make them suitable for certain groups in different circumstances. The choice of the appropriate technique in each case generally corresponds to that of the trainer or educator. To select the most suitable group dynamics in each case, the following factors must be considered¹²³:

¹¹⁹ Johnson-Bailey (1996)

¹²⁰ Maher (1994)

¹²¹ Johnson (2006)

¹²² Pereira Pérez (2009)

¹²³ <https://www.gerza.com/index.html>

- Expected goals (to develop decision-making skills, to facilitate the learning of specific knowledge, to develop creativity, etc.)
- Characteristics of group members (age, level of instruction, interests, expectations, predisposition, experiences, etc.)
- Group size: due to the nature and complexity of group dynamics, a certain number of participants is required to allow these dynamics to be successfully developed.
- Physical environment: certain dynamics require a specific room that allows the performance of a large group, or the simultaneous work of several small groups.
- Time: some dynamics take longer than others, and the size of the group also affects the needs in terms of time. This factor should be taken into account, since it is not advisable to leave the construction of a dynamic in the middle of the process.

The positive impact of a good group dynamic in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners, has been proven in research published by the Canadian Center of Science and Education. The study showed, how Group-Dynamics Oriented Instruction was reliably effective.

A good dynamic helps to:

- Develop and improve the willingness to communicate, as well as in the long run, speaking ability.
- Trigger energy, interest and inclination to partake in discussions.

Last but not least, thanks to a good group dynamic, a group of students becomes a source of learning enrichment, instead of the threat that can sometimes be experienced by individuals. Students are more willing to initiate communication and less willing to keep quiet when they function as a member of a group.

2. Peer-to-peer learning

(ELAN INTERCULTUREL)

Peer to peer learning or social learning, can be defined as “any communicative activity carried out between learners, where there is minimal or no participation of the teacher”¹²⁴. It can therefore be understood as collaborative learning, operating on a horizontal principle, in which the different students exchange with each other. The interlocutors mutually develop and build knowledge, on an equal footing, unlike the traditional vertical system where a teacher teaches presupposed knowledge to a student. The collaborative system is more and more present in modern society and has become a real actor in its evolution: we are beginning

¹²⁴ Philip (2014)

to exchange/share our cars, houses, services and eventually our knowledge. In this dynamic, the coherence of peer to peer learning or social learning is highlighted by the *70.20.10 model*¹²⁵ showing that 70% of our learning takes place in the operational context (by learning in the workplace when we arrive in a company for instance), 20% of the learning results from exchanges with peers (colleagues, managers, etc.) and only 10% of the learning comes from school-based education. There are therefore, more benefits to promoting peer learning than the school-based education we have been used to until now¹²⁶.

Applied to language teaching, peer learning is often divided into two practices: collaborative learning and cooperative learning. Both “involve a strong sense of mutuality and joint effort”¹²⁷. The difference between them, is that cooperative learning does not necessarily involve the same level of knowledge among the people exchanging. In fact, “it occurs when one participant – often having more proficiency - assists another of lower proficiency in achieving a desired goal.”¹²⁸ T. Pica argues more specifically that the type of social interaction most appropriate to the development of language is “one in which learners and their interlocutors share a need and a desire to understand each other”¹²⁹. Learners must restructure their conversation, so that the mutual, intrinsic desire to understand each other can be used to help achieve language acquisition. Indeed, people feel more comfortable in peer learning situations than in traditional educational environments, which rely on authoritative external people. By replacing a stranger with someone whom the public immediately feels a connection with, learners are more receptive. This helps them to gain self-confidence and to have the courage to ask questions.¹³⁰

According to P. MacIntyre¹³¹, the ideal structure for social learning in language learning (in his case, English) is that the participants are students¹³², with at least one of them being fluent in English as a second language. The system is therefore set up as a hybrid between vertical education and horizontal exchange.

In addition, it sets four conditions:

1. The learner must be aware of the (appropriate) strategies. Strategies can be used spontaneously or learned, but their use must be intentional.
2. The learner must have a reason to use the strategy (positive attitude, motivation, opportunity to use it).
3. There must be no reason not to use it (anxiety, sanctions when using it, reasons to believe it is ineffective).

¹²⁵ <https://blog.continu.co/peer-to-peer-learning/>

¹²⁶ Zenoni (2018)

¹²⁷ Philip (2014)

¹²⁸ Krashen (1981)

¹²⁹ Pica (1987)

¹³⁰ <https://blog.continu.co/peer-to-peer-learning/> & <http://www.cactusworldwide.com/blog/2015/08/20/peer-teaching-and-peer-learning-in-the-language-classroom/>

¹³¹ MacIntyre (1994)

¹³² Several studies including the study by Alain Baudrit (2005)

4. The use of strategies must be reinforced by positive consequences (reduction of anxiety, higher scores, etc.), even if the strategies themselves are not useful for learning.

Peer to peer learning has been given a boost in recent years, with the emergence of new digital tools that have enabled it to take on new dimensions. These make sharing knowledge, content and rapid interactions easier, creating a real collective intelligence of which *Wikipedia* is probably the most emblematic example. Some websites specializing in peer to peer learning such as *TechSmith*¹³³ promote this new form of peer to peer learning, using the e-learning basics that we will see later, and explain how to adapt and use it in a school setting.

TechSmith provides a concrete three-point guide, for implementing what we might call peer to peer learning 2.0 in the school environment:

1. “Let students teach each other by having them make quick video lessons. Students explain course concepts in ways that make sense to their classmates, and showing others, strengthens their own understanding and retention.
2. Enable students to ask and answer each other’s questions, before asking the teacher. Students join the discussion with text, drawings, and narrated video responses.
3. Facilitate group collaboration to discuss issues, explain viewpoints, and share ideas. Increase the effectiveness of classroom sharing, especially when the student-teacher ratio is high, or instructor time is limited.”

Peer to peer learning is an old phenomenon, but one that is being renewed and given a new dimension through new technological tools. It is part of a group dynamic, of varying sizes, more than a pair relationship, and seems relatively simple to set up, as long as a group spirit is present and set up or even maintained by an external person. The results, both technically and in terms of group dynamics, are indisputable but require a structured environment and a certain maturity amongst participants.

¹³³ <https://www.techsmith.com/edu-k12-peer-to-peer.html>

3. Collaborative learning

(STORYTELLING CENTRE)

Collaborative learning can be a powerful tool to avoid the exclusion of low status students, in the framework of language courses for people with a low education background.

The partners of the Alternative Ways project believe that collaborative working is the most effective and beneficial way of conveying knowledge in a learning process. The toolkit they developed is based on collaborative methods, including the involvement of group exercises and assignments. Working collaboratively, contributes both to the development of mastering a new language as well as to the personal development of the students. As language teachers work with groups of students of low language learning skills, they might face other challenges as well¹³⁴. For example, it is hard to form same level groups and some students might have a low self-esteem. By collaborative working, everybody can do what suits them best and contribute to the tasks the group needs to perform. That is why the partners underline the importance of collaborative working.

A. Working with groups

In the recent past, the partners of the project have delivered multiple workshops to different target groups¹³⁵, showing that the advantage of working with groups is that one already has the appreciative and critical listeners in the same space (peer to peer learning). A good way to use the potential of this situation, is to ask students to work together in smaller groups, to support each other in working on assignments. This influences the dynamics of a class in a positive way, as students can check immediately if ideas work, discuss issues and test ways of putting things forward¹³⁶. Besides, showing insecurity, is easier in a small group than in front of a bigger audience. It helps people to work on their self-confidence.

It is also advisable to involve the entire group in giving feedback. This trains people in being critical in a constructive way and it shows that by collaborating, the quality of their language can grow to an unexpected level. Secondly, by seeing other students using the 'new language and by being 'invited' to give feedback, people will also look at their own use of the language in comparison to the user they have to judge and will find it easier to discover the strengths and weaknesses in their own language usage.

¹³⁴ <https://www.werkwijzervluchtelingen.nl/opleiding/vragen/welke-knelpunten-komen-vluchtelingen-tegen-bijvolgen-opleiding.aspx>

¹³⁵ See our projects and workshops at www.storytelling-centre.nl

¹³⁶ See also Foundation Bricks of the Aladdin Project at <http://aladdinproject.eu/>

Moreover, the students of a language learning program often have more in common with each other than with the trainer. So, fellow students will mostly be the best judges of a learner and sometimes also the best advisers on how to use the language. The task of the trainer is mainly to lead or facilitate this process, fairly and properly and to support in explaining why language rules are the way they are.

Though different trainers will think differently about the ideal size of a group, the shared view is that the true power of language teaching in a non-formal way benefits from working in relatively small groups¹³⁷. The attention students need to have and the concentration that is being asked of the trainers leads to the assessment that a group of five to six people is the ideal, working with one trainer. With less students it is difficult to have the optimal group dynamic and interaction, with more students the ability to pay enough attention to all students is lost.

Understanding how a group works, being able to install interesting group dynamics and foster collaboration is key to the learning process. After seeing the importance of the group, we will now tackle the importance of the individual as a physical being. How can the connection to one's own body encourage learning?

¹³⁷ http://sydney.edu.au/education_social_work/groupwork/implement/prepare/size.shtml

06

METHODOLOGICAL PILLARS 4:

EMBODIED LEARNING

1. Multisensory learning

(ELAN INTERCULTUREL)

Traditionally, the auditory and visually sensitive channels have been found to be the most effective for students to learn reading and writing. Nevertheless, educators and researchers have long believed that stimulating multiple areas in the brain, called Multisensory Learning, can enhance the learning process. By engaging students with different learning styles, for example, those people that are more “visual”, and others that are more “auditory learners” (for more information on different learning styles, see chapters: “Need to use a diversity of methods and approaches” p.40 and “Different learning styles” p.52). This teaching method allows each student to use a variety of their senses to understand and process information.

Moreover, research indicates that multimodal processing reduces the cognitive load, because information from different senses can be more easily chunked in the short-term memory and used to build long-term representations, improving the learning process¹³⁸. The more senses that are stimulated, the more we are able to retain *new* knowledge. Furthermore, multisensory teaching increases learning attention, which creates and caters for an optimal learning environment.

Italian doctor Maria Montessori¹³⁹ was a pioneer of this multisensory approach in the early 20th century, and most subject areas in a Montessori school use a mixture of visual, auditory, tactile and kinesthetic approaches where memories are not stored intact but in pieces. The greater the variety of sensory channels that can be associated with new learning, the greater the probability that it will be stored in different brain networks, giving students more possibilities of memorizing. This is why, teaching the same concept using different senses will reinforce the learning process in the long-term memory.

¹³⁸ Bagui (1998)

¹³⁹ <https://amshq.org/Montessori-Education/History-of-Montessori-Education/Biography-of-Maria-Montessori>

Over the last decades, several modern language instruction techniques for students with language issues, such as dyslexia, have coalesced into a method called *Multisensory Structural Language Education*, which stimulates all senses with articulatory modalities for teaching¹⁴⁰. Research has shown, that all students and teachers can greatly benefit from a multisensory approach in the teaching and learning process.

Learning a new language, implies learning new culture codes and as previously mentioned, new cultural ways of thinking. Using multisensory learning here, would imply more than the simple application of efficient language learning strategies¹⁴¹. Using multisensory learning is like knocking on all sensory doors at the same time, in order to allow significant learning to happen. Let us taste, hear, see, touch and smell new learning, new languages!

2. Sports as a way of learning

(ARBEIT UND LEBEN)

Sport offers the opportunity, to create shared experiences and to communicate, even without speaking the same language. Using a common set of rules, similar ways of playing and shared passions, people from all kinds of different backgrounds and origins are able to play sports together.

As a result, sports have the potential to bring people together, to connect and speak with a common (non-verbal) language.

A. Brain training and sports

There are basic findings on the positive effect of movement and sports on the functions of the brain. Positive hormones triggered by physical activity favor learning in general. Differentiated movement and sensory experiences, support the connection of the cells in the human brain, thereby enabling the processing of information. Therefore, the combination of sports and language is a logical consequence of this finding. Prof. Dr. Renate Zimmer, German expert in the field of combining movement and learning, repeatedly points out that language and movement are not just randomly connected but they form a unity that cannot be separated. If language learning is to be supported, then all senses related to the learning process have to be set in motion. For using language as a means of communication, the interaction with other people needs to be tangible.

¹⁴⁰ Birsh (1999)

¹⁴¹ Sari (2015)

This is where organized sports come into the picture. Language use can be motivated, actions and procedures can be described and previously learned material can be playfully deepened. Trainers can serve as language role models and give corrective feedback. There are exercises and concepts, specifically designed for the combination of brain training and (language) learning. The brain is activated by means of non-routine, coordinative, cognitive and visual tasks, according to the principle of performing movements whilst at the same time challenging the brain. No exercise is mastered until an automation occurs. The exercises create new connections between the brain cells, thus enabling the "slumbering" mental potential to be awakened. The more connected networks in the brain, the higher the performance, flexibility and processing speed of the brain.

The positive results of the training include stress reduction, improved attention, improved speed of action and much more.

Exercises and games can be used in a way that connects to the special competence areas of language lessons, such as "Speaking and Listening", "Reading - with texts and media" and "Writing". By performing and implementing motion exercises whilst studying language, accurate speech and listening are encouraged. Pantomime representing words, sentences or stories, can support reading and grammar for learning parts of speech (representation of adjectives and verbs). For the field of writing exercises, physical activities can be integrated into the lessons, where the alphabet is being learned and strengthened via motion, or where self-written texts can be translated into motion as well. Almost all learning subjects of language lessons can be characterized by small movement games or by relaxing exercises. For an in depth list of suggested exercises, please see the toolkit.

B. Language animation

Shared experiences and successful communication, enable people to discover, understand and reflect the cultural idiosyncrasies ¹⁴²of others. Language animation can help to exploit this potential.

Language animation was conceived as an educational concept for intercultural encounters between French and German Youngsters, by the Deutsch Französisches Jugendwerk (German French Youth Work) in the 1990s. It acknowledges, that understanding also works with little knowledge of a foreign language if what is being said is supported by movements.

It is a method that does not primarily pursue the teaching of language skills. It rather offers the opportunity to overcome inhibitions in a playful way and to learn another language using all senses, without any pressure to perform. It is a practical and target group-based method characterized by creativity, interactivity, and a lively, playful approach to learning:

¹⁴² A way of being particular to everyone that leads them to have a particular type of reaction, a particular type of behaviour, The Larousse Dictionary

learning with the whole body. So, the objectives as well as the implementation, clearly differentiate it from formal language lessons.

Through playful activities with language elements, it helps individuals develop a feeling for an unfamiliar language, its melody and sound, and encourages them to try out another language. It is not about traditional foreign language teaching, it is about informal communication exercises, where participants approach each other in a relaxed and natural manner. For example, they can try to communicate with their hands and feet or additionally, repeat or memorize individual words and turns of phrase. The most important thing is that they have fun and can get to know each other better. Neither mispronunciations nor grammatical mistakes are corrected, with the focus being on eliminating inhibitions one may feel with the partner language, stimulating an interest in communicating in a language other than one's mother tongue, and arousing curiosity about the other country. Language Animation also draws attention, to the possibilities of non-verbal communication in the foreign language context. Facial expressions, gestures, eye contact and symbols are all equally valid forms of communication that can be used to achieve the respective communication objective. An important side-effect, is that successful communication creates an appetite for more.

In this context, three complementary stages were developed:

- i. **Elimination of inhibitions:** the phase of eliminating inhibitions runs parallel to the process of recognizing personal communication strategies. This phase, also aims at creating an atmosphere in the group that is conducive to communication. On the one hand, it means overcoming self-consciousness and fears, as well as gaining confidence and a feeling of belonging; on the other hand, it means understanding communication as a phenomenon that goes beyond language and perceiving language-assistive behavior, as described above, as normal. Playful and creative activities are used, like icebreaker activities in group situations, to eliminate physical and mental shyness. This encourages communication. What is crucial in this phase, is that participants are under no pressure to perform but can gain confidence in themselves and in others.
- ii. **Language learning:** linguistic elements are integrated fluently into joint activities. Depending on the context, these can be group-dynamic games or spontaneously enacted scenes. What is important, is that communicative relationships and communicated content reflect the current situation of the group and participants. This phase is also about taking initial steps to gradually embed the foreign language in the mind. A personal relationship to the language should develop through the introduction of well-balanced language elements, repetition of terms and phrases, the writing down of vocabulary, use of posters, notes on objects and other personalized methods of learning reinforcement.

This approach of non-formal education, does not require linguistic knowledge in a foreign language and is independent of participants age. Linguistic animation should never be exclusive, all participants should be able to join the exercises. It is all about learning at eye-level, where the participants are allowed to make mistakes. No one is expected to be an expert, but everyone can experience being skilled in one or more languages.

What linguistic animation can convey is: curiosity for new languages and different cultures, communication strategies, everyday vocabulary and finally thematic vocabulary.¹⁴³

3. Role-play, laugh and play: the importance of fun in language learning and its application (STORYTELLING CENTRE)

Winston Churchill once said, “Personally I’m always ready to learn, although I do not always like being taught”¹⁴⁴ and he was probably right, it is not always fun to be taught. However, it should be fun to learn!

To acquire a (second) language, students need many opportunities to practice and apply what they have learned in class. A language classroom often poses challenges in this area, due to old-fashioned teaching methods, dull curricula, or limited opportunities to use the language outside of the classroom. Practicing a new language can also be intimidating, especially for students with a high affective filter or negative emotional factors that may interfere with language learning¹⁴⁵.

We have experienced that it is very important to make learning fun, in order to give students meaningful opportunities to apply their learning. When teachers use activities that make learning engaging and fun, students are more willing to participate and take risks. Having fun while learning, also helps students retain information better because the process is enjoyable and memorable¹⁴⁶, it implies full on multisensory learning.

From experience, we can say that getting students to speak up in language classes is often a challenge, certainly, when they feel unsafe. For that reason, creating a safe environment is crucial for an efficient and beneficial educational environment¹⁴⁷.

In addition, many students hesitate to talk in class because they are anxious about making mistakes, especially in front of their peers. For this reason, it is important for teachers to plan activities that encourage learners to interact and relieve the pressure they often feel

¹⁴³ <https://www.dfjw.org/ressourcen/sprachanimation-als-interkulturelle-brucke.html>
https://www.ijab.de/uploads/tx_ttproducts/datasheet/ijab-if-ig-sprachanimation-neuauf1-171208-web.pdf
<https://www.ijab.de/en/what-we-do/advancement/eninnovationsforum/innovationsforum-jugend-global/a/show/taking-language-animation-further-for-inclusion-you-always-need-a-fallback-plan/>

¹⁴⁴ Churchill made this remark on November 4, 1952 while speaking in the House of Commons in London.

¹⁴⁵ <https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/teachers-corner-making-learning-fun>

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ See also the chapter about Neuroeducation.

to speak perfectly. To establish this, it is advisable to introduce nice and entertaining games or even work with songs and theatre tools¹⁴⁸.

We will mention some general examples here. In the toolkit, we will share more concrete exercises within the framework of the Alternative Ways project.

One of the tools that can be used are the so-called story dice or story cubes¹⁴⁹ - these contain different images on each face. Ask the students to throw the dice and to make a story involving the image they see at the top side. As most images are rather funny and as the assignment to use these images does not necessary lead to a logical story, it is often a source of much laughter. Meanwhile, the students learn new words and how to form a sentence (often at a very basic level). Having used the story dice in Storytelling Center workshops many times, we know that these are highly appreciated by the students.

Working with songs is also a hit amongst the students. They love to listen to music and to try to understand the text. Though understanding the entire text is often a bit too hard for the students, they get an idea of what is put forward, because the text is supported by the music. The students get the emotion of a song (many songs are about universal feelings) and the rhythm of a language, by listening to the music. Additionally, singing the song together is almost always hilarious, helping to bond the group. Being silly together contributes to a great team spirit, which even leads to an atmosphere in which daring to make mistakes and take risks becomes the standard! The vocabulary of the students will also grow steadily, as the words are offered to them in a structure (see the article about chunking¹⁵⁰ p.48).

Last but not least, introducing theatre in the classroom can be a very effective and entertaining tool. Instead of asking the students to tell or read a text, ask them to perform it. In a playful way, they will learn how to conduct a conversation and they will learn new words, again within a context.

For more advanced students, role-play can be introduced to let them practice certain situations, like a job interview or a visit to the doctor. This will help them to get the right vocabulary for specific situations. If you add some humorous elements, they will also have a lot of fun during these role-plays, allowing them to release and limit the pressure felt in such meetings.

In this chapter, we saw how including the body with its senses and emotions to the teaching method, is key to maintaining curiosity and motivation and how this allows the information to be stored in the long-term memory. These are resources that are internal to the human being. Now, we will see how external resources such as media and art, can help greatly in improving a teaching style.

¹⁴⁸ You will find more information on articles specific to language learning through music and theatre learning.

¹⁴⁹ Which can be found online (rorycubes). Also available at Flying Tiger stores. Or use the app Story Dice.

¹⁵⁰ See chapter *Storytelling as a transversal skill in language learning*

07

METHODOLOGICAL PILLARS 5:

LEARNING WITH MEDIA AND ART

Different types of media and art can be used to enrich the teaching method. The internet is one of them, involving images, music and theatre which are also relevant on their own.

1. E-learning (ELAN INTERCULTUREL)

E-learning can be conceived as a modernized version of correspondence courses, in the sense that teaching is facilitated not in person, but at a distance, through a computer, a tablet or even a smartphone. This "online" version is more complete than its "offline" ancestor. The most common form of public education is a website on which teachers make documents available to students: this is called a shared resource server.¹⁵¹ E-learning can also be much more interactive than that: forums, polls, tests, calendar of events, etc. The term *e-learning* therefore includes all learning practices using a digital interface.

In recent years, since the democratization of the internet, language learning online has become increasingly important for both young people and adults. Delivered through online exercise modules, webcams with a teacher on the other side of the camera or through a phone, these online courses allow companies to reduce training costs, employee absence days and travel costs¹⁵².

Whilst some schools, associations or companies need and use dedicated servers, a huge number of international platforms have emerged in recent years¹⁵³ under the guidance of ever-present new actors¹⁵⁴.

¹⁵¹ https://www.etudiants.ch/cms/etumag/032/e_learning

¹⁵² <https://www.cadremploi.fr/editorial/formation/langues/detail/article/anglais-le-e-learning-est-ce-vraiment-efficace.html>

¹⁵³ The main platforms are Blackboard, Chamilo, LMS (Moodle), Claroline, Dokeos, Ilias, Sakai and Edx. Several lists are available on the Internet with the specificities of each platform. See <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/technology-26670624/learning-a-new-language-with-help-from-your-peers> and https://www.reussirmavie.net/J-apprends-en-ligne-les-nouvelles-pepites-du-e-learning_a1570.html

¹⁵⁴ These actors, touching the worlds of business, education and other diverse sectors, meet regularly at international conferences on e-learning. One example is the international e-learning symposium for adults and young adults. Two have so far taken place, in 2015 and 2018 both organised by the French team Trigone, specialised in research in adult education, from the CIREL laboratory (Centre Interuniversitaire de Recherche en

One of the most representative cases is *LMS*, called *Moodle* in France. *LMS* is a very rich open online learning platform: a forum to which everyone is automatically registered, with all the resources that the teacher makes available (course planning, reading and bibliography, as well as the course objectives)¹⁵⁵. Interactions between users are strongly encouraged: each student has their own profile, which can be customized with an avatar. *LMS* also adds many pedagogical and communicative interaction tools to create an online learning environment: this application makes it possible to create, via the network, interactions between teachers, learners, and pedagogical resources. Thanks to its modular architecture, *LMS* takes advantage of plugins developed by its community to extend functionality and thus meet specific needs. Although it is intended for educational purposes, *LMS* is above all a place of exchange. Today, almost every university has an *LMS* platform, accessible only to its students¹⁵⁶.

There are also less frequented participative platforms with particularly active users, some of which are dedicated to language learning, such as NaTakallam¹⁵⁷. Founded in July 2015 by three students from Columbia University in the United States, this platform connects users interested in practicing dialectal Arabic with refugees as teachers. In a few clicks, the user is connected with one of the tutors based in Lebanon, Egypt, Turkey, Germany or France, recruited with the help of the Lebanese NGO Sawa¹⁵⁸. Users can practice and improve their Arabic in a non-formal context whilst meeting new people. However, these platforms remain limited by their number of users which is often too small to generate profits or become self-sufficient.

E-learning has a number of advantages over so-called *face-to-face* learning. It gives a greater autonomy to the learner, who can connect whenever they want from a configured computer. After a test phase to determine the learner's skills, the modules proposed cling as closely as possible to the knowledge gaps identified by the computer program. The e-learning software is also configured to accurately report the student's progress¹⁵⁹. The customizable aspect of e-learning may seem counter-intuitive, given the impersonal format of internet resources, but it is no less essential. According to *Proactive Academy* (a platform similar to *LMS*), "to be truly effective, especially among young people, e-learning tools must meet an educational need. We believe that this learning method must be anchored in the reality of the world of work: the resources made available must correspond to the short-

Education de Lille). Information on these conferences is available at <https://e-formation2018.sciencesconf.org/>. A European associative initiative (France, Wallonia, Flanders) has set up a project called Dig-e-Lab to "create a dynamic of excellence around online training initiatives, using video supports, for the cross-border context" with the aim of setting up a specific platform. See <https://dig-e-lab.eu/fr/accueil/> for more information.

¹⁵⁵ The structure of the platform is explained by https://www.etudiants.ch/cms/etumag/032/e_learning

¹⁵⁶ https://www.etudiants.ch/cms/etumag/032/e_learning

¹⁵⁷ <https://natakallam.com/>

¹⁵⁸ You can find more information in Hullot-Guiot (2018)

¹⁵⁹ <https://www.cadremploi.fr/editorial/formation/langues/detail/article/anglais-le-e-learning-est-ce-vraiment-efficace.html>

term needs of companies, but also be adaptable to each student to limit the risks of dropping out."¹⁶⁰

In addition to saving time and money by avoiding transport, e-learning does not just provide students with a logistical contribution. Distance students obtain similar or higher results than students who have learned in a traditional way. This is arguably because they are said to study more¹⁶¹. Nowadays, many of the world's best universities also offer distance learning. It is in the field of adult learning in companies, that the statistics are the most impressive. Using e-learning would reduce the time allocated to training by up to 60% and increase productivity by 50%, but more importantly, it would improve information retention capacity by up to 60%.

This means that e-learning not only reduces costs but is also more effective in terms of transmitting knowledge during the learning process¹⁶². E-learning is exceedingly relevant for younger generations, as they are completely immersed in new technologies. Young people are familiar with these tools, which makes it accessible and attractive¹⁶³.

However, the necessary use of a computer is a double-edged sword: people who cannot own a computer or smartphone will not then have access to one. Moreover, e-learning is not suitable for all types of people, whilst it has many advantages for young people and companies, it often seems disconnected from reality. Despite its playful aspect, the absence of human contact and lack of motivation leads to many dropouts, with the absence of direct contact with a trainer playing a major role in these failures, especially in language learning.

Although e-learning is a good alternative to traditional teaching, a hybrid approach of the different methods allows better results to be obtained. In the absence of immersion in a foreign environment, the most common solution for learning a language today is called *blended learning*. Coming from the word "blend", this formula mixes *face-to-face* training sessions and online courses. A mixture of types, that still allows a student to be put into a position to express themselves in a group, in conditions similar to a classical conversation¹⁶⁴.

It is undeniable that e-learning is a wide-ranging concept that has now been integrated into traditional forms of teaching, through the internet, allowing better results but requiring human follow-up to avoid the dropping out of participants. It is not intended to replace the traditional learning system but to complement it, taking the name of *blended learning*.

¹⁶⁰ <https://www.proactiveacademy.fr/blog/formation/formation-en-ligne-e-learning/>

¹⁶¹ <https://www.easy-lms.com/fr/aide/base-de-connaissances-lms/apprentissage-en-ligne-aussi-bon-que-presentiel/item12527>

¹⁶² <http://ellicom.com/blogue/formation-en-ligne/adoption-du-e-learning-5-statistiques-parlantes/>

¹⁶³ Robert Limb, coordinator of English language teaching at ISTE, a business and marketing college: "E-learning is a good method for absolute beginners because it allows you to review all the grammatical basics. Similarly, it seems to me to be adapted to self-taught English speakers so that they can understand their mistakes and correct them" (personal traduction). See also <https://www.cadremploi.fr/editorial/formation/langues/detail/article/anglais-le-e-learning-est-ce-vraiment-efficace.html>

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

2. The power of images as media for learning (TALENTENSCHOOL)

People learn in different ways, but it is well known that visual cues help us to better retrieve and remember information, such as new words. That makes sense when you consider that our brain is mainly an image-processor. When using images to learn a new language, you automatically use the most obvious way of learning: the power of learning through images. Words are abstract and therefore more difficult for the brain to process, as opposed to images, which are concrete and easier to remember. There is a reason why we teach toddlers who are in the midst of their language development, to pinpoint the right images whilst a word is being said and vice versa.

This applies to all different types of images, pictures, photos, illustrations or symbols, they all work the same way. A good logo for a company also works by the means of this principle: you recognize the brand, and thus the company, before you read the name. Most of what you learn traditionally comes in through two senses: the eyes and the ears. Words enter through the ears and the eyes register the images. Words and images come in separately (ears and eyes) but in the brain, they are connected to each other and linked with prior knowledge.

This means, that when learning a second language, images can be used in different ways. In vocabulary education (see also chapter “Learning vocabulary and oral expression” p.20) there is a difference in quantitative and qualitative word knowledge. First of all, the commitment to quantitative word knowledge means the *labelling* of words. You see an image of an apple and 'paste' the word apple. Second, qualitative word knowledge: of which *concept* is the word part of? An apple is a fruit, other fruits for example are bananas, pears and grapes. Of all the new words that are covered, there are pictures available (illustrations or photographs). You can give a lesson by using different cards. It is important to use separate cards for the text and the pictures. You can use these cards during the defining of the words, the labelling. Another possible exercise is to use these cards to categorize the word you want the student to learn, for example, the category is fruit, and the apple belongs to this category. Students not only learn the word apple, but also learn the word for this specific category, fruit.

Oral explanations work best with the direct support of an image. This is an important learning strategy for learning a new language, also for adults with a low education background. Images can be used as game material, for example, by playing a word memo and asking the students to speak out loud the word on the card. It is possible to start a conversation on the basis of the words of the memo. You can also make a sequence of the pictures and let the participants make a correct sentence out of them.

The combination of pictures and text gives lots of possibilities for creative language lessons.

3. Learning through music as a facilitating medium (ELAN INTERCULTUREL)

According to A. Tomatis, "the gift of languages is first and foremost a matter of the ear; educate it, open it and we will discover that we were born to speak all languages"¹⁶⁵. When we play music, the brain changes and adapts. The practice of music requires and builds a series of conditions of accompaniment. These can be useful for learning new knowledge and languages. Chinese research¹⁶⁶ on children's verbal memory reveals, that children who learn music, memorize new words better and for a longer period of time. This study, published in 2003 by a group of researchers from the University of Hong Kong, was conducted on 90 children aged 6 to 15 years-old, half of whom were training to join the school orchestra and half who had no connection to music. For the musically active group, the results of the tests into verbal memory, were far better than the none musically active group. This is due to the ability of musical training, to improve the organization of the left temporal region of the brain, the seat of verbal memory. Thus, we can see that the practice of music stimulates the functions of the left hemisphere, where we find most of the areas mobilized by listening and musical practice.

Corna Fulla¹⁶⁷ associates the sound phenomena of languages and music through their representations, one spelling, the other on a score. Indeed, the musical work is made up of strong and weak moments, which alternate within the tempo. As far as language is concerned, each one has its own phonological system marked by its rhythm, intonations and accents. Thus, these themes can be associated with both music and language. In addition, we note that the type of relationship that music and language have with their theory and practice is linked. Indeed, as far as music is concerned, solfege, harmony and musical theory make no sense if they were not used to play an instrument. The same applies to the grammar of languages. It is not a question of learning grammar to make theoretical and formal descriptions but to have keys to express oneself. It is therefore a question of mixing theory and practice, whether it is in music or language. In concrete terms, learning languages and music allows a broadening of the auditory spectrum. The ear is like an elastic: the more you work on it, the more the elastic extends. Music promotes the perception of sounds, and therefore makes it possible to better understand a foreign sound¹⁶⁸.

To express themselves orally, children must master all the muscles of the language's motor system and ensure their coordination. It is through musical activities that the child will be able to develop and perfect this system. Singing helps to develop the musical ear. For children, learning is done by rote. Memorization is made easier by the melody. The discovery

¹⁶⁵ Tomatis (1991)

¹⁶⁶ Bencivelli (2009)

¹⁶⁷ Corna Fulla (2008)

¹⁶⁸ Sawyer (2016)

of the acoustic possibilities of the voice is part of musical education. These singing exercises will work on diction, articulation and intonation of the language. We notice that all the textbooks studied give a place to music and especially to singing. In all textbooks, most songs focus on vocabulary that has already been studied or will be studied in the learning unit¹⁶⁹.

Learning through music and singing is increasingly present in school textbooks. C. Graham, a famous American didactics expert, is known worldwide for her collections entitled "Jazz chants for children". She developed the technique of singing jazz, during her twenty-five years of teaching English as a Foreign Language (ESL) at the American Institute of Language at New York University, as well as many other universities in the United States and around the world¹⁷⁰.

Online tools for learning a language through music, have also been available since the development of e-learning¹⁷¹ in recent years. It is possible to practice with speech translation sites¹⁷².

A typical session can begin with a few stretching exercises, relaxation, control of one's anchoring on the ground (straight chest, without stiffness), all of this in silence and attention directed towards the teacher, with some breathing awareness exercises if we control them. It continues with a simple vocal warm-up¹⁷³. For example, the *Lennen Bilingual School* in Paris brings in a music teacher for one hour a week for ages up until the 5th grade. During their weekly session, the practitioner suggests that students use musical instruments to develop rhythm and create their own music. Thus, in schools with a multilingual character, music is highlighted.

Music does not only have neuro-educational benefits, some studies¹⁷⁴ show in fact that music stimulates emotions and it is proved that emotions have a strong impact on the learning process.

During a conversation, people who speak their native language tend to have a very fast flow and can sometimes be difficult to follow. Conversely, words set to music are often recited at a slower, more repetitive pace, which makes it easier to listen to and helps to familiarize learners with pronunciation, especially since the song can be listened to multiple times. These sentences and expressions are not isolated but intertwined in a context¹⁷⁵. Memorizing a song is more about pleasure than effort, unlike some school texts. The importance of repetition in language learning should not be overlooked. In an article published on the *Guardian's* website¹⁷⁶, journalist Jonross Swaby says, for example, that he learned to roll the R by listening to and humming the same song in Spanish every day, simply because of the repetition effect.

¹⁶⁹ Jedrzejak (2012)

¹⁷⁰ Graham

¹⁷¹ See also the chapter about e-learning.

¹⁷² Many of the music e-learning sites are referenced by <https://www.mosalingua.com/blog/2011/12/17/les-meilleurs-sites-pour-apprendre-une-langue-avec-la-musique/>

¹⁷³ Pamula (2008)

¹⁷⁴ Tyng (2017)

¹⁷⁵ <http://fr.assimil.com/blog/apprendre-une-langue-etrangere-en-musique/>

¹⁷⁶ Swaby (2015)

A study conducted by Karen Ludke of the *Edinburgh University*, whose results were published in the scientific journal *Memory and Cognition*¹⁷⁷, highlighted the value of music in adult language learning. In this study, three groups of 20 adults were formed. Each of them had to learn vocabulary in Hungarian using different methods, namely classical, rhythmic or singing repetition. At the end of the fifteen minutes of learning, the group members who had learned through singing, showed the best results, when asked to present their newly acquired knowledge. These results were observed regardless of factors such as age, gender or musical ability.

Even if, to quote Paul Carvel, "music deserves to be the second obligatory language of all schools in the world"¹⁷⁸, learning a foreign language through music is a method that has its limitations. The work on the ear takes years and is only really effective if started in childhood. The developing brains of the youngest are best equipped to learn music. Most 4-5-year-olds enjoy playing music and can learn the basics of some instruments¹⁷⁹. In addition, to know the syntax rules, times, false friends and other specificities of a language, it is sometimes better to choose a traditional or hybrid method than to limit oneself to singing¹⁸⁰.

¹⁷⁷ Karen (2014)

¹⁷⁸ Carvel (2000)

¹⁷⁹ <https://blog.allegromusique.fr/la-musique-aide-t-elle-dans-lapprentissage-du-langage>

¹⁸⁰ <http://fr.assimil.com/blog/apprendre-une-langue-etrangere-en-musique/>

4. Learning through theatre: another medium that builds motivation

(ELAN INTERCULTUREL)

The term "living language", often sounds wrong because formal language learning is not very lively at all¹⁸¹. The acquisition of words, of a conjugation, is not necessarily contextualized¹⁸² and students can suffer more from acquiring a language than they gain by speaking the language they want to acquire. Theatre, is an excellent medium for learning a language in a non-formal way. In fact, performing a play in a foreign language enables you to play a character in a particular situation. Where the play is already written, it is necessary to take the time to learn the text whilst understanding the meaning of what is being said. This includes knowing the meaning of the words themselves. Without realizing it, you enrich your vocabulary, which makes it easier to express yourself afterwards¹⁸³. It is also possible to learn new words in an improvisational theatre course¹⁸⁴. The idea of using theatre in language learning is an old concept: Hélène Catsiapis¹⁸⁵ explains the process she has put in place by emphasizing that a teacher must make their students work in an "open situation" like a sketch, which leads to a freer conversation and revision of previously studied topics. This art, requires oral expression in a safe context (playing a character) and stimulating through playing, thus facilitating speaking in a foreign language.

A British approach to teaching, based on theatre and known as *drama*, emerged from these reflections. Based on theatrical techniques and used mainly in the teaching of foreign languages, this new learning methodology takes two forms depending on the expected objective. When activities are aimed at acquiring or determining linguistic, grammatical or phonological facts, a certain level of quality may be placed on productions; with the objective always being for the level to be set according to the needs of the student. In this case, errors are corrected by the students themselves, or when they do not have the capacity to do that, by the teacher.

On the other hand, when it comes to unguided expression, especially in improvisations, the aim is to achieve fluency rather than to correct the language. It is preferable to leave the student free to play with the language, to appropriate it through manipulation, even if this means inducing errors¹⁸⁶. We all sometimes find ourselves confronted with silent classes because students prefer not to answer rather than take the risk of making mistakes. To avoid these blockages, it is desirable not to pay attention to errors and not to flag them during theatrical activities, unless they prevent communication.

¹⁸¹ <https://www.mosalingua.com/blog/2015/07/30/apprentissage-des-langues-par-le-theatre/>

¹⁸² See also the chapter about Vocabulary and Expression.

¹⁸³ See also the chapter about Reading and Writing.

¹⁸⁴ <http://fr.assimil.com/blog/prendre-des-cours-de-theatre-en-anglais-pour-apprendre-ou-sameliorer/>

¹⁸⁵ Catsiapis (1980)

¹⁸⁶ Casoni (2013)

The golden rule is not to intervene during the game - unless the message is incomprehensible - because the teacher's unneeded interventions could block participants from being fully engaged in the activity¹⁸⁷.

The *drama* methodology has now evolved towards several new methods such as the *Glottodrama* method¹⁸⁸, introducing the idea that the session should be co-facilitated by a foreign language trainer and an actor. Students first carry out warm-up activities to prepare for further work. Then, based on a triggering document that they explore, they improvise sketches around the proposed situation. Students are filmed in their improvisations, which then allows the videos to be used as a support for linguistic correction. Even if it is a linguistic tool, the videos are used as well, a second time, for better guidance of the students in their theatrical work by the trainers¹⁸⁹. The role of the *teacher-animator* is essential because they are at the heart of the process: in listening to and serving students, they play the role of a guide rather than that of a traditional teacher. They are the guarantor of the participants' autonomy in the appropriation of the new language¹⁹⁰.

Many people are involved in the evolution and dissemination of these learning methods. For example, the fact that the courses at the *Ateliers bilingues d'expression théâtrale*¹⁹¹ in Paris are based on the drama methodology and the fact that they work around a collective project, in the form of an end-of-year performance has led to significant improvements in both academic results and language proficiency in communication situations¹⁹². These kinds of initiatives are spreading to universities around the world, always with great results. The Ho Chi Minh City Open University, for example, experimented with this process in some classes in 2009 and then extended it to the entire school in 2012¹⁹³. Students have performed plays in English in regular theatres, including the Municipal Theatre. Nowadays, they repeat this experience every year. These plays are performed with the participation of over 300 students, amongst whom many are from other institutions in the city, showing the general enthusiasm for the practice.

A famous French association, approved by the Ministry of National Education, is *Langues en Scène*, which accompanies teachers in the learning of modern languages and the discovery of theatrical acting, with an actor who is native to the country of the language being taught or perfectly bilingual¹⁹⁴. The initiative meets the objectives of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* by applying a flexible and adapted methodology: it is a joint development of a teaching project based on a theatrical creation, a story or a theme

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.* Personal translation from French. More information about forming a group in the chapter about Collaborative Learning.

¹⁸⁸ European research work funded by the Programme d'éducation et de formation tout au long de la vie de l'Union Européenne and coordinated by the Italian Language Research Laboratory, Edizioni Novacultur.

¹⁸⁹ Martin (2016)

¹⁹⁰ Diez Del Corral (2015)

¹⁹¹ Set up at the University of Paris-Est Créteil since 2013, they benefit from IDEA - Initiative d'excellence ANR support and are part of the DELCIFE (FLE) training. Cross-curricular options are offered for all students, some of whom are studying in an IUT program.

¹⁹² Vazquez De Castro (2017)

¹⁹³ Châu (2016)

¹⁹⁴ <http://www.langues-en-scene.com/>

already chosen by the teacher such as children's rights, citizenship, environment or cultural differences¹⁹⁵.

The main factor for student success is not focusing on learning ability, but above all, on *motivation*. Self-confidence can only be gained by stepping out of your comfort zone¹⁹⁶. Enrolling in an unknown language theatre course is not enough to overcome stress, find words more easily and express yourself correctly. It is important during each class to participate in improvisations and sketches to be more and more comfortable and forget one's apprehensions¹⁹⁷.

Media and art, are powerful tools to create different motivations and access the students' centers of interests and passion, this will help them see what other perspectives they have in the host country, rather than only the administrative and professional ones. After studying how some external and precise tools can enrich the teaching method, we are going to see how a holistic context and situation can be of great efficiency to diversify the learning process of a student. Where else can they learn besides the classroom?

¹⁹⁵ <http://www.primlangues.education.fr/actualite/langues-en-scene-ateliers-de-theatre-en-langues-etrangees>

¹⁹⁶ See also the part about the application of storytelling in language learning in the chapter: "Storytelling as a transversal approach".

¹⁹⁷ <http://fr.assimil.com/blog/prendre-des-cours-de-theatre-en-anglais-pour-apprendre-ou-sameliorer/> Personal translation from French.

08

METHODOLOGICAL PILLARS 6:

CONTEXTUAL LEARNING

1. Learning at the workplace (ARBEIT UND LEBEN)

Social change, from an agrarian society to an industrial society, globalization, demographic change and the postulate of lifelong learning increases the demand for specific labor. This aim is to be met by the means of job-related learning targeted for the specific requirements. The goal is to adapt the specific knowledge to the requirements. The societal phenomenon of the explosion of knowledge makes it impossible to convey everything to knowledge, which is why it is important to convey specific knowledge in the work context. According to different learning theories, context promotes the retention of knowledge within the learners, because they can combine the new information with already existing knowledge and can practice this, during their working day.

Arbeit und Leben NRW is coordinating different projects in the area of basic skills at the workplace. We take care of all the organizational aspects for basic skills training for employees with low literacy skills. This includes the planning of the courses' content, the time organization, place and coordination between the potential participants and the decision-makers. Our main contacts in the different companies are members of the works councils. We present the content of our courses to the staff and see if there is any demand or interest for basic skills courses.

The main requirement for our content planning is to focus the courses on the actual reading and writing requirements from the daily work of the participants. Only occasionally, are the courses equipped with additional books and learning journals.

So far, we have had very good experiences with using documents from the workplace for our courses. Depending on the business area, these can be anonymized care records, accident documentation, emails and letters or any other relevant form of correspondence.

This core element of our courses, requires the trainer to have sound knowledge of the work tasks of the participants, whilst also being able to teach literacy skills using the best method for the individual group or participant. There are special training opportunities in

Northrhine-Westphalia, on how to use material from the workplace in a basic skills course. In addition, they look at specific methods and strategies for adult learning.

The method of using the material from the daily tasks of the participants allows for a switch of roles where some participants will be able to explain, certain details and requirements to the other course participants and the trainer. The possibility to deconstruct the teacher - learner dichotomy and allow everyone on the course to alternate between the two roles, is a hugely motivational factor.

Another beneficial aspect is that the newly discussed and possibly newly learned skills can be tried and tested immediately during the daily workflow. This way, the participants see the positive effects of their courses on their everyday experience. While they are using the new knowledge, additional questions may arise, which can be discussed in the following course session. Whilst there is a certain amount of content planning ahead of the beginning of the course, we leave enough room to add new topics. While the courses are running, the participants are always invited to suggest and decide on new topics.

In every basic skills course, we try to highlight the importance and benefits of multilingualism. While most of our participants will only have the motivation to improve their language competence in the native language of the country they are in, the benefits of being multilingual need to be made visible to the participants. Language has the power to exclude or include, to connect or to disconnect people. The ability to speak different languages is sometimes appreciated and sometimes neglected. We see the works of prestige and status of different languages at play in regard to this aspect and it is our responsibility to add a critical reflection on the different competences. This would be a first step for critical thinking skills that are an important aspect of any basic skills course.

2. On the go

(TALENTENSCHOOL)

Tell me, I will forget. Show me, I will remember it. Let me experience it, I will make it my own...
Confucius

The lesson 'Language on the Go' is based on playful and contextual learning. This methodology assumes that people learn more effectively when learning is connected to a specific situation or experience. It has been known for quite some time that motivation, enjoyment and a connection to the 'real world', influence learning tremendously. It is often difficult to create a meaningful lesson when focusing on these separate aspects. People learn their language, precisely because they need it to achieve their goals and communicate with others. You learn language by using it and having fun with it. Learning separate pieces of a language is not conducive to successful language learning. In addition, enjoying the learning and reading is essential.

As seen in the chapter ‘Learning vocabulary’, words need to be repeated multiple times in different contexts. It is assumed that a word needs to be repeated an average of seven times before it becomes anchored in a person’s memory. In this context, repetition means that a student must actually be able to practice using the words¹⁹⁸.

Language on the Go, is a creative language lesson where students use activity cards to playfully practice language and new words. In one of the Language on the Go lessons, for example, they go to the supermarket. By learning new words on location, we are providing the students with an experience that they can link to the words. They will remember the words better by using them in a context.¹⁹⁹

After a lesson ‘on location’ we always spend the next lesson on processing. This revolves around repeating and processing the acquired knowledge and words. As part of this, we will also talk about the definitions of the words and the correct answers to the other questions and activities from the previous lesson. Next, the students repeat the new words and their meanings in different contexts: for example, a language game such as hangman, word memory, lingo or a quartet game, which also incorporates the new words.

This kind of contextual learning offers lots of opportunities to learn new vocabulary in a challenging environment. Language is fascinating in its everyday context. Language is everywhere and is present in every social situation. Lessons on the Go give the students the chance to practice their oral language skills and their vocabulary. When they practice speaking in public, this will contribute positively to their self-confidence.

3. Learning at the museum (ELAN INTERCULTUREL)

The museum responds to one of the ten characteristics of learning according to Dierking²⁰⁰ (1991, 5), the ‘relevance’, which is different for each individual. The question is then, how to make the information relevant for more than twenty students in a single class or for the hundreds of visitors to a single exhibition in a museum? How to create situations and contexts conducive to active participation? Unlike most learning materials used in school, the museum's purpose is real, it has a moving and attractive aura of authenticity that impresses. From the outset, we perceive little of its ‘stories’. Work on objects is more effective if it is integrated into a three-part sequence (preparatory work, museum visit, operation). The purpose of the preparatory work in class is to build a structure for observing the object without describing it completely in advance, to maintain curiosity and amazement.

¹⁹⁸ Vermeer, A. (2005) Ontwikkeling van mondelinge vaardigheden. In: Kuiken, F. & Vermeer, A. (2005). Nederlands als tweede taal in het basisonderwijs. Amsterdam/Tilburg: Thiememeulenhof.

¹⁹⁹ Borgers, M.J. & Stalborch, M. (2014). Handboek “Lezen met kinderen en hun ouders”. Amsterdam: De Talentenschool. (manual for “reading with children and their parents)

²⁰⁰ Dierking, L. (1991): Learning Theory and Learning Styles: An Overview, In: *Journal of Museum Education*, Volume 16, No.1 Winter.

For Benjamin Lee Whorf²⁰¹, each culture inhabits a unique linguistic universe, that corresponds to a separate universe of sensations and thoughts; which Roy F. Baumeister²⁰² is strongly opposed to, he talks about one basic universe of concepts but with different words and different grammatical rules. These two theories can be challenged by a visit at the museum because art triggers emotions and very often emotional oral expression that will use different concepts linked to sensations and symbols.

A language learning project in the museum, developed by Elan Interculturel, the LALI project²⁰³, showed that learning by art mediation strengthens foreign language acquisition, literacy and soft skills improvement. Moreover, intercultural and art mediation activities afford resources to generate problem-based learning: learning is transferred into a real-world environment, namely, in a museum which creates stimulating conditions for peer-learning. Language acquisition, is viewed as taking place through exposure to language in natural contexts, defined in the CEFR (2001, p. 139) as the 'untutored knowledge and ability to use a non-native language resulting either from direct exposure to text or from direct participation in communicative events'. In this perspective, we can reflect on the opposition between formal and non-formal learning. For Dierking²⁰⁴, this distinction is questionable: '[This] relevance is questionable if we look at the nature of the learning process. In my opinion, learning is learning, and it is strongly influenced by the situation, social interactions and individual beliefs, knowledge and attitudes. Places of learning include classrooms, museums, zoos, houses, and, as incredible as it may seem, shopping areas. Each of these situations can be formal or informal, depending on the construction of the learning circumstance, and how the context is perceived by each individual'.

The museum is a great place to learn through exploration. Among the many advantages of this type of learning, McCrory²⁰⁵ stresses 'the fruitful sense of discovery, to be considered as an important result in itself and not simply as part of an approach oriented towards specific cognitive objectives. According to McCrory, the effects of interactive learning are classified into cognitive (learning a theory), affective (liking the learning) and 'conative' (acting on the learning) effects.²⁰⁶ The case of LALI²⁰⁷, is a hybrid between formal learning in the classroom and non-formal learning in museums, one does not exclude the other. The classroom part is used as a base for going out to the museum. In the museum, interactions between participants about the perception of a piece of art, via questions/answers or games are encouraged as much as possible.

²⁰¹ Whorf, B., L. (1956): *Language, thought and reality*, New York/London.

²⁰² Baumeister, R., F. (2005): *The cultural animal: Human nature, meaning, and social life*, Oxford.

²⁰³ European project on language learning for newly arrived in the museum.

²⁰⁴ Dierking, L. (1991): Learning Theory and Learning Styles: An Overview, *Journal of Museum Education*, Volume 16, No.1 Winter.

²⁰⁵ McCrory, P. (2002) : Blurring the boundaries between science centers and schools, In : *ECSITE Newsletter Autumn*, Issue 52, P.10-11.

²⁰⁶ More information on this classification is available in the article Weber, T. (2003) : Apprendre à l'école, apprendre au musée : quelles sont les méthodes les plus favorables à un apprentissage actif ?, In : *SMEC apprendre à l'école, apprendre au musée*, http://www.museoscienza.org/smec/manual/02_general%20chapters_all%20languages/02.5_apprendre%20a%20l%20ecole%20apprendre%20au%20musee_fr.pdf

²⁰⁷ European project on language learning for newly arrived adults in the museum.

Participants should be given as much freedom as possible, making the framework for facilitators very flexible. The case presented by Aboa Vetus & Ars Nova²⁰⁸ is also interesting to mention. In 2006, young asylum seekers were invited to visit the Finnish museum under the initiative of Espoo's Helinä Rautavaara, to explore Turku's history and contemporary art. Fifteen museums throughout Finland participated in the project. The objective was to promote the integration and cultural interaction of young asylum seekers and to prevent exclusion. The young people established links between their cultures and the museum's works of art and tried out certain art techniques. Although language learning was not the primary objective of the museum, the participants' Finnish vocabulary grew significantly, showing the close relationship between the museum, history, acculturation and language.

With the emergence and development of e-learning, many actors are involved in the creation of online tools for the museum to learn a language. Elan Interculturel, for example, created a mobile application as part of the LALI project to support participants and provide a link between sessions²⁰⁹. In addition, some museums are particularly active in the development of these tools. The visit assistance booklet 'J'apprends le français au musée Carnavalet - les petits métiers parisiens'²¹⁰, downloadable online, is intended for people learning French who follow literacy courses, French as a Foreign Language, or participate in Sociolinguistic workshops in social centers or specialized associations. The booklet offers a thematic tour on the theme of 'small trades and Parisian brands', to be led by a supervisor/trainer with or without the assistance of a museum guide. It can also be used individually and independently by the learner.

The museum, is therefore a very good support for language learning in an intercultural context. Museums, in a quest for dynamism, are active actors in these projects, which allows a real link between the sessions and formal learning in the classroom. Nevertheless, the vocabulary used in museums, because of its specificity and sometimes its complexity, can be very difficult to understand and it is important to contextualize it in order to build bridges with the learners' vocabulary²¹¹.

Contextual learning is highly important in terms of motivation: learners are able to see concretely what their learning is useful for. In daily life situations, at work, in a museum but also in many other places such as train stations, shopping malls or in front of monuments, they can practice what they have seen in class. There is a huge variety of contexts that can be used to apply the learning and to develop autonomy and creativity.

CONCLUSION

²⁰⁸ Granlund, M. (2007) : *Turvapaikkana museo*, <https://www.aboavetusarsnova.fi/fi/nayttelyt/turvapaikkana-museo>.

²⁰⁹ European project on language learning for newly arrived adults in the museum.

²¹⁰ The booklet is available online in PDF format:

http://www.carnavalet.paris.fr/sites/default/files/editeur/livret_de_lapprenant_portrait.pdf

²¹¹ LALI : European project on language learning for newly arrived in the museum.

This document is a compilation of existing knowledge, experiences and study on the way adults learn and what are, according to the Alternative Ways' partners' opinion, important to enhance in the process of teaching and learning. Neuroeducation and intercultural learning are transversal aspects that are to be taken into account in any teaching process. Group dynamics and collaborative learning allow participants to feel a sense of belonging and increases motivation. The introduction of the body and senses, leads to different ways of organizing the information in the body and the brain, which stimulates the long-term memory. Different kinds of media expand the learning horizon, and context helps in applying the learning in practice and creating new motivation.

All these aspects were taken into account, to create the tools and activities that constitute the core of the Alternative Ways project. Those tools are depicted in the toolkit (<http://aw.millerpreview.nl/>) which is supported by a manual (to be found on the same website) that will give a few tips on how to use the toolkit. The tools and activities were created, to inspire teachers in diversifying their approach and introducing non formal learning into their lessons, so the learners can have a broader access to the information that is given to them. The tools can be adapted and also criticized and we warmly welcome feedback at info@alternativeways.eu.

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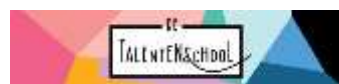
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