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OUTPUT 1

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Foreward to a Guerrilla Literacy Manual

Patricia Huion

Being a learner can be a fascinating journey. A few years ago I was asked to devise a way of teaching trainee teachers who had repeatedly failed their basic literacy tests. It was a remedial course: a meeting place for all those who did not know how to read, write nor speak their mother tongue at a proficient level. It was a scheduled course and every student who entered that classroom at that particular time had already been branded as a failure. I don't think I have ever entered a more down-trodden group of learners: silent, heads down, tense. It was also a now or never atmosphere: if they did not succeed this time they would never be allowed to become teachers.

I swallowed. For me it was a long time since I had been teaching languages. I also wondered why they had so much difficulty with these basic skills. Language had never been too difficult for me... So I felt incompetent, not knowing what I had to do.

It was a blended course. There were a lot of documents on Toledo: an excellent course, a lot of examples and tests. And there was a limited amount of face-to-face monitoring classes.

I had to start with assessing their entrance level which included a three minutes' interview. During this interview I had to write down all their pronunciation errors on a pre-printed assessment document. On top of that I had to record these conversations and post them so they could re-listen and link to this error page. I remember vividly thinking how artificial and discouraging I found this set-up.

To ease this ordeal I suggested three questions in advance, one of which was «what happened in these basic literacy classes?»

To my utter surprise most students chose this question. Time and again I was treated to confessional narratives where students owned up all their sins: «I don't know anything about grammar», «Interpunctuation doesn't make sense to me», «I have never ever used these words!», «If I were to speak like that they would laugh at me!». They all ended with something like «I probably haven't learnt enough». I had huge difficulties with writing down my error analyses. They all looked so defeated.

I decided to start teaching about punctuation which seemed to me the easiest part. I showed them the page on which the rules were explained and asked them to explain these to their peers.

Absolute chaos. «How do you know when a sentence begins?», «How do you recognise a main verb?», «What's the subject of a sentence?»

I was baffled. But I also found myself at a loss. I didn't have the appropriate language to teach them. I despaired: I couldn't understand how and why they came up with their very surprising answers. After 90 minutes we were looking at each other in utter bewilderment. My students were panicking and I felt utterly ashamed: I had only made matters worse.

The next class I apologised to my students. I told them I didn't have a clue about how to teach them these skills. I asked them if they were willing to help seek ways to tackle these problems. After all they were all on the verge of becoming teachers. I asked them if they were willing to think aloud while making exercises. They were not too keen on that. Until they saw I merely analysed what was happening.

And that is how we discovered these fail patterns. We joked, encouraging each other to «please, make mistakes!» And in true underdog style we looked for a nickname and that is how we started to call ourselves guerrilla learners!

Guerrilla Literacy Learning: A definition

Patricia Huion (UCLL)

Grammatical rules are points of orientation. You can get there by mistake.

Het is de persoonsvorm.

Tegenwoordige tijd.

Derde persoon enkelvoud.

De stam is infinitief min en, dus lev.

De v staat niet in 't kofschip.

Dus is het hij leefd met een d!

Literacy in its basic definition is the ability to read and write. As easy as this may seem there is currently a global learning crisis, where 250 million of the 650 million primary school children worldwide are not taught basic literacy skills. In Western Europe 96% reach grade 5 level reading skills. **Yet 1 in 15 of 15 year olds still cannot read properly.** Europe is confronted with a very large group of students who are unable to acquire basic literacy. Students continue to fail tests and many quit studying although they could have become very good professionals in different fields. As a consequence, teachers and researchers are looking for new ways of teaching basic literacy skills. Furthermore, present day society allows citizens to move freely between different countries. This opportunity has created a new kind of illiteracy where highly qualified and literate people in their native language become NEET people (not in employment, education or training) in their new countries.

All these changes provide challenges to literacy learning and thus call for a new didactical approach. Guerrilla Literacy Learners (GuLL) is a student-centred approach which helps language learners improve their language acquisition skills. GuLL switches from how learners should learn to how they actually learn thus embracing the European recommendation that if students fail to learn, teachers might want to teach in a different way. GuLL asks learners to reflect upon the unorthodox links (Guerrilla patterns) they make and then remediate it. The patterns we have observed so far are:

- guessing;
- mixing rules unorthodoxly;
- applying correct rules in wrong contexts;
- applying mathematical logics to solve linguistic challenges;
- translating literally from one language into another;
- relying on body language to correct the mistakes.

An example of a Guerrilla pattern is knitting correct rules together in a wrong way:

did he gave

In “did he gave” we have a student who knows the past, how to ask questions in the past and he knows his irregular verbs, but he knits together two pasts rather than the past of the auxiliary and the infinitive of the main verb. We have observed that asking students to describe their Guerrilla patterns helps them to improve their language level. As such *Guerrilla Literacy Learners* empowers learners by coaching them into autonomous learners.

GuLL also aims to expand teachers’ repertoire of language teaching. Languages are quite often taught within a linguistic frame. In GuLL, however, design research, user-centred spaces and narrative approaches will be added to allow learners to make sense of their own attitudes. Traditionally most languages are taught through drill exercises focusing on one right way of doing things. Guerrilla learners on the other hand first gain insight into their fail patterns through thinking aloud exercises. They are also challenged to think up new ways of teaching their peers these Guerrilla linguistics which travel from fail patterns to the correct use of language.

In this manual we develop a “Guerrilla” Flipped Class, on the model of “guerrilla gardening/knitting movement” intending to improve public spaces through citizens’ creative contribution. The target audiences

are individual learners, teachers, community-builders, librarians, and teacher training departments seeking learner-centred ways to improve basic literacy thus decreasing the number of early school leavers. This manual empowers teachers to facilitate Guerrilla learning. The manual consists of six main chapters: language-focused teaching approaches, learner-focused language acquisition, case-studies of learner engagement, personal reflections on language learning, the GuLL approach, ways of evaluating the GuLL approach.

The first chapter starts with a historical perspective of language teaching from structuralism/behaviourism, rationalism and cognitive psychology, to social constructivism, from drill to conversation so to speak. Teachers are focused on the right answers and errors are merely mistakes. They become the focal point in the next part: error analysis. Based on the test results of Italian university students of English, a frame is suggested to categorise these mistakes using English grammar as metalanguage. So far these approaches focus on language itself, on what students have to learn.

In the second chapter we move towards the agents (teacher and learner) and towards how mistakes are part of language learning: Freinet's self-correction and moral education, Roger's self-assessment and student-centred, nonthreatening, and unforced learning, Montessori's desire to learn where mistakes become your friend.

Next we move towards Dalton schools featuring Helen Parkhurst's reflective learning and self-correcting responsibility, gamification and authentic learning, tapping into learners' prior knowledge to increase motivation, and body, voice, hands to deal with migrants' difficult emotional baggage. We conclude with leaving the classroom for technology-enhanced one-to-one learning in libraries and discovering the possibilities of leisure time education.

Gull moves away from language-focused teaching practices where the teacher indicates the mistakes learners have made and where grammar is used to describe these errors. Gull aims at recreating the desire to learn languages through user-centred design, narrative coaching and art of hosting. It aims at creating proud students self-assessing their use of language among a community of peers through graphic facilitation. It aims at creating learners who are in control of their own learning trajectory: meeting in on-line communities of practice and innovating their learning path in knowledge clips. They design new identities and describe their mistakes in a non-specialist language that makes sense to non-linguists. They too use stories, games, songs, authentic learning contexts to bridge towards a new way of learning in which mistakes become windows of opportunities. In GuLL it is not important which mistakes they have made; it is not important whether they can self-assess or prefer to rely on their community; but it is important that they understand how they created a mistake and how they can correct it. The unorthodox ways in which they construct mistakes are called Guerrilla patterns. If we combine these with the way towards the correct use of language we call it literacy. This manual teaches teacher, teacher trainees, librarians, community workers ways to unearth this Guerrilla literacy.

Of course we also need ways to validate this new approach. We therefore refer to European frameworks, European teacher identity, and a European multicultural tool. However, as we feel that much of the talents Guerrilla learners have to use are not mentioned in these assessment grids, we developed a GLAT: Guerrilla Learner Assessment Tool and open badges to digitally reward learners' input. We also propose a reflective learning diary, peer assessment and ways to improve motivation as self-evaluation.

Now there is one thing left to introduce which is an intermezzo. Many teachers disconnect from their learner identity once they become teachers. So we have written stories about our own learner experiences.

We hope you enjoy the manual and you are also invited to learn more in our MOOC. Of course we are eager to learn from you. You can contact us through our website:

<http://www.pleasemakemistakes.eu/contact.html>

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I. BUILDING BRIDGES

I.1 Language acquisition

Guido Cajot (UCLL)

1. Language and Schools of Thought in first or second language acquisition

A definition of a concept or construct is a statement that captures its key features. So, a definition of a term may be thought of as a condensed version of a theory. Conversely, a theory is simply – or not so simply – an extended definition.

A synthesis of standard definitions out of introductory textbooks could be: «Language is a system of arbitrary conventionalised vocal, written, or gestural symbols that enable members of a given community to communicate intelligibly with one another».

I want to add (a) the creativity of language, (b) the presumed primacy of speech over writing, and (c) the universality of language among human beings.

A consolidation of a number of possible definitions of language yields the following composite definition:

1. Language is systematic.
2. Language is a set of arbitrary symbols.
3. Those symbols are primarily vocal, but may also be visual.
4. The symbols have conventionalised meanings to which they refer.
5. Language is used for communication.
6. Language operates in a speech community or culture.
7. Language is essentially human, although possibly not limited to humans.
8. Language is acquired by all people in much the same way; language and language learning both have universal characteristics.

Yet with all the possible disagreements among applied linguists and researchers, some historical patterns emerge that highlight trends and fashions in the study of language acquisition. These trends will be described here in the form of three different schools of thought that follow somewhat historically, even though components of each school overlap chronologically to some extent.

1.1 Structuralism/Behaviourism

In the 1940s and 1950s, the structural, or descriptive, school of linguistics, with its advocates (Leonard Bloomfield, Edward Sapir, Charles Hockett, Charles Fries, and others) prided itself in a rigorous application of the scientific principle of observation of human languages. Only the *publicly observable responses* could be subject to investigation. The linguist's task, according to the structuralist, was to describe human languages and to identify the structural characteristics of those languages. «Languages can differ from each other without limit and that no preconceptions could apply to the field» (Twaddell 1935).

The structural linguist examined only the overtly observable data. Of further importance to the structural or descriptive linguist was the notion that language could be dismantled into small pieces or units and that these units could be described scientifically, contrasted, and added up again to form the whole.

Typical behaviouristic models were classical and operant conditioning, rote verbal learning, instrumental learning, discrimination learning, and other empirical approaches to studying human behaviour. You may be familiar with the classical experiments with Pavlov's dog and Skinner's boxes; these too typify the position that organisms can be conditioned to respond in desired ways, given the correct degree and scheduling of reinforcement.

1.2 Rationalism and Cognitive Psychology

In the decade of the 1960s, the generative-transformational school of linguistics emerged through the influence of Noam Chomsky. Chomsky was trying to show that human language cannot be scrutinised simply in terms of observable stimuli and responses or the volumes of raw data gathered by field linguists.

The generative linguist was interested not only in describing language (achieving the level of descriptive adequacy), but also in arriving at an explanatory level of adequacy in the study of language. That is, a 'principled' basis, independent of any particular language, for the selection of the descriptively adequate grammar of each language (Chomsky 1964).

Cognitive psychologists asserted that meaning, understanding, and knowing were significant data for psychological study. Instead of focusing rather mechanistically on stimulus-response connections, cognitivists tried to discover psychological principles of organisation and functioning.

Cognitive psychologists, like generative linguists, sought to discover underlying motivations and deeper structures of human behaviour by using a rational approach. That is, they freed themselves from the strictly empirical study typical of behaviourists and employed the tools of logic, reason, extrapolation, and inference in order to derive explanations for human behaviour. Going beyond descriptive to explanatory power took on utmost importance.

Both the structural linguist and the behavioural psychologist were interested in description, in answering what questions about human behaviour: objective measurement of behaviour in controlled circumstances. The generative linguist and cognitive psychologist were, to be sure, interested in the what-question; but they were far more interested in a more ultimate question, why: *What underlying reasons, genetic and environmental factors, and circumstances caused a particular event?*

1.3 (Social) Constructivism

Constructivism is hardly a new school of thought. Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, names often associated with constructivism, are not by any means new to the scene of language studies. Yet constructivism emerged as a prevailing paradigm only in the last part of the twentieth century.

What is constructivism, and how does it differ from the other two viewpoints described above? Constructivists, not unlike some cognitive psychologists, argue that all human beings construct their own version of reality, and therefore multiple contrasting ways of knowing and describing are equally legitimate.

This perspective might be described as «[...] an emphasis on active processes of construction [of meaning], attention to texts as a means of gaining insights into those processes, and an interest in the nature of knowledge and its variations, including the nature of knowledge associated with membership in a particular group» (Spivey 1997). Constructivist scholarship can focus on «individuals engaged in social practices, [...] on a collaborative group, [or] on a global community» (Spivey 1997: 24).

A constructivist perspective goes a little beyond the rationalist/innatist approach and the cognitive psychological perspective in its emphasis on the primacy of each individual's construction of reality. Piaget and Vygotsky, both commonly described as constructivists, differ in the extent to which each emphasises social context. Piaget (1969) stressed the importance of individual cognitive development as a relatively solitary act. Biological timetables and stages of development were basic; social-interaction was claimed only to trigger development at the right moment in time. On the other hand, Vygotsky (1978), described as a 'social' constructivist by some, maintained that social interaction was foundational in cognitive development and rejected the notion of predetermined stages.

Researchers studying first and second language acquisition have demonstrated constructivist perspectives through studies of conversational discourse, socio-cultural factors in learning, and interactionist theories. In many ways, constructivist perspectives are a natural successor to cognitivist studies of universal grammar, information processing, memory, artificial intelligence, and interlanguage systematicity.

2. The study of first language acquisition (FLA)

In principle, one could adopt one of two polarised positions in the study of first language acquisition. Using the schools of thought formerly outlined, an extreme behaviouristic position would claim that children come into the world with a *tabula rasa*, a clean slate bearing no preconceived notions about the world or about language, and that these children are then shaped by their environment and slowly conditioned through various schedules of reinforcement.

2.1 The Behaviouristic Model of Linguistic Behaviour

This model of linguistic behaviour was embodied in B. E. Skinner's classic, *Verbal Behavior* (1957). Skinner was commonly known for his experiments with animal behaviour, but he also gained recognition for his contributions to education through teaching machines and programmed learning. Skinner's theory of verbal behaviour was an extension of his general theory of learning by operant

conditioning. Operant conditioning refers to conditioning in which the organism (in this case, a human being) emits a response, or operant (a sentence or utterance), without necessarily observable stimuli; that operant is maintained (learned) by reinforcement (for example, a positive verbal or nonverbal response from another person).

2.2 Cognition and Language Development/Social Interaction

At the other constructivist extreme is the position that makes not only the rationalist/cognitivist claim that children come into this world with very specific innate knowledge, predispositions, and biological timetables, but that children learn to function in a language chiefly through interaction and discourse.

In recent years it has become quite clear that language functioning extends well beyond cognitive thought and memory structure. Here we see the social constructivist emphasis of the functional perspective: the function of language in discourse.

Conclusions

All three positions must be seen as important in creating balanced descriptions of human linguistic behaviour. Consider for a moment the analogy of a very high mountain, viewed from a distance. From one direction the mountain may have a sharp peak, easily identified glaciers, and distinctive rock formations. From another direction, however, the same mountain might now appear to have two peaks (the second formerly hidden from view) and different configurations of its slopes. From still another direction, yet further characteristics emerge, heretofore unobserved. The study of language acquisition is very much like the viewing of our mountain: we need multiple tools and vantage points in order to ascertain the whole picture.

If one considers language study as the memorisation of some vocabulary and sentence structures with “good” pronunciation, the entire effort is doomed to failure from the beginning. Language is a complex whole: syntax (sentence structure), phonology (sound system), lexicon (vocabulary), semantics (meaning), and pragmatics (usage). The mastery of all this requires the learner’s total commitment for life, especially if the standard sought is the educated native speaker. Language learning is a process which takes time under the best of circumstances, when the learner is motivated and has everything available to help him to reach his goals.

Language practice must take place in a relevant and safe context while the learner is executing a task and having support by the teacher. In other words, the learner will not only learn about the language but he will learn the language by using it.

This is what we want in GuLL: we empower the learner in a narrative coaching by letting him explain the way he is dealing with his linguistic problem. The environment is safe, he talks about his guerrilla technique and we try to understand and support him. In fact, we make him aware of the way he is thinking. This awareness should help him to deal with the linguistic problem in the future.

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I.2 Error analysis

Alba Graziano, Anna Romagnuolo (La Tuscia)

Error analysis (EA) is the study of deviations from target-language norms in second language acquisition (SLA). Indeed, it developed in the field of SLA from the '60s onwards thanks to the work of Stephen Pitt Corder (1967). Formerly, Contrastive Analysis (CA), under the influence of behaviourism, aimed at identifying interlingual differences by predicting and describing patterns that were likely to cause difficulty and could be “cured” with drill exercises (see Fries 1945; Lado 1957, 1964). By elaborating the idea of Interlanguage (IL) as an inevitable phase of language transfer from first to second language and by appreciating it as progress making in language learning, Pitt Corder was able to distinguish between *errors* and *mistakes* and to consider the former as a natural developmental stage. Prior to identifying, describing and categorising errors, samples of learner language had to be collected; therefore, only when computer sciences started to be applied to linguistic research and made quantitative analysis possible, EA was set on scientific basis by relying on huge Learner Corpora. These are searchable computerised collections of language learners' written or spoken production, and contain authentic language data produced by learners of a foreign/second language. In terms of research, they can offer an opportunity to compare and actually describe what students can (and cannot) do linguistically in *quantifiable* terms.

Computerised Language Corpora Research (CLCR) started in the late '80s and early '90s by basically combining Computer-aided Error Analysis (CEA) and Contrastive Interlanguage Analysis (CIA). It relies on the principles and methodology of Corpus Linguistics (Firth, Halliday and Sinclair), which draw no distinction between form (grammar) and meaning (lexicon), but consider them interdependent and indeed look for patterns associated with grammatical features and the tendency of words to co-occur. The philosophy of this research methodology is undoubtedly statistical, based on recurrent patterns (frequency→past observations/probability→future predictability).

Learner Corpora (LC) have played different roles in the linguistic and pedagogical research around language acquisition:

- as a research tool for the analysis of the features of IL (e.g. International Corpus of Learner English-ICLE: see Granger 2002, 2003, 2012; <http://www.uclouvain.be/en-cecl-icle.html>);
- as a pedagogical tool: to assist IL development (e.g. Longman Learner Corpus: see <http://www.pearsonlongman.com/dictionaries/corpus/learners.html>);
- as a valuable resource for curriculum design: through selection and sequencing of grammatical phenomena;
- as teaching methodology: exploiting the corpus in class for inductive learning and planning assessment and self-assessment. Learners compare their IL and NL data-driven learning by using concordances from reference and smaller corpora (Johns 1986). In this way, as James (1998: 258) maintains: «The way learning proceeds is by learners doing their own error analyses, something that learners are naturally inclined to do but often need teacher guidance in doing effectively».

Through the analysis of learner corpora it has become possible to identify recurrent patterns of error in spelling, parts of speech, morpho-syntax and lexicon, while the reference to native speakers' corpora allows comparing under- and over-usage of expressions, identifying strategies of avoidance and describing the level of “natural” written production and the degree of deviance from the “standard” norm, i.e. from the expectations of a *literate adult native speaker*.

All this might also result in an intrinsically theoretical limitation and in a practical drawback on the side of the EA approach to teaching/learning:

1. It implies revitalising the “native speaker” model, which, particularly in the area of English as a second language, has given way to a much greater tolerance as to accuracy, provided communication happens, to the point of appreciating the contribution of “foreign” speakers as one more form of linguistic creativity.
2. It does not seem to be enough to measure some of the problems foreign language students may have to face, which are at the root of the most serious communication failures but are not strictly grammatical, rather connected to context experience, in the sense of lack of both experiential and socio-cultural knowledge.

Bearing pros and cons of EA in mind, the Tuscia team carried out an actual experiment in EA as a canonical starting point for a project like GuLL, which deals with students' errors, learning strategies, loss or lack of literacy and (pedagogical) retention and retrieval strategies. Our conviction is that EA should be part of teachers' educational background since it can help them contrast language systems, identify errors due to the IL phase and locate mistakes at the correct linguistic level. On the other hand, we are just as persuaded

that it cannot be proposed to students as a learning method just as much as grammar (the scientific description of a language system with its metalanguage) cannot be presented to them but with an inductive and *a posteriori* approach.

The LC we set up was based on first year exams of Tuscia University students of English in the BA degree of Foreign Languages in the years 2009-2012, the vast majority of whom were italophone but with some of different origin (either Erasmus students or Romanian and Russian). The choice of using tests is justified by other experiences in EA, although we do not undervalue the specificity of both the psychological impact and even more the “inauthentic” situation. However, the main aim was to elaborate a corpus-driven error tagging system: i.e., after collecting the products of 112 students, we proceeded to apply the ICLE grid of error categories, verifying its validity but subsequently adjusting and adapting it to the reality of our own corpus. So, we provisionally tagged 2451 mistakes and grouped them into 41 error categories, which seem to be enough to describe this corpus even if it were to be enlarged (see Appendix). Since the texts used to compile our corpus were just sentences to be completed, rephrased or contextualised by students, the corpus was not tagged, but an excel sheet was compiled which might make both samples and data easily accessible.

Before illustrating the results of this research, a few words must be dedicated to refining the description of both the students and the aim of the assessment following the course contents.

1. Just like most Italian children, these students have received at least 8 years formal schooling in English (in a few years they will have had 13 years and more). Yet, the majority of them reaches at most levels A2 and B1 at the Placement Test. A questionnaire reveals different teaching methods, although the majority remembers very traditional grammar/translation and textbook-driven approaches with some extreme cases of school teachers speaking Italian most of the time. Only few declare some learning abroad and some informal learning, and not all of them seem to be digital natives, although the situation is rapidly changing. As a consequence, what these (but one could say most Italian) students suffer from is little speaking capacity (aggravated by serious problems of pronunciation), limited lexical patrimony (especially in the field of collocations and colloquialisms), no idea of language culture-boundedness, and above all NO AWARENESS of what they have been learning (meta-cognitive competence), of how English really works (meta-linguistic competence) and of what can be done with a language (performative and communicative competences).
2. The first year course held by prof. Alba Graziano is supposed to deal with theoretical subjects; still, given the circumstances, it tries to reconcile some meta-linguistic awareness with the practice of the general language. It mainly attempts at
 - inducing a communicative image of the language, by demolishing false notions about English grammar and enforcing more flexible “rules”;
 - contrasting Italian and English, by systematising the verbal system, the modality, the concepts of countable/uncountable and defining/non-defining, pre-modification and word formation;
 - making learning more fun, interactive and autonomous through the use of digital tools.

The verbal system in particular is practiced and tested through imagining “stories” behind single short utterances where only the verbal form changes, so as to contextualise them in mini dialogues or meaningful pieces of discourse and showing what the different use/meaning of the English tenses is. This is the part of the test that has been chosen to form our LC since it is the most autonomous task and so one that might tell us something about learning strategies even from the observation of the final product and not of the process.

The quantitative order of errors was in the following categories (see Appendix):

1. spelling and capitalisation (**My boss is always asking me to read his corrispondence it seems that he wants to let my know something.*);
2. verbs (both use and morphology: **Yesterday I've had only a banana for lunch; *had invite; *can't came,* etc.);
3. lexical choices (**Have you got your lunch today?*)
4. communicative efficiency in general (**My husband didn't want to go to New York to do better his studies, but however my husband had trained as an architect.*);
5. word formation (**A: Will you have lunch with your boss tomorrow?? B: Yes i will, i'm so exciting!*);
6. tense sequence (**Someone 's slept in my bed when I was studying.*)
7. word order (**Why you aren't in your bedroom?*).

No wonder there are lots of spelling and punctuation mistakes (although these are students running for a Degree in English!), since the prevailing use of *fill in the gaps* or *multiple choice* exercises in the practice of Italian teaching leaves small or no space to practice writing or even copying whole texts. Errors on the verbal system, which are the scope of the testing, are also expected (although not really welcome since they are the main target of the course!), but the greatest hindrance to communication is represented by

the errors rubricated under n. 4, which at times reveal lack of imagination (ex: *A: *Have you had fish?* B: *Yes I've had fish for a long time yesterday.*), at times a disproportion between inventiveness and the requirements of the test (**The plumber has asked the neighbours of a block of flats: Are you having the water? The an old women is answering: No, we aren't!*).

The majority of errors can be traced back to interference of the mother language and indicate that the main strategy to solve communicative problems remains literal translation from the mother tongue, thus confirming what also emerged from other research studies carried out in Italy (Prat Zagrebelski 2004). In our LC, they mainly affect verbal forms (**I call you later*; **Do you have lunch today?*; **My husband has trained as an architect two years ago*; **It's the first time I see*; *double future*, and in general the whole of the future periphrastic, etc.) or produce lexical and syntactical calques (**all the day*; **for all*; **what you eat?*; **a lot of time ago*; **to home*; **give the permission*; **people was saying*; **this night*; **for buy*; **go in*; **houseworks/homeworks*; **to have notice*; *double negation*, etc.). Otherwise, you can notice examples of IL, which result into “neither meat nor fish” language (**after I'm studied*; **I was find*; **I have hungry*; **I would drink*; **have you had already bought*; **I think will be difficult so*; etc.), which might be considered as strategies of gradual familiarisation with the foreign structure. A special case might be the so called *duration form*, which moves from a realisation with present tense following the Italian use (**It's this morning since I don't eat nothing*) to the use of present continuous (**Josh must be late, is two hours that we are waiting for him*, **Are you still having a snack? You are having it for two hours!*) before reaching the standard form with present perfect continuous.

As a provisional conclusion to our experiment, we are induced into believing that most errors are somehow absolutely “orthodox” in the sense that their culture-boundedness makes them predictable (even in the case of non-italophones). Possibly their common origin can be traced back to a very traditional (grammar-translation) approach to the teaching/learning of English and to the application of a Latin metalanguage to a still fundamentally Germanic grammar. That is why we call for a different LT approach/methodology which avoids teaching grammar in a traditional way and calls students to identify their errors with their own personal labels and the causes of these errors with individualised stories.

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Appendix

| Category | Total number of errors /category | Tag | Total number of errors /tag | Description |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|
| (F) Form | 533 | FM FS | 136 397 | morphology (word formation) spelling and capitalisation |
| (G) Grammar | 873 | GAW GAM GAR | 6 36 42 | article wrong article missing article redundant |
| | | GADJCS GADJN GADJC | 7 1 6 | adjective comparative/superlative adjective number adjective concordance |
| | | GNN GNC | 35 12 | noun number noun case |
| | | GPW GPM GPR | 22 35 8 | pronoun wrong pronoun missing pronoun redundant |
| | | GVAUX GVMO GVN GVTA GVTS GVV | 28 15 29 308 136 3 | verb auxiliary verb modal verb number verb tense/aspect/finite/non-finite tense sequence (<i>consecutio temporum</i>) voice (active/passive) |
| | | GADV | 27 | adverb wrong |
| | | GWC GWM GWR | 28 57 32 | word class word missing word redundant |
| (X) Lexico-grammar | 203 | XCO | 17 | wrong complementation (dependent verb clause) |
| | | XPRW XPRM XPRR | 101 25 35 | preposition wrong preposition missing preposition redundant |
| | | XNUC | 25 | nouns uncountable/countable |
| (S) Syntax | 78 | SWO | 78 | word order |
| (L) Lexicon | 222 | LC LP LS LFF LNE | 14 48 122 8 30 | conjunction/connector lexical phrase (chunks/collocation/phrasal verb) lexical single false friend not English (calques/invented words/foreign words) |
| (P) Punctuation | 118 | PW PM PR | 16 119 53 | punctuation wrong punctuation missing punctuation redundant |
| (C) Communicative efficiency | 325 | CU CI CR | 195 122 8 | unclear/wrong incomplete register |
| (S) Style | 25 | S | 25 | style |

II. TAPPING INTO LEARNING EXPERIENCES

II.1 The pedagogy of error

Carolina Purificati, Alessandra Smerilli (Asinitas)

1. Celestin Freinet

Freinet (1896-1966) was a French educator and creator of new teaching methods and techniques based on the creative work of students. He based his research on pedagogical style and methods that are grounded in personality theory and individual initiative, and on his experience of teaching in the public schools in France. His concept of «natural learning», based on observation and experimentation, new techniques and cooperative learning, sets him apart from many modern educators.

Freinet's method of developing his own pedagogical style was based on intuitive search, self-education, practice, and experimentation. In *L'histoire d'une pédagogie populaire* (1974), he stressed: «Pedagogy is created by people who very often don't have teaching experience or they taught long, long ago, but who have plenty of time and the authority necessary to speak in the name of educators» (p. 278). This conviction led him to search for his own methods and strategies of teaching, appropriate to his abilities, skills, and beliefs. In the book *Les dits de Matieu* (1959), he describes his search for the natural methods which can link school with the environment by likening the role of a teacher to that of a shepherd, gardener, or breeder.

In Freinet's vision the teacher is a fighter for societal change in the areas of democracy, freedom, peace, and the return of ethical values. One goal of teaching is to impart values by creating an atmosphere of warmth, confidence, support, and hope. The climate in the classroom influences all work and it must be an encouraging one. Freinet advises teachers to: «Show your belief in children and goodness, and help, but be firm» (1969, p. 106). He believes that children should learn moral behaviour. He observes that an artificial atmosphere exists at school; the discipline that comes with notes, exams, and competition teaches egotism, not moral behaviour. Morality at school should develop in the direction of help and cooperation. A new method, a new role for teachers, and new organisations of teaching and educating can change the model of the traditional school.

His school helps children prepare for life by teaching socialisation through independent work and self-discipline. This is reinforced by such devices as the school journal, where children write their remarks about school; work plans, where children learn to design their own school work; and by «slip problems», which provide self-correction. This school is a place where children feel empowered as a result of accomplished work. Marking and grading are provided by awards for achievements. Freinet believes that such an approach to education helps children learn to overcome their own weaknesses.

In the process of development, human beings encounter different obstacles. If these obstacles are successfully overcome, the fight provides stimulation, power, and satisfaction as well as direction for activities. The feeling of power, which can be found in family, society, nature, or people, is very important for human development. The shock of defeat causes regression, then action for the recovery of balance. If balance is not recovered, the result is “psychic deviation”, the influence of which is felt throughout an individual's life.

In these new premises, school work is organised in a different way to that in traditional schools, where time is allocated according to the syllabus and subjects taught in accordance with an official curriculum that imposes a monthly apportionment of time by subjects and a repetitive daily timetable. The importance of unscheduled activities arising from chance occurrences in the environment, and the concern to develop pupils' independence, led Freinet to envisage a more flexible timetable, composed of broad segments of time for work by the whole class and individual work plans. These plans are drawn up by each pupil at the start of the week and are considered to be commitments, personal work contracts. Within this general framework, ad hoc groupings can be set up. Evaluation remains a constant necessity but takes a different form. Collective tests, administered at regular intervals as the pupils work their way through the syllabus, are replaced by techniques of self-evaluation in the form of grids to be filled out each time new skills are acquired. The traditional compulsory syllabus for arithmetic, spelling and grammar is presented in the form of more specifically defined skills in which the pupil tests himself each time he/she completes a

given “unit”. For this purpose “self-correction files” are created for use by the learner, either of his own accord or following the teacher’s advice as difficulties arise.

Fifty years after its appearance in 1920, Freinet’s theory is still practiced in the thirty eight countries which are members of FIMEM. In Canada, the Mouvement Freinet was introduced in 1966 in Quebec during Les stages d’entraînement aux méthodes d’éducation actives (SEMEA); in Italy it is still practiced by the Cooperative Learning Movement.

2. Carl Rogers

Carl Rogers, best known for his contribution to client-centred therapy and his role in the development of counselling, also had much to say about education and group work. Carl Rogers applied his experiences with adult therapy to the education process and developed the concept of learner-centred teaching. He had the following five hypotheses regarding learner-centred education (Rogers, 1951):

1. *A person cannot teach another person directly; a person can only facilitate another’s learning.* This is a result of his personality theory, which states that everyone exists in a constantly changing world of experience in which he or she is the centre. Each person reacts and responds based on perception and experience. The belief is that what the student does is more important than what the teacher does. The focus is on the student. Therefore, the background and experiences of the learner are essential to how and what is learnt. Each student will process what he or she learns differently depending on what he or she brings to the classroom.

2. *A person learns significantly only those things that are perceived as being involved in the maintenance of or enhancement of the structure of self.* Therefore, relevancy to the student is essential for learning. The students’ experiences become the core of the course.

3. *Experience which, if assimilated, would involve a change in the organisation of self, tends to be resisted through denial or distortion of symbolism.* If the content or presentation of a course is inconsistent with preconceived information, the student will learn if he or she is open to varying concepts. Being open to consider concepts that differ from one’s own is vital to learning. Therefore, gently encouraging open-mindedness is helpful in engaging the student in learning. Also, it is important, for this reason, that new information is relevant and related to existing experience.

4. *The structure and organisation of self appears to become more rigid under threats and to relax its boundaries when completely free from threat.* If students believe that concepts are being forced upon them, they might become uncomfortable and fearful. A barrier is created by a tone of threat in the classroom. Therefore, an open, friendly environment in which trust is developed is essential in the classroom. Fear of retribution for not agreeing with a concept should be eliminated. A classroom tone of support helps to alleviate fears and encourages students to have the courage to explore concepts and beliefs that vary from those they bring to the classroom. Also, new information might threaten the student’s concept of him- or herself; therefore, the less vulnerable the student feels, the more likely he or she will be able to open up to the learning process.

5. *The educational situation which most effectively promotes significant learning is one in which threat to the self of the learner is reduced to a minimum and differentiated perception of the field is facilitated.* The instructor should be open to learning from the students and also working to connect the students to the subject matter. Frequent interaction with the students will help achieve this goal. The instructor’s acceptance of being a mentor who guides rather than the expert who tells is instrumental to student-centred, nonthreatening, and unforced learning.

In this perspective Carl Rogers places self assessment at the start and heart of the learning process. Traditional assessment methods do not usually evaluate the potentiality and the processes at the base of each individual. Instead they stimulate competition and performance anxiety, reducing cooperation and confrontation, so impeding any changing in the learner. In a context of significant learning these obstacles can be removed if the teacher shifts the attention from the contents to the relation.

Rogers believes that self-initiated learning becomes responsible learning when one evaluates one’s own learning. Goals and criteria are established by the individual, who decides to what extent he or she has achieved them. Self-evaluation must thus be part of experiential learning.

There are various ways to incorporate self-evaluation into learning: mutual discussion between teacher and students, written evaluations and self-grading, demonstration of fulfilment of a contract; self analysis in comparison with standards or norms or in discussion with other students. In a democratic education approach teachers and students share the criteria of evaluation, the objective of learning, correction

and self-correction techniques. The students periodically evaluate themselves in a collective discussion or a confrontation with the tutor. Mistakes are detected, shared with the class so that they become source of collective learning which prepare and open to self-evaluation. In this way the class is set upon empathy, mutual understanding and affective climate.

3. Maria Montessori

Maria Montessori is famous worldwide for her theories about the developmental needs of children, and applied them in educational settings. Montessori's focus on the "whole child" led her to develop a very different sort of school from the traditional adult-centred classroom.

Montessori believed that the goal of early childhood education should not be to fill the child with facts from a preselected course of studies, but rather to cultivate the child's own natural desire to learn. She believed that real education comes from within oneself, and is not taught by any other person, and that a truly educated person continues learning long after the hours and years they spend in the classroom, because they are motivated from within by a natural curiosity and love for knowledge.

Therefore, the Montessori method of education is designed to accommodate a child's natural desire to think and discover for him/herself (hence the motto *Help me to do it myself*). It is based on the principles of respect and independence where young children are respectfully regarded as full and complete individuals in their own right, capable of developing a meaningful degree of independence and self-discipline, in following their natural urge to learn and explore their environment.

Montessori is designed to help children discover and develop their own unique talents and possibilities. Each child is treated as a unique individual learner. Children learn at their own pace, and learn in the ways that work best for them as individuals. This method teaches the child to *think*, not simply to memorise, feedback and forget. Learning becomes its own reward, and each success fuels a desire to discover even more.

The prepared environment of the Montessori class is a learning laboratory in which the child is allowed to explore, discover, and select their own work. The independence that the child gains is not only empowering on a social and emotional basis, but it is also intrinsically involved with helping the child become comfortable and confident in their ability to master the environment, ask questions, puzzle out the answer, and learn without needing to be spoon-fed by an adult.

Children learn by doing, and this requires movement and spontaneous investigation. Many exercises are designed to draw the child's attention to the sensory properties of objects within their environment: size, shape, colour, texture, weight, smell, sound etc. Gradually the child learns to pay attention, seeing more clearly small details in the things around them. They have begun to observe and appreciate their environment. This is a key in helping the child discover how to learn.

Montessori Education emphasises "active learning" and the process undertaken rather than the end product. The learning environment reinforces the child's independence and urge towards self-development. This is achieved in three ways – beauty, order and accessibility. The Montessori materials are beautifully handcrafted and are displayed on low, open shelves. Each piece of material has a specific place and they are arranged in sequence from the simple to the more complex. It presents one concept at a time to the child and has a built-in "control of error".

In a Montessori classroom concepts such as textbooks, grades, exams, punishment, rewards, and homework are rarely embraced or applied. Unlike traditional methods of instruction, the progressive approach focuses on cooperation rather than competition and on personal growth rather than peer evaluation. Students are assessed based on a descriptive summary of the child's daily interactions and performance on independent and collaborative tasks. A child's individual and group creations are organised into a portfolio and progress report for parents to be evaluated during specific periods of the year. It is the responsibility of the teacher to individually assess each student through critical observation so that individual plans can be devised to help students overcome specific areas of deficiency.

The Montessori approach to assessment and reporting derives from the nature of Montessori's philosophy and pedagogy which facilitate targeted and personalised learning and development experiences for each child, the timing of individualised lessons being determined by the detailed observation of each child by the teacher. The materials provide feedback to child and teacher as to where the child is at any time on these developmental milestones and in mastery of skills and concepts. There is a strong emphasis on individual choice and individualised teaching, based on the understanding that children do not achieve those developmental goals, nor master those skills and concepts, in lockstep, but rather need to work at their own

pace, benefiting from the opportunities the three year age range provides to learn from and to teach each other, to be inspired by others, and to value helping others.

Montessori education is specifically non-competitive, and eschews rewards and punishment in order to encourage the development of intrinsic motivation for learning in children. Children take ownership of their own progress through their daily work journal, weekly individual conferences with their teacher, by requesting specific lessons as need arises, and by maintaining portfolios of completed work. These materials, together with detailed daily observation of each child by the teacher, form the basis of reporting to parents. Such reporting is individualised, highly detailed, and focused on the strengths of the child as well as areas where further development is needed. In Montessori multi-aged classrooms, all students are aware of each others' abilities and are comfortable with working at their own pace.

The achievements of others are not seen as threatening, but rather as something to which to aspire. Children are able to see that it is normal for individuals to achieve mastery in certain areas at different times and in different ways. As a result, they are encouraged rather than discouraged, and ready to continue to tackle, rather than to avoid, learning challenges. It is obvious that freedom of learning in the Montessori approach exposes the learner to mistakes, so the teacher does not give prizes or punishment but stimulates fantasy and curiosity.

This does not mean that the students are left alone or that mistakes are left without being corrected, but usually the teacher observes the class and their actions so that when finding a mistake she proposes the same situation again and the students find the right way and the correction by themselves. Montessori believes that «it is not important to correct, but to check the mistake». The focus is set on the individual, because each learning process is private, defined by the student himself. It is impossible to cope with students in a standard way, valid for all of them. What is useful for everyone is the logic that stands behind the educational practice and that has to be applied in case of a mistake. The child has to perceive that making a mistake is natural and correct, does not have to fear it before it happens, and has to be satisfied anytime he can detect a mistake and correct it. This is the best reward for any student: to be able to re-elaborate his/her actions.

Someone makes a mistake when experimenting with something new, and only who tries and experiments shows that autonomy and intellectual curiosity which are necessary in the learning process. The more you take the risk the more you make mistakes. The fundamental ability is to understand what has driven you to make that mistake so as to find the right procedure. In this way the student's mind can be re-organised, his/her sense of adaptation to new circumstances and situations improves. That's why Montessori suggests: «we should have a positive attitude towards mistakes, consider them companions and friends that live with us with a precise aim».

4. Building a mixed method

Our research follows the tradition of active education, educative cooperation and libertarian pedagogy, all those approaches that are person-centred and change-centred. *Each person comes to school with a body and a story*: this is the motto of the Cooperative Education Movement in Italy, which has inspired us since the beginning of our work.

This means that anyone engaging in a teaching process has to put relationships at the centre of his/her approach. We believe that one learns only within an authentic relationship, when bodies and stories can meet. At school, teachers and students can grow up through encountering each other.

Learning a new language is a process of “spoliation” on the one hand and identity enrichment on the other. It means the person is finally ready to accept a change, acquiring presence in the new country. The Italian language school serves as a means to rediscover the word and to facilitate communication. For migrants the school is an ideal place of hosting and caring because it guarantees continuity in relationships and uses the group as a means of individual learning and care. In the western school tradition learning is only cognitive, separated from its bodily and affective aspects. The active education methodology invests the whole person. In our school we use different and integrated channels of expression so that all the multiple intelligences are involved: expressive labs, singing, playing, narration and writing.

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II.2 Dalton Plan: responsibility, independence and cooperation in young learners' classroom

Magdalena Galaj (36.6 Competence Centre)

What does a pupil do when given, as he/she is given by the Dalton Laboratory Plan, responsibility for the performance for such and such work? Instinctively he seeks the best way of achieving it. Then having decided, he proceeds to act upon that decision... Discussion helps to clarify his ideas and also his plan of procedure. When he comes to the end, the finished achievement takes on all the splendour of success. It embodies all he had thought and felt and lived during the time it has taken to complete. This is real experience. It is culture achieved through individual development and through collective co-operation. It is no longer school—it is life.

Helen Parkhurst, *Education on the Dalton Plan* (1922)

Inspired by the intellectual ferment at the turn of the century, educational thinkers, such as John Dewey, began to cast a bold vision of a new, progressive, American approach to education. Helen Parkhurst caught the spirit of change and created the Dalton Plan. Aiming to achieve a balance between each child's talents and the needs of the growing American community, Helen Parkhurst created an educational model that captured the progressive spirit of the age. Specifically, she had these objectives: to tailor each student's programme to his or her needs, interests, and abilities; to promote both independence and dependability; and to enhance the student's social skills and sense of responsibility toward others. Parkhurst developed a three-part plan that continues to be the structural foundation of a Dalton education: *House*, *Assignment*, and *Lab*.

Today, as in the early days when ABIS School4Child (Łódź, Poland) became a Dalton School, ABIS is committed to educating students in accordance with the Dalton Plan developed by Helen Parkhurst. This unique philosophy of education, along with fine facilities and a dedicated staff, continues to enhance the school's reputation as one of the most innovative and successful educational institutions in the Łódź region. Students at primary school ABIS School4Child begin using the Dalton Plan from a very young age. At the first grade, children are presented with opportunities to make educational choices about their learning and in the process discover how to identify their interests and take responsibility for pursuing them. Over the years of their education, ABIS students learn how to take responsibility for their own education. ABIS graduates frequently comment on how well prepared they were for further stages of education (*gimnazjum*) because the Dalton Plan taught them how to budget their time, seek out faculty, and take control of their own educational destinies.

How is work organized in ABIS?

House

An important pillar of the Dalton Plan for building community and attending to the needs of every child, House is the home base in school for each ABIS student, and the head teacher is the parent's key contact with the school. In the early grades and later, the students' body is comprised of students of the same age. In all grades the teacher guides and assists each student in the learning process.

Assignment

The Assignment represents a contract between student and teacher. In addition to defining common obligations for daily class work, long-term projects, and homework, Dalton Assignments are uniquely structured to promote the internalisation and refinement of time-management and organisational skills, while offering students opportunities to develop their individual strengths and address their specific needs. The Assignment is introduced in the first grade and increases in scope and complexity through later grades when the student moves forward in their education.

Lab

The Laboratory is integral to the educational culture of ABIS School. The word *Laboratory* refers to the one-to-one and small group sessions between students and teachers which increase the traditional classroom instruction, combining study, research, and collaboration. Students and teachers schedule these Labs at specified times throughout the school day to discuss Assignment projects, expand upon questions of interest that arise in class, clarify issues, and explore new facets of a topic they want to pursue. Usually it is Friday. In grades 4-6, there are special rooms for each subject area that give emphasis to this independent interaction between teacher and students.

Role of formal education in shaping students' self-reflection on their learning process

A school cannot reflect the social experience which is the fruit of community life unless all its parts, or groups, develop those intimate relations one with the other and that interdependence which, outside of school, binds men and nations together.

Helen Parkhurst, *Education on the Dalton Plan* (1922)

The task of developing good human beings and responsible social citizens requires empathy, deliberative reasoning, and the moral imagination of all members of the ABIS community. The school remains committed to Helen Parkhurst's original goals to create not only academically strong graduates but also those who will become informed, intuitive, and responsible citizens.

The ABIS School is committed to providing an education of excellence that meets each student's interests, abilities and needs within a common curricular framework and reflects and promotes an understanding of, and appreciation for, diversity in our community as an integral part of school life. ABIS challenges each student to develop intellectual independence, creativity and curiosity and a sense of responsibility toward others both within the School and in the community at large. Guided by the Dalton Plan, the School prepares students to "Go Forth Unafraid."

As an innovative school guided by the Dalton Plan, ABIS is an intentionally diverse community committed to a tradition of life-long learning and educational innovation. The following are major principles that inform the daily learning environment at ABIS:

1. Valuing all dimensions of each child – intellectual, social, emotional, aesthetic, physical and spiritual.
2. Cultivating values of respect, integrity, compassion and justice to encourage community responsibility, combat prejudice and engage students as participants in a democratic society and global community.
3. Developing intellectual independence and risk-taking through inquiry, direct experience and collaboration.
4. Valuing all disciplines – the arts, sciences, humanities and physical development in an interdisciplinary curriculum, mindful of our historical emphasis on music, dance, theatre and visual arts.

Within a defined but flexible curriculum, the formal Dalton education in the primary school ABIS School4Child individualises learning for children at different levels of development. Teachers vary the pace of instruction in the basic skills, enabling each child to achieve both personal and academic success. Learning takes place either on a one-to-one basis, or in small groups, or as part of whole class activities. Opportunities are provided at all levels to encourage children to become active and independent learners, aware of their progress and flaws. Mistakes are a part of the process.

ABIS language learning builds on the children's existing knowledge and rich linguistic experience and focuses on developing an increased competence in the use of the language arts: speaking and listening, reading and writing. Through careful assessment, literacy skills are developed and supported starting in the earliest grades. Having been exposed to 7 hours of English and 4 hours of French weekly, children in ABIS primary school receive formal instruction on a daily basis from their language teachers and native speakers. Students are taught to develop strategies using both phonemic awareness and syntactic cues.

Students are also exposed to a variety of language learning methods and techniques. The program enriches students' language and vocabulary development through read-aloud stories, dialogues, poster creation etc. ABIS believes that reading is not only a tool for learning that helps children to make sense of their world but also an excellent vehicle for opening up dialogues about diversity, ethics, and values in a personal and meaningful way.

Through exposure to a rich array of multicultural literary themes, values such as respect, sharing and giving, empathy, community, and harmony are systematically explored and integrated through the curriculum at all grade levels.

The foreign language programme emphasises the interconnectedness between reading and writing, listening and speaking. Writing instruction, which takes place daily, is an expressive, meaningful activity for the children. Beginning in kindergarten (a pre-schooling program at ABIS), children are encouraged to put their own voices into print: their thoughts, ideas, illustrations, findings, and discoveries. Teachers work to create an environment of respectful "give and take" in order to nurture the developing potential of young writers and speakers while simultaneously introducing them to conventional spelling and grammar, through ongoing practice and review of these skills.

The children record their own stories, keep journals, write group poems, dialogues, and do individual research and which they present in the form of project, poster or digital presentation. They learn how to edit, revise, and rewrite their own work. Students' own handmade books of their original stories and reports are

carefully kept as part of the library collection. They participate in projects where they create their own work (AMORES – cookery book according to Jan Brzechwa’s “Mr. Blot’s Academy”). All their work encourages errors and mistakes which students commit in the process of their written and oral activities. Still their responsibility, awareness and self-reflection allow them to self-control errors made. A lot of mistakes and slips of tongue or typos are avoided thanks to peer work and work sharing. Students one-to-one sessions with teachers are very fruitful, too. Students are guided into error correction and they are given responsibility for learning from their own mistakes.

Conclusions

Dalton plan pedagogy allows teachers to adjust the pace of teaching and learning to the real possibilities of the child. It teaches self-reliance and develops initiative and independence in action and thinking of learners. It inspires students to seek the best and easiest methods of work, it helps them to master the sense of responsibility for the execution of the tasks undertaken. It implements individual learning of a child and it implements a harmonious cooperation between the teacher and the student. It individualises students tasks and sets great store by using each student’s potential.

The process of education is visualised, allowing children to better understand and remember the principles of their functioning in an institution. Days of the week are assigned with one colour, and the plan of the day is illustrated. The name or symbol of the child is placed next to the illustration of operations for which he or she is responsible for- the children are responsible for the tasks and commands they perform, for the teaching aids, which they use and the order in the room, as well as for other children in their class.

An array of tasks posted weekly, is set at the beginning of each week by the teacher. Every morning the child chooses from among his/her tasks and implements them at his/her own pace. Children work in pairs, every week they work with different students, even those whom they do not like much. This enables better cooperation of the group. The group consists of children of different ages, which gives the opportunity to learn by modelling from older friends, older children learn to help younger ones. Although in formal education (primary they are more or less the same age). This is used to implement the rule that the child should try to do tasks on their own (self-reliance). If they cannot cope with the task, they should ask for help someone who already knows how to do the task (cooperation), and at the end of the chain there is a teacher.

The fact that children are at different level of competence in the Dalton plan is an advantage as it gives teachers the ability to guide children on the basis of tutoring. In Dalton education, children have the opportunity to experience and learn on their own according to the principle “what does not pass through the hands of a child is not really understood by them”. The teacher does not play the main role – he/she is present in the classroom as an observer and “comes in” only when he/she is really needed, or to create the framework for the children’s activities.

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II.3 Learning with social disadvantage

Carmen Rădulescu (Ion Ghica)

Every learner has experiences that influence his/her understanding of the world. These unique experiences form the building blocks of learning and the avenues that provide opportunities for personal connections with new content. Though our own unique experiences influence our understanding of the world, to what extent are individual differences reflected in classroom instruction or in a school curriculum? Often in the classrooms the student's voice is silent. Perhaps many kids drop out because teaching and learning do not fit into their range of experience and because their voices are unheard.

In Dâmbovița region–Târgoviște municipality, the context is characterised by cultural and social diversity. There are Bulgarian and Roma ethnic groups, students with parents working abroad, teenagers coming from social services or students with a good social and financial condition.

Although, as a rule, the term “disadvantaged” is associated with “special needs”, in the terms of the United Nations it includes children from poor families or belonging to ethnic minorities. In this context, we speak more often about “social inclusion” or “inclusive education”, thus defining the effort that schools make in order to remove barriers to education and to ensure participation of the vulnerable to exclusion and marginalisation (UNESCO, 2000). The first requirement of inclusion is to reduce or eliminate all forms of exclusion, therefore, inclusive schools are open and friendly, having a flexible curriculum and high quality teaching practice, promoting partnerships in education (OECD, 2007). From this point of view we believe that the Economic College is an inclusive school.



Romanian

Roma

Bulgarian

Everyone experience is an important **piece of color** in the big picture of knowledge.

A thematic, interdisciplinary curriculum that present a larger picture is more meaningful than isolated facts.

The challenge for our teachers is to engage these students from the outset so that they feel their ideas and experiences are honoured and believe that they have a stake in their own learning.

A good teacher starts by being a diagnostician. She finds out what students know about a particular domain or what experiences students may have had that will impact their understanding of a certain topic, and builds upon such knowledge. By accessing students’ “funds of knowledge” – the knowledge acquired from the students’ communities, socialisation patterns, and non-school experiences, the teacher engages the students and allows them to

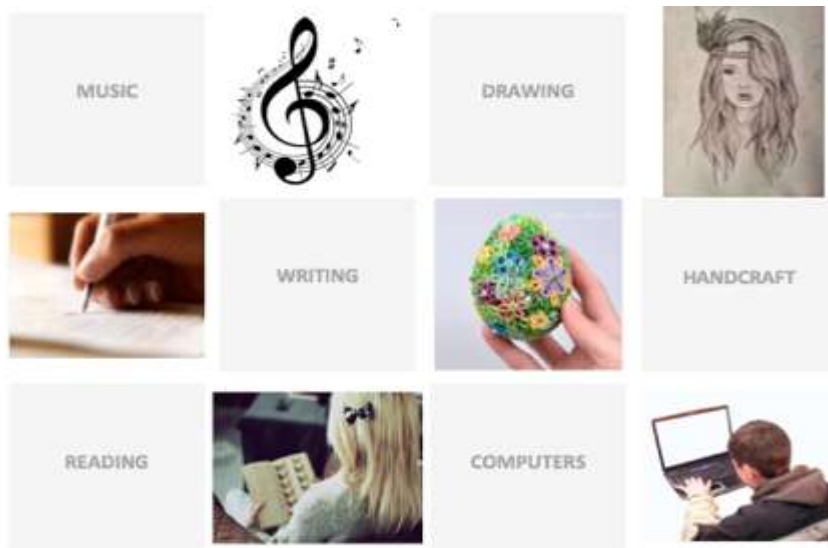
connect their own experiences and beliefs to the ideas and notions being studied. For example, nowadays within the students’ interests we can find: playing games on computer, reading, drawing, writing poems, singing or composing, cooking, sport. Considering that “learning is developmental”, which means we make sense of our world by assimilating, accommodating or rejecting new information, we, as teachers, can design a motivating and inspiring lesson only if we build a safe and attractive environment. Games are the best resources that comply with all what we need: *engagement, spontaneity and enjoyment*, three essential requirements to make learning easier. Even more so language learning: learners engaged in a motivating game want to participate and in so doing they need to understand what others are saying and they need to communicate their own viewpoint creating a bridge among them. When playing, all the learner’s attention is directed towards the outcome of the game and in this unconscious effort of being *in action*, inhibition vanishes. Moreover, rules have to be interpreted, accepted and finally respected by all the participants during games, and consequently the development of cooperative behaviour is guaranteed.

Below are some examples both from language classes and general classes, in which we tried to access the students’ experience in order to motivate them to learning.

Ex.1 Game: Word Brick – a popular game used for “building” sentences in English.

Content: The choice of word or topic category can make the game more or less challenging. (Basic Word Categories: nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs, articles and pronouns, prepositions...; More Challenging Word Categories: countable nouns, non-countable nouns, irregular verbs...; or topics like globalization, climate, media...)

Tap into: Students use the “bricks” to build complete sentences in English while they talk and play in small groups. At the start of the game, each group receives a handful of Word Bricks and engages in the activities that the teacher introduces to them. In order to play more than one round, the teacher can call out a new category or topic. The time limit can be adjusted.



All *Word Bricks* do not need to be made of the same materials. Pictures or cut-ups can be used and in groups students can make posters. Whatever material *Word Brick* are made from, their name reflects their use for building – which is what students do with *Word Bricks*. Teachers can use anything that can be written on. Pieces of paper will work, cardboard cut from boxes, flat stones, large uncooked beans, smooth pieces of wood or shells.

Students respond and interact by using their personal experience, imagination, and/or critical thinking skills to form answers. Because there are no

fixed answers, each player responds according to his or her level of proficiency in English. Games are suitable for all learners. Playing opens a crucial pathway to language learning not only because it grants the opportunity to use the language in a flexible and meaningful way but also nourishes both the intellect and the soul.


Ex.2

Content: Applied economics lesson - Loans

Tap into: The teacher begins by asking the students what they know about loans: *Are they familiar with loans? Are your parents taking loans? To which purpose?.* Some students answer they know from their parents that if you need a huge amount of money to get some important things you can take a loan. *That's right. But, how many of you know exactly which are the steps, the documents and the criteria a bank uses in order to give loans?* The class is probably silent. *So, we have to find out by researching.* The teacher asks the students to suggest whom they should contact in order to get this information, which should be the approach, the questions, and the steps. The students brainstorm as the teacher notes these ideas on the chalk board. The students choose the bank they want to visit and record their reasons for it.

For some students, it is a parent's job or working place, for others their future job interest or an opinion influenced by a favourite TV serial. The students then e-mail the various banks for information on loans; interview people who have loans (parents, relative, friends); use spreadsheets to calculate their budget for food and lodging in order to establish the needs and the revenues every month; they plan the loan; and word process daily journal entries about the documents they need in order to get a loan. All the information is assembled in a portfolio and shared with the others in the class. Creating a song, a drawing or a presentation about loans can be suggested in order to increase the retention of the information.

In this example, the teacher still presents a curriculum-based lesson but students have choices in determining the focus of the activity. The teacher initially hooks the students by finding out what they know about a subject in particular, and by assessing their general interests. While adhering to the curriculum, the teacher encourages students to make choices based on their interests and experiences and builds upon that knowledge.



Ex.
Content: Loans
 Tap into: compose a song or write a poem or draw something related to loans in which you shall present:

- The actors
- The condition to achieve in order to take a loan
- The advantages and the disadvantages of taking loans

It is true that many of our teachers would protest, saying that this kind of activity is too time consuming, that it is far more efficient to present them with the information, and they are right in a way, since student-centred activities, particularly those involving technology, certainly require more time than the traditional lecture. All teachers face major time constraints (time to plan, to grade, to cover the curriculum and prepare students for the exams), but we should reflect on the goal of education for once. Is education a continuous

preparing for exams and university? Or should education be varied according to the individual and don't children learn best by doing and adjusting to their aptitudes and interests?

Educational research and common sense tell us that we learn best when we are engaged with the material and when we see the material as meaningful. Think back onto a wonderful learning experience you had as a student. Did the experience centre on a great lecture or a workbook exercise? Or did it most likely involve a project, an activity in which you were engaged, excited, and got a chance to show off some of your talents, knowledge and experiences? Do you still remember much of what you learned?

By tapping into their knowledge about a particular topic we allow students to make connections between ideas, facts and concepts. These connections may provide the hook to get students interested in a subject or topic (*Hey, I didn't know that I knew that!*) and allow them to shine in front of the teacher and their peers.

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II.4 Learning and working with migrants

Carolina Purificati, Alessandra Smerilli (Asinitas)

ASINITAS Onlus is a not-for-profit organisation founded in 2005. It is active in the field of education and social work. Its mission is to promote the care, education, training, sheltering and testimony of Italian and foreign adults and minors. Its primary work focuses on promoting processes of inclusion for subjects perceived by society as non-equals, in order to bolster their social presence. Active education, person-centred care, story-telling, and gathering of biographies and testimony are the privileged methodologies. As an interdisciplinary working group it focuses on second language acquisition research with students who have a low level of literacy in their L1 by adapting several methods, from M. Montessori to Freinet, to the Italian experience of active learning with Cemea and the Movement for cooperative learning.

The organisation coordinates two schools of Italian as a second language for foreign women and mothers, refugees and asylum seekers, and migrants in Rome. The schools also include workshops on manual expression; listening spaces for Italian and foreign women and families; theatre workshops; orientation on health services, culture, education and training; training courses for teachers, educators, socio-cultural operators. The association promotes community participation through different activities and social labs in cooperation with local institutions, local NGOs and communities to raise awareness on the issue of international migration and inter-cultural exchange.

1. The two schools of Italian: who do we meet?

1.1 The school of Italian for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants

The school of Italian with asylum seekers, refugees and migrants welcomes each year about 200 men and women from the countries of Western and Eastern Africa, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkish Kurdistan, Bangladesh, Morocco, Egypt, South America. The environment is extremely heterogeneous both in terms of nationality and age.

Many of them are asylum seekers and join the school with a heavy baggage of complexity: the emotional burden of nostalgia of their country of origin and the difficult situation it is going through; pending or interrupted emotional ties; a travel experience that sometimes takes years and involves a series of traumas, including the risk of life itself crossing the desert or the sea; uncertainty about their fate linked to obtaining a residence permit; great bewilderment about their permanence in inadequate or chaotic migrants/refugees' centres or anyway in precarious living situations, immersed in an incomprehensible language and a different culture. The asylum seeker lives in a suspended time and in prolonged conditions of existential insecurity and uncertainty about the future. The text of this young Sudanese is an emblematic description of their experience:

The time has stopped for me when I entered Italy, the 05/05/2011. But I did not see anything, life has stopped when I entered Italy, you cannot do anything, no documents, no work, no phone card to call the family, no clothes, clothing, there is not even good food, when I am sick there is no medicine. I sleep no more during the night, every moment I'm worried, always worried. Night and day I walk into the city. What do we do? There is no solution. There is not a person in Italy who speaks more about the luck immigration, not a minister, not the president, not a man, not a woman, even the old people, no, no ... I'm sad, very very sad. But I want the Italian language, but when I think "what do Italians do for me" I don't understand anymore Italian, so ... because my heart is tired, very tired. My life has totally stopped in Italy. My life is blocked here, totally blocked. I say it's so all over Europe, so not only in Italy. (Karamoko Djawala – Sudan)

1.2 The school for women in Torpignattara

To better understand the kind of women we encounter at the school of Torpignattara, it is important to briefly describe the neighbourhood where the school is located. Torpignattara is a district South-East of Rome. It is no suburban area: the central railway station is just 20 minutes away. It is perceived as such because there are many foreign residents, the institutions are almost absent and the level of social conflict is very high. Nevertheless Torpignattara is also a "lab" for intercultural coexistence and a ground where an important match for the future of Italy is played. It has always been an area of immigration: only that for the past 30 years immigration from Southern Italy has been replaced by sizeable flows of immigrants mainly from Bangladesh. After the Bangladeshi, the other main minorities are the Egyptian, Chinese, Romanian and Peruvian.

In most cases, the women we meet at school have not chosen to migrate. Often their marriages to men already living in Italy for several years were combined between families, by proxy or by phone, causing in many cases the interruption of individual paths. If for some of them their departure was desired and seen as a synonym of opportunity, for many others it is suffered. In both cases, however, there is a clash with an unknown context, about which they have received no previous information, if not their husbands' own stories – often untrue. That is why many women are not aware of their migration: they know that they are going to Rome, in Italy, but they do not know the history, the food, the traditions, the culture, they do not know the life conditions in wait for them. In a sense, those women never arrive in Italy, nor even in Rome. They get to Torpignattara and remain there, locked in that corner of Bangladesh or Egypt their communities have reproduced for themselves.

They live in a dimension of great loneliness for years: their husbands are mostly absent, totally engaged in underpaid occupations for the maintenance of the family. The numerous and close pregnancies are also lived alone and with great difficulty. Giving continuity to educational and professional careers started in the original country is almost impossible given the hurdles implied by requesting recognition of their diplomas and qualifications and the difficulties with the language. Let alone family and cultural conditioning.

Through its schools Asinitas has created welcoming and meeting contexts addressing the most vulnerable groups of the migrant population. Its action-research has become a reference for the social and pedagogy world, foreign communities, and is nowadays a point of intercultural exchange in the city.

2. Methodological research: our teachers

Our methodological research on the construction of educational contexts and teaching of Italian L2 follows the trail of movements and intellectuals who, in Italy and elsewhere, carried out important theoretical/practical research on methods of active education: from Maria Montessori to Lamberto Borghi, who in turn drew its theoretical formulations from thinkers of libertarian education such as J. Dewey and C. Rogers; from the Centres for Active Education (CEMEA) to the Movement of Educational Cooperation (MCE), who brought the thought and techniques of C. Freinet to Italy.

In the Western tradition of education, learning is almost exclusively cognitive and keeps bodily and emotional aspects separated. Active education, on the contrary, argues for an integrated individuality, in which every aspect of the person should be welcomed and encouraged. In our schools we value the diversity of languages, and engage people in their entirety to stimulate multiple intelligences and capacity: bodily and playful activities, singing, crafts/hand workshops, storytelling and writing.

2.1 Body and voice

Body in its entirety is the main vehicle of learning: it is in the body that sensitivity and rhythms and most of our memories lie; it is with the body that we enter the world as people and citizens.

Every morning, after breakfast with coffee, tea and cookies, we start with a circle. It is the initiation rite of the day, our good morning and our call: we do not have attendance lists: in a circle we look at each other, who is there and who is not. We join hands, we hear the neighbouring bodies, their warmth, support, sometimes the embarrassment. Those are our attendance lists.

When we talk about migration the concept of presence acquires an essential value in relation to the double feeling of absence that the migrants carry with them: not only the physical absence from the country of origin, but also absence in the host country. If *praesentia* means to be “in front of”, does the simple fact of being in front of someone imply existence for that person? Sharing the same city, the same streets, the same bus, the same neighbourhood does not necessarily mean being present and visible to oneself and others. Moreover, as Miguel Benasayag writes, in order to achieve true presence it is necessary to suspend judgement and especially get rid of all those labels and superstructures which give us the impression of knowing who is in front of us, but actually prevent the real encounter with the other.

To begin this long process, our first act of presence is the one concerning the body.

During the circle we stop our thoughts for a few minutes, as well as the difficulties of everyday life – the papers that are not yet ready, the feeling of nostalgia for the family, the uncomfortable bed in the refugee centre. Often we start with a song, a song from the Italian folk tradition: we listen to the melody, the sound of words, then we read them together and sometimes we try to associate them with gestures to fix them more easily in our minds. Singing is good for the body: it activates senses and facial expressions; it connects,

excites, amuses. Furthermore, in choral singing there is no need of individual performance, there is a collective voice in which you can feel invisible and protected or, if you wish, you can show.

Other times we suggest to the students that they sing traditional songs in their own mother tongues. Sometimes it is hard to begin, but most of the times the group picks it up and encourages it. The mother tongue evokes and returns memory and dignity; singing discloses each and everyone to others by engaging the body and the senses without demanding full comprehension. We also propose presentation games, bodily activation exercises, dances, trust games, cooperation and opposition games, sensory games.

The playful dimension leaves freedom to personal participation and allows mutual understanding within the group, breaks up relational rigidity, puts emotions into play, and encourages laughing about oneself and others.

2.2 Storytelling

Stories set the inner life into motion, and this is particularly important where the inner life is frightened, wedged, or cornered. Story greases the hoists and pulleys, it causes adrenaline to surge, shows us the way out, down, or up, and for our trouble, cuts for us fine wide doors in previously blank walls, openings that lead to the dreamland, that lead to love and learning, that lead us back to our own real lives...

Clarissa Pinkola Estés, *Women who run with the wolves*

Most people who come to our schools have arrived in Italy and in Rome only recently. They are men and women who have made long journeys through deserts, mountains, seas. They run away from wars, persecution, poverty, drought. Some of them bear deep inner dramas. For others it is rather the desire to travel, to learn, to study that pushed them to leave. What unites these people is the inevitable fracture of life that migration brings along. What brings these people together is the inevitable rift of life caused by migration. Knotting again the threads of memory from the places of origin to the places of the present is a fundamental process for migrants, as well as re-locate and re-signify the personal story within the collective history of the world. The first act of appropriation of presence is, therefore, learning the language of the host country without which one can only remain in a state of nostalgic closure.

But the language that normally is taught in L2 Italian courses as well as the one used in textbooks ignores the history of these persons; it is a language that reflects only the practical needs of migrant integration, a language related to bureaucracy and services. On the contrary, we care for the language of memory, ideas and feelings, the language of self-expression, of relationship with the others and the world, the language that builds bridges and creates imaginaries. For this reason telling and self-telling becomes a central practice of our didactic.

In order to do that, we use images of art, illustrated books, tales, mythological and traditional stories, poetry, films and stories concerning the real life brought in by our students. Stories about roots and identity, loss and suspension of sentimental relationships, personal and cultural disorientation, travel, escape, change, adventure: these are all the cross-cultural anthropological aspects which do not speak directly about me nor about you, that do not ask nor intrude, but within which you can recognise yourself and somehow also understand each other better.

In tales the hero, often poor and sad, leaves his original place and passes several tests before living cheerfully in a new kingdom. Often myths also tell about metamorphosis and exile. After listening, reading, comprehending, discussing, we propose narration on the subject, written or oral, for individuals or pairs. In pairs students address their stories to each other, then they return to the group and everybody narrates in the first person the story they have just heard, as if it was their own.

When structuring a story, the sense of an experience is also revised and reconstructed according to the listener and the context. The story and the exchange of experiences are meta-cognitive operations of highly effective training. Connecting self-experience with experiences heard from others allows a glimpse into different possibilities, stimulates other meaning processing, allows a better comprehension of one's own story by giving it new meanings.

People are free to tell a story, decide whether to put themselves on the line or not. We do not care about the objective truth of the events, we care about the "story of feelings", if and how each person has the desire or need to express it. During the writing we intervene as little as possible, in the conviction that correction and accuracy at this stage may impair the thought, the language, the hand.

The restitution of the stories within the group is an important moment, it is made in a circle, in cosiness and silence, without interruption, questions, judgements. Narrations then become traces to hang on

the walls of the classroom, testimonies to be included in the booklets that we publish each year at the end of school.

2.3 Learning by Doing

*Creare è una forma di maternità; educa, rende felici e adulti in senso buono.
Non creare è morire e, prima, irrimediabilmente invecchiare*
Anna Maria Ortese

Beside the use of body and voice, of narration and memory, it is essential to use the hands. This implies working on two different dimensions: one is the use of didactical materials from the Montessori tradition (and therefore movable alphabets, grammar boxes, language games, materials for logical analysis, etc.), which have the power to make the linguistic structures tangible and promote experience before the revision at a cognitive level; the second dimension is the one of expressive/manual workshops. We take good care of the “doing” – manual work – as we believe that learning firstly comes through experience.

Approximately once a month, all the classes of the school get together in one area where various materials are provided, which will be used to carry out a composition: students work together, regardless of how they can read, write, or apply grammar rules.

We organise workshops at the end of thematic blocks: for days we work on a story, its contents, the suggestions and reflections it evokes. Then, during the workshop, the theme is brought to an interior and individual dimension throughout a manual production. As with writing, everyone has the freedom to get more or less involved, to build what they want and need to express, but without the language obstacle. The workshop methods are always meditated and experimented first by the teachers’ team. That is important for the choice of materials, which normally include recycled materials, fabrics, wools, yarns, natural elements, papers, colours and glues. It is important that the materials are beautiful and diverse, orderly arranged in the classroom, and that the proposal is clear and reassuring. The creative part is always followed by a more intimate moment of writing production.

We think that the ability of verbal expression can be strongly supported and conveyed through manual, graphic or painting activities. It should be the hands to search for self-expression, because hands use a language which will generate new words, new expressions and new communication. Creation reveals its author, sums up their expressive desire in the here and now of the creative situation. The dimension of “doing” makes relationships easier through the use of shared materials and tools, creates convivial moments, allows for everybody’s active participation, encourages mutual help and discussion. Despite the anxiety it can generate at the beginning because of using manual skills that you might think you do not have, “concretely doing” provides great relief because it shows that you can afford more than useful learning.

It is fundamental that each participant feels reassured and sustained in case they refuse the creative proposal; they need to feel that their work has been valued, and each one should be satisfied with their results. No one is allowed to leave the hall feeling that they have failed. At the end of the day, students show and share their own work with the rest of the group, then the final artefacts will be hanged on the walls or exhibited on the tables in the school, becoming the final trace of a common path.

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II.5 The Aleholm Model of Diversity

Elisabeth Mueller Nylander (Sävsjö kommun)

At Aleholm, the entire teaching staff works to assist marginalised groups with literacy. The immigrant students (about 1/3 of the student population) face a number of difficulties as newcomers to Sweden, especially acquiring new languages (Swedish, and in many cases basic English as well). Many of the adult students who attend the school also struggle with mastering the basic literacy skills required to pursue further education. Moreover, a number of the upper secondary students show signs of decreasing interest and ability in language skills in both their mother tongue and foreign languages (English, French, Spanish).

In keeping with the school mission to provide the foundation for life-long learning, it is essential to encourage the student population to empower itself through practice with the many forms of literacy that exist today, including language fluency and digital tool use. Currently, the school is implementing a form of pedagogy known as one-to-one, in which each student has access to Wi-Fi and a personal laptop or iPad. The teachers are encouraged to attend courses so that they can aid students in mastery of these digital tools. However, there is a strong desire from both students and staff for improvement in this area. In short, the current model relies too heavily on the individual energy of devoted teachers and there is a lack of systematic work on the ICT and literacy front.

In order to remedy this situation, one idea is to use the school library as a learning hub where both informal and formal learning can take place. This is in keeping with the current trend that suggests libraries can be seen as a dynamic meeting place for learning. The argument is that libraries should be seen in terms of the opportunities for activity they provide and not just as a collection of books. Moreover, the aim of schools should be to ensure the presence of a school librarian, «if students are to become critical thinkers and not just information gatherers» (Mueller Nylander 2014).

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II.6 Leisure time education

Alena Jůvová, Ondřej Duda, Adéla Antlová (Palacky University Olomouc)

1. The concept of leisure time

For humans leisure time has become a means of freedom and life fulfilment and its value keeps increasing for both an individual and society: leisure time gains an axiological dimension. In general, leisure time is defined «as a unique human activity that derives from the personal and free decision of an individual and is dependent on the good will amongst all people. It is a means to achieve a happy and contented life and is consistent with the objectives of environmental stability» (The World Leisure organisation). Opaschowski (2006, p. 35) characterises leisure time primarily as a period of time in which an individual can do what he/she wants and what brings him/her joy and amusement. The German educator also defines the main principles of leisure time education:

1. leisure time as a means of character development,
2. subject activity and development of creativity to overcome passive consumption,
3. focus on social contact and common experience of leisure time,
4. spontaneity, looseness and openness,
5. fun, joy and experience,
6. release and relaxation.

The theories of leisure time were an academic concern of the sociologist Joffre Dumazedier (1915-2002), who studied the effect of leisure time on culture, social relationships and lifestyle and laid down the conditions under which leisure time can emerge. According to him free time is the time we have when we leave out all our duties (work, study, family) and after we satisfy all our physiological needs.

Contrary to the positive view on leisure time we get after reading its definitions, scientists as well as parents speak of ill use of leisure time by youngsters. Leisure time is both a great gift and a big risk at the same time. It provides opportunities for development of child's personality, but there is also a risk of social pathology. *The problems associated with the use of leisure time can be basically divided into two. Firstly, problems connected to a total lack of leisure time, and, secondly, problems connected to the ability to use it really effectively.* Children and young adults are mostly related to the latter: they cannot use their time effectively (Žumárová in Kraus, Poláčková et al. 2001, pp. 161-162). The quality of individual use and experience of leisure time can be influenced by:

- social status: gender, age, health condition, marital status, influence of family environment, traditions and culture.
- socio-economic status: place of residence, education, profession, qualifications, economic and material security, share of power.
- personality characteristics: value orientation of the individual, mentality, temperament, structure of interests.

Veselá (1999, p. 28) speaks of endogenous and exogenous factors influencing the way a particular child experiences its spare time.

- Endogenous factors are the personal characteristics such as age, sex, health condition, physical and mental condition, personality traits, interests, etc.
- Exogenous factors such as the environmental characteristics and social groups in which the individual lives (family, peer group). What is important is the action of schools and educational institutions, as well as the local environment and the society. And finally, we mustn't omit the strong influence of the mass media.

Measuring by ways of experiencing leisure time, the family is the first model. A child receives and imitates the lifestyle of parents and brings it into his/her adulthood (Pávková et al. 1999, 29-30). Parents bear the responsibility for education in leisure time, as well as the education toward leisure time of their children. Spending a quality leisure time with family is very valuable and it is a kind of a litmus test of its functionality.

2. Functions of leisure time

The functions of leisure time resulting from human needs, as determined by Opaschowski (1987 in Vážanský, Smékal, 1995, pp. 30-31), are as follows:

Recreation: need of refreshment, recovery from everyday life stress, mental relaxation, sense of liberation from erroneous and excessive demands, rest and sleep, good health condition (“mental health”), feeling good;

Compensation: balancing the need for unilateral load and shortcomings, removing strain (doing nothing, laziness), waiver regulations, rules and constraints, release from the set objectives and purposes, desire of nature, being unencumbered, carelessness and generosity, conscious enjoyment of life;

Education: need for knowledge and new learning experience, stimulating orientation and desire for experience, curiosity in the behaviour and conduct of the tests, exchanging roles and learning to act in roles, the need to uphold and reaffirm oneself, the art of developing strong self and personality change, need of learning and activating one’s own possibilities of action, cooperative life;

Contemplation: need for peace, meditation, self-reflection and self-esteem building, having and being able to buy time for oneself, desire to get some distance from self, longing for a reasonable (spatial and internal) standoff, freedom from hustle and nervous tension, independent life, sense of one’s own individuality, finding identity;

Communication: need for communication, contact and sociability, desire to be alone, wishing diverse social relations, intensification of quality leisure time spent with others (community), discovery of time for other things, increased perception of feelings and intentions, empathy, love, tenderness, sex, sexual contacts;

Integration: need for society, collective respect, inclusion, sense of belonging to a group, common experience, need for support and group atmosphere, search for emotional security, social security and stability, sense of connection with others and interaction, work and play with others, recognition, social consciousness, family relationships, group feelings, positive social commitment (readiness to help, respect, tolerance), social learning in a group and with the group;

Participation: need for participation, involvement and social self-esteem, opportunities for self-initiative, engagement, participation and interaction at events, promotion of common goals and implementation of joint projects and aims, joint decision and responsibility, readiness for cooperation and solidarity, shaping environment by social events;

Enculturation: need for creative development, productive application and participation in cultural life, need for independent growth of personal abilities and talents, promoting one’s own ideas and different solutions to problems, desire to one’s own creative application, ability of expression, imagination, spontaneity, developing and expanding aesthetic feelings and abundance of ideas, self-motivated and committed performance, game productivity, cultural activities and initiatives, active participation and contribution.

3. Leisure time and education

As mentioned above, leisure time is time during which an individual’s process of education continues, though in different context and under different rules. However, its positive impacts on learners will be not less important if he or she uses the time well.

Education in leisure time differs from education in schools because:

1. it has an autonomous character (based on the interests, needs and abilities of the pupil),
2. it is based on a voluntary basis,
3. it is strongly present in the positive emotion, immediacy and spontaneity,
4. the relation of the educated person toward the educator is less formal,
5. education is indirect, functional, runs through the environment and children's groups, so that children do not even realise that they are being educated.

We distinguish upbringing in leisure time and for leisure time, i.e. leading individuals to the proper use of leisure time. Experiencing quality leisure time is one of the primary tools for prevention. Starting in childhood, the individual acquires habits in leisure time (how to plan efficiently or how to relax properly). Also the individual needs to navigate him/herself and develop their interests that might be a source of fulfilment and satisfaction in the adulthood (Pávková et al. 1999, p. 20). Education in leisure time targets the four following main functions: educational, health, social and preventively developmental. Its implementation is defined by a series of requirements, such as a requirement of voluntary activities, self-realization, diversity and attractiveness, sensitivity and sensibility or social contact navigation (Pávková et al. 1999, pp. 41-44 and 48-49).

All this makes leisure time a valuable tool in the hands of a teacher or a parent, through which it can be used to develop a wide range of skills and personality traits of children and young adults. At the same time it is a valuable tool for an individual striving for his/her development. The range of activities in which

an individual may be engaged in his/her spare time is wide. There are leisure-based educational facilities such as youth centres, after-school centres and school clubs. Besides these organised ways, unorganised activities also exist, which anyone can choose freely and spontaneously. Čech (2002) mentions these activities as most popular among children: stay outside, doing sport, computer and videogames, games, TV, artistic activities, reading a book, pet, stay in the countryside, sleep). In recent years, there is a growth in the use of ICT and mass media. The increase in the use of internet is crucial, not least for our project.

4. Leisure time and GuLL

What we are most interested in is the part of free time which is devoted to communication. Most activities are somehow connected to communication. Key is the question: How can we use our free time to improve our language learning? More exactly, what opportunities does free time give us to help understand where mistakes come from?

Before we attempt to look for the answers to this question we should stress that only those who are really motivated to learn a language and to try to understand it will be ready to devote part of their free time to study a language. They might be intrinsically motivated but more probably teachers and parents will be engaged to find reasons why this extra activity might be profitable to them (especially, when we think of young learners). Adult learners of a language will undoubtedly be more self-motivated.

What can a teacher or any educator (e.g. parent) do?

1. Prepare children to become more sensitive to any language traces they encounter during their free time (mother tongue or foreign language): e.g. notices, newspaper titles, other people's talk... and motivate them to pay attention to all the mistakes they notice.
2. Make them bring these mistakes to mutual, group discussion. By these steps learners realise that other people make mistakes, too. Through mutual discussion they become more sensitive and willing to analyse mistakes, and doing it in a group of people might help them find inspiration before they do it individually.
3. Motivate learners to be linguistically productive and to be willing to analyse their mistakes (write texts, poems, songs, comics, jokes, blogs, communicate through FB, orally... and during this think of the mistakes, they made and analyse them).
4. Offer learners tools for self-correction (library, self-access material, internet connection...).

What can an individual do?

Be linguistically productive and reflect upon their products (utterances, pieces of writing). When they communicate they can use spelling checkers, dictionaries, grammar books, online help, ask friends, google it (write the phrase to see whether it exists) and check what they wanted to write/say. They can even analyse mistakes they have not made yet but which they would most probably make in cases of doubt or absence of checking facilities.

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III. MY LANGUAGE LEARNING

During the creation of the Guerrilla literacy basics we all felt the need to talk about how we learnt a language. We realized that prior to developing this Guerrilla Literacy, we should listen to our own language learning experiences. If Guerrilla Literacy draws on personal language acquisition, we should be its first learners. Secondly, we also questioned whether national ways of teaching might have a dominant influence. So we share our testimonials per country.

III.1 Belgium, Flemish community (Patricia Huion): *Going multilingual*

I'm Patricia Huion and I've studied Flemish, Dutch, French, English, German, Norwegian. To me language has always been a symbol of connectivity. I was taught Flemish at school but my father was Dutch and I spoke Dutch with my paternal grandmother. My maternal grandmother didn't like this and she quite often made comments about this, imitated my 'posh' accent. We lived near the French (Walloon) border. We went swimming in the French-speaking community for instance. I still associate French with leisure activities and holidays. My paternal grandmother's family fled to Manchester during the first World War and my grandmother kept this love for the English language all her life. My maternal grandmother was a language lover too: she taught me the differences between regional dialects and studied AAANTwerps and BRUSSEls through the radio as her children got married to these 'aliens'. German was difficult due to our families' history in the Second World War and Norwegian became an option because my parents had Norwegian friends.

Language was not necessarily linked to class experiences for me. I studied grammar and vocabulary and I wrote essays. Mistakes were indicated in red but I've never had a language lesson during which a teacher sat next to me and discussed the origins of my mistakes. On the contrary mistakes were to be avoided. The link between grammar and mistakes had to happen on its own, I guess. I always hated grammar books, drill exercises, fill in the gap sentences, all kinds of closed exercises. I read a lot and I tried to talk to non-Flemish people whenever I had the opportunity.

III.2 Italy (Silvia Tobaldi): *Rhymes and Reasons*

When I was a little girl I was fond of music. I was fond of pitch, volume, sounds, tones, and all the shades of colours created rhythmically alternating notes and silences. I could feel this texture, see it and enter it. So, when my father played his Beethoven LPs, I sat alone, dreaming, imagining, wondering and wandering. One day, I entered the kitchen to drink some water when something on TV caught my attention. There was a young woman wearing a large straw hat and singing a song in a language I did not know. My mother was also singing, even though she was a terrible singer and she had no idea of what she was saying. The song was so interesting to me that I immediately memorised its melody and, believe it or not, its sounds. So, I kept on singing this song in this strange language, which for no reason I supposed to be English, for years and years.

When I was 11 I started studying English at school. All I had to do was translating dialogues and learn them by heart. Copy and translate, copy and translate, copy and translate. Grammar exercise after grammar exercise. Spelling, spelling, spelling. I could see no difference between English and History; they were both about learning tons of boring information to repeat to the teacher to make her happy. What was worse was that my English marks were quite bad and my English teacher was not happy at all. I was very disappointed. I could not understand how the English language could be so different from the song I was still singing in my brain. I was working hard, though.

One day, my English teacher had the idea to duplicate the teacher's audio-cassette to all her students, so they could practise at home. I went home and immediately played that cassette. I was over the moon!!! Here were the sounds I was looking for!!! Here was the melody!!! Now I could listen to this special music, I could analyse it and sing it. I could understand the sense of grammar, memorised functions and structures and

even my spelling mistakes disappeared. Was it magic? Not at all, it was guerrilla! I could also connect the strange sounds of my favourite song to words and I even knew some of them! I realised that only what sounded made sense in my way of learning. Was this because of natural inclination? Was this because of passion? Was this because of a different ability? I did not know and did not care; I could learn that language by playing it, and that was a fact. And so I nearly forgot about books but I would play the language year after year.

One day that guerrilla schoolgirl became a young guerrilla teacher of English. The first thing I told my students was «forget about books». I said: «Well... books are a useful support, but they aren't alive! A language is not a language if it isn't spoken and used! So, play your language, play with your language! Use what you want... computer games, films, music, videos, forums, chat rooms, ... don't trust your books, trust yourselves and find your way!»

I strongly believe that a teacher must be a coach. My guerrilla continues, I continue to sing that song, sometimes even to my students.

III.3 Sweden (Elisabeth Mueller Nylander): *Let Me In On The Secret: why a Texas gal would embrace learning and languages*

As the plane touches down, my stomach remains in the air and my thoughts return to the reunion ahead. I am back, and they are waiting for me. They know I am not the same person now. I have gained a new perspective, and I will never look at life the same way again. I will never be the same because now I know their secret.

The secret has always been around, ever since I was alive, and probably even before I was born. The secret was there when I was young, but then again, I was always young because Elisabeth was born the baby of the family. Mark was never young because he was my big brother. He was six years older and could do wonderful things. Mark could ride his bike without training wheels and he could stay up late to watch «Star Trek» with Mommy and Daddy.

Mark's snapshot taken in the camper during April of 1975 pictured me, Mommy, and Daddy's camera. Mark even took pictures with his own camera just like Daddy. He took a picture of me one day in the family's Volkswagen camper. Obviously I was telling Mommy something very important when Mark pressed the little red button. I was probably showing her which way on the map we should all go because I was very good with directions for a four-year-old. Where we actually ended up that time or all the other countless trips, I can't recall. We may have gone to Spain, Italy, France, or just for a drive through the German countryside near our home in Heidelberg. All I can remember is that we listened to John Denver, and that I knew all the words to «Rocky Mountain High» and Mark didn't. In the same picture, you can see Daddy's camera in its slick black case shining in the sunlight. That camera was very important, and I was not allowed to touch it unless I had special permission. It was actually able to capture the secret sometimes. «Hands off, Elisabeth, don't touch!». Although Mark had a camera that could do the same thing, he didn't really know how to use it yet. But Mark was learning, and then he would know the secret just like Mommy and Daddy.

The secret was there every day, and my search for it became a passion. I began to look for its essence among the many mysteries in my life. For a time, I thought the U.S. Army held the key. Daddy joined the Army before 1971, when I was born in Houston, Texas. The Army was important enough to be the secret because it made big decisions. The Army could make Elisabeth forget Daddy and fear him like a stranger when he returned from Vietnam. Later the Army moved us all to Germany. I couldn't think of anything more powerful than the Army, and I always wanted a strong man like Mark's G.I. Joe when I played with my Barbie Dolls. Somehow Joe's presence was not enough, and my questions about why Daddy was something called an 'officer' were never really answered. I soon gave up on the Army's ability to provide me with the secret. The Army just became something that perplexed me from time to time with its Officers' parties that I saw through the keyhole of my bedroom at hours past my bedtime.

The Camera and the Army were only two of the many mistaken ideas of what I thought was the secret. These and all other aspects of my life would eventually become blurred and distorted images in my mind. Yet, I never gave up in my search for the secret because even if I didn't know exactly what it was, the rest of my family did. They knew because they were all older. Their knowledge was a private bond that only the three of them shared. I felt left out and alone. My need to be in on their secret became a hunger, and I desired to know what it was at all costs. «I'll tell you when you're old enough to understand». That promise was their end of the bargain, and all I had to do was be a good little girl and do as I was told. I was told that I should always pray and sit still in church. This was not always so easy and Mommy or Daddy often had to remind me outside the church with a spanking. I was told that I should go to school. I am still going there. I did as I was told, but they never told me the secret. I found it out instead.

My realization wasn't sudden, and I didn't just know the secret one glorious day. I had started to understand long before I even knew what the words 'camera' or 'Army' meant. I began to comprehend the moment that I loved something. I don't know what I loved first, but all that matters is that I loved something. After that instant, my life became an explosion of moments that were dictated by my love for a particular thing like Mommy and Daddy, Mark, God, boys, my kitty-cats, America, or anything. I always knew the answer, even as I searched for that 'secret' that I thought only grown-ups knew. I always knew, but I could never put it into words until I separated myself from all that I knew and loved.

When I made what would be my last attempt at discovering my family's secret, I chose to live my Junior year of high school in Denmark as a foreign exchange student. My family had moved from Germany back to a small town in Texas, where we had stayed since I had started school. I was convinced that I had stayed in my hometown too long, and that the secret lay in my experiencing something radically different. I decided that Denmark was different enough. I spent my time devoted to learning the Danish language and customs. I dreamt, talked, ate, and breathed Danish. I became as Danish as possible and felt a real part of my own Danish family. I put all of my old self behind and allowed my Danish self to grow. I learned to love another culture and that was the answer. I had learned the secret. Embrace some culture other than your own and you can understand yours.

As I walked off the plane and left my year as a foreign exchange student behind, they were all waiting there: Mom, Dad, Mark, and all the American things I loved. We embraced and perpetuated the secret.

III.4 Holland (Peter Frühmann): *I walked on a small toad...*

I have mastered the Dutch language bit by bit and people say that my Dutch is better than average. I do not have any accent and sometimes I get compliments for that. I always answer that most Austrians learn to speak Dutch accent-free because they have soft consonants like the Dutch. For example, Austrian and Dutch "t" sounds the same: a short "d" with the tongue closer to the front teeth, a mild burst, not like the German "tch" which explodes from the teeth, no tongue involved. Vowels are also similar: Austrians – like the Dutch – call an egg an "ei", while Germans would say "aai". I can make Dutch people laugh when I do "ze Tcherman Aktsent".

I never took Dutch lessons, I listened to people in the street, I listened to the radio, I read the newspapers, I mimicked words until they sounded Dutch to me and I tried them out. One appreciated my efforts and tried to help. My breakthrough was when I had a fit of laughter because I understood all ambiguous jokes told by a Dutch stand-up comedian. I had done it all myself, it had been my initiative, I was proud of myself. But there always comes the day when you die, of shame...

After about a year in Holland – it was summer – some of my Dutch friends invited me to join them to a house in France. It was situated on the flanks of a mountain, close to a small lake, surrounded by forests. One day I had a strange encounter while I was descending from a mountain, and back at the house I wanted to share this with my friends. When we had our afternoon beer I started to talk:

«I walked on a small path when I saw...» but I could not continue my sentence because they all started to laugh. «You walked on a what?!...» I was puzzled and a bit offended, but good friends as they were they explained. In Dutch a path is called “pad” but in Dutch the same word is also used for “toad”. The word I used for small path was “padje” which in Dutch would mean “small toad”. The diminutive for a small path would have been “paadje”, a long “a”. How could I not know?

The mistake I made was that I should have known (and learned) that there are – as in most languages – exceptions. The Dutch diminutive for many words is the ending “je”. A narrow or small street is “straat-je”, a small child is “kind-je” and so on. And a small toad is “pad-je”. A small or narrow path, however, for most Dutch is “paad-je”. Later I learned that both – “padje” and “paadje” – for a small path are correct, but that most Dutch have agreed on the latter in spoken language. In a way it seems to have become not so much an exception but a ‘dominant’ word, a norm. Hence the understandable hilarious reaction of my friends.

And the strange encounter I had walking down the mountain on that small... path? I had met a witch and she... But that’s another story.

III.5 Hungary (Judit Kertesz): Language learning without extra features

I think I have always been a ‘classic’ language learner. I have no extra ‘features’, I didn’t grow up abroad, my parents are no diplomats. I’m just a Hungarian, I grew up in Russian and German cartoons.

I consider myself an extrovert person, I like to communicate and usually I’m curious about people and the foreign culture around me. English was always part of my life and my second foreign language, Spanish, became my favourite language because it’s sheer melody. German was quite an unsuccessful attempt for me in high school (that would be another story about teachers’ mistakes), but as I always say, I still speak it at ‘survivor’ level.

I remember I became more confident with languages when I met native speakers. Basically, this meant that when I wanted to communicate, I had to talk, no matter what. I think I’m very lucky that I had many opportunities in my life to travel and make international friends, so that living an ‘international’ life motivated me a lot to keep English and Spanish alive. Who cared about mistakes when my interlocutor was just smiling and nodding. And yes, I think (hope) they understood what I told them. Success! Who needs grammar? Nobody.

Of course later, when I started to work at an international company, I realised that grammar and correct speaking and rich vocabulary are essential. I think that was a kind of ‘second stage’ in my language learning.

As I was writing this story of mine I was thinking about the key-resources of my language learning process.



I wonder how this diagram would look like to today's younger generations of language learners.

III.6 Poland (Grzegorz Grodek): Discovering a love for literature through digital collaboration

Anna, an 11 year old primary school pupil from Poland, used to read rarely in her own time and would be embarrassed if her friends saw her reading. Imagine, this year Anna's Polish teacher and her class participate in AMORES project. Now Anna reads a lot at home and participates in collaborative work with her peers on creating e-artefacts inspired by literature. Yesterday her group finished a cartoon on Jánosik, the "Polish Robin Hood", and published it online. Tomorrow during the Polish class they will discuss the cartoon with their peers from the United Kingdom via videoconference. Anna is looking forward to it.

More than a fifth of children and young people (22%) rarely or never read in their own time and nearly a fifth (17%) would be embarrassed if their friends saw them reading. Many school students lack knowledge of national and European literature. Teachers find it hard to interest children in reading literature, but agree that the use of ICT could help raise the level of students' interest. However, in order to implement ICT in literacy teaching teachers do not only need expertise in using ICT, but also innovative methodology that would exploit the use of ICT for reading and learning literature.

Based on the above, the AMORES project focuses on improving literature learning across Europe by improving students' engagement with literature through a methodology based on interactive and collaborative use of ICT as well as on improving digital literacies of both students and teachers through the creation of e-artefacts, critical reflection on their production and their use in social participation.

III.7 Romania (Carmen/Zoe Radulescu): Reading vs. Speaking

I do not know how things work in other countries, but in Romania, for many people of my generation, knowing English was a real challenge. Coming from a culture that was very attached to French, I hardly replaced "je t'aime" (sic!) with "I love you" — and I could not have done it if the times had not dictated it. Everything was possible because of the way the social, cultural and scientific fields evolved. The period of academic preparation almost past, our only chance of studying English was... to act like a Guerrilla.

We felt as if we were trying to approach the language in the same way combatants do to an unknown field that has to be conquered. We had to keep going and we couldn't admit we had a chance to be defeated. I must confess that the battle was not easy at all, and very often our attempts to express our opinions were followed by the perplexity of the people who listened... but I always thought that they deserved a second chance, so I reiterated the idea in other words and most often I added some gestures that enriched such a poor linguistic universe....

The decisive moment for me was a teacher's speech that I listened to. It was Petru Creția, the Romanian translator of the most beautiful of Plato's dialogues, in a popular show of the time ('90s) – Musical Soiree – who said these memorable words:

I do not speak almost any language. I read them all as a "dead language".

I know that the combination of death and life in this picture is rather morbid, but the author's intention was, paradoxically, one of resurrection, of a rebirth of the interest to learn foreign languages. At the same time, the respect for "the word" came from a deeper understanding of Knowledge as being distributed more democratically than we would like to believe; no language owns the universal Knowledge and wisdom in the whole world!

It is true that the classical period favoured some languages, such as Greek and Latin, to the extent that any chance to become a "philosopher" was considerably reduced if somebody did not know Greek and Latin, but

the modern ages introduced into the equation a different language, English. When I say English, I don't mean "to speak English" but "to read English" meaningfully:

to have access to a source of highly original thinking.

So, although my verbal attempts were never higher than hills (because the dizzy heights of the mountains were reserved by birth to the native speakers or to those gifted with a stunning native talent), I proudly face my mole destiny and I can dig into the depths of a language that is foreign to me through a mechanism that involves reflection over the written word. I think I am, in this respect, a powerful Guerrilla....

III.8 Czech Republic (Ondřej Duda): What was and what is my motivation to learn English?

This is a learning narrative from one of my students about his motivation to learn English.

I've been learning English since I was 6. The first few years were really terrible. In my opinion I was the best student in my class in this subject. It was my only motivation at primary school. But we had a bad teacher. She was dear and friendly. But she always spoke 45 minutes about her husband, dog or sister in Czech. Everything has changed since I went to the gymnasium. My teachers focused on all aspects of the language-grammar, vocabulary, oral and written English. We have also a native speaker from Southampton for two years and I love dialogues with him about sport, culture or food. The quality of my English went up here.

I'm learning English because it will be useful for my job. It's my hobby and I'm learning it because I want to, not because I have to. For me, the best experience is speaking in English with the famous sportsmen from all the world every year at the Golden spike in Ostrava. The best moment of my life was speaking with the fastest man of the planet-USain Bolt from Jamaica. Only five minutes of conversation with him was amazing. My hobby is collecting autographs of famous people of sport, mostly athletes. So I need English often. My English is not the best, but I am satisfied with my conversation because other people usually understood me.

Learning English is an important way to communicate with friends from other countries. For example in Croatia where I was for the last four years. I need this language to communicate with other players of volleyball or in the restaurant. So, this is my motivation. After that I love watching films with subtitles, ice hockey, volleyball and football matches on the internet in English.

III.9 UK (Liz Mackie): Does correcting mistakes ruin language learning? A personal account from England

English. The third most common native language in the world. The most widely learned second language in the world. And, increasingly, the primary language of international business, cooperation and friendship.

With English so widely spoken worldwide, why would native English speakers want to learn another language? The short answer is that we don't. Here in England, only 25% of the adult population can hold a "basic" conversation in a language other than English. International surveys frequently put the UK at the bottom of any language-learning league.

It is not clear why language learning is so poor in England. A low priority within the national education curriculum is one cause. The compulsory requirement for all pupils to study a language to age 16 was removed in 2004. The number of pupils studying languages dropped like a stone, resulting just a few years later in very low numbers of language graduates and a national shortage of language teachers.

But Government policy is only one part of the story. Poor experiences of language learning may be a bigger reason. Few adults who have been through the English education system look back on their language classes

with happy memories. Those endless vocabulary lists. Trying to make sense of gendered nouns. Rote learning verb endings. None of it was fun, none of it was easy and little of it made sense.

Perhaps one reason why language learning is so difficult for English learners to grasp is that we don't learn our own language in this way. Of course no one has to consciously learn how to speak and understand their own language. But within our education system we don't learn English grammar so we are blissfully ignorant of the grammatical rules of our own language. Most of us only become aware that language even has grammatical rules when we start to learn another language. So we come to associate the boring, unimaginative and rule-bound world of grammatical structure with other languages. We learn that the rules must be obeyed, that no-one will understand us if we get the rules wrong. We become demotivated and dismayed by our own inability to master this new world of grammar. A majority of us give up as soon as we can, which now is at age 14, with relief that we don't need to persevere, and with gratitude that we can get by in the world with English.

The mystery of this strict application of formal learning to other languages is that we seldom apply this to our own. A well-known secret about the English language is that everyone gets it wrong all the time. And it doesn't matter. Anyone who has spent time here will know that English is spoken with huge variations but is still readily understood as English. Native English speakers make mistakes all the time but, even in school, these are not always corrected. Because communication is valued more highly than correctness and constant correction gets in the way of effective communication.

If we could find a way to teach other languages with the flexibility and relaxed approach to mistake making that we apply to our own language, we really would be the world's greatest linguists.

III.10 Italy (Alessandra Smerilli): *The challenges of learning a language... for teachers and students from all over the world*

Every October, for the past 10 years, the Intercultural Centre Miguelim opens its doors to the school of Italian for foreign women.

My class is composed of 25 women of different age and national groups, and 4 teachers: Maria Stella, one of our long-standing volunteers, a truly creative genie, Gabriella, a former teacher of Latin and Greek, Simona, a young intern from the language faculty and me. This year, all the teachers of the school collectively decided to put ourselves on the line right from the start and briefly tell, with the help of short videos, some of the difficulties we encountered in learning a foreign language.

Stella has recently started learning English and her biggest problem is that she gets anxious when she has to speak. So much so that she forgets all the words that she knew until one minute before. She needs time and quiet to get hold of the language. Slowly slowly.

Simona tells about her experience with Chinese: the difficulty and the beauty of the written language, but most importantly the feeling of extreme disorientation once she got to Beijing. Despite months and months spent studying pronunciation and tones, no one would understand her, and she would not understand anyone. How do you learn a language in which the words horse (mǎ) and mother (mā) have exactly the same sound but with a slightly different tone? After 6 months her pronunciation had considerably improved.

Gabriella tells us about Arabic, with sounds so different that she struggled to read and pronounce. Solutions? She did not find any. Go back in time and be born in an Arab country, a voice from the class laughingly suggests.

Valentina talks about the "damn" English phrasal verbs: how is it possible that the same verb has all those different meanings? Tatiana, a Moldovan woman who arrived in Italy only 4 months ago, proudly pulls out the dictionary of verbs she just bought. This is what Valentina needs!

I tell of the "sentimental relationship" that I had with Portuguese, a language so similar to mine that at some point I felt that I stopped learning and did not progress anymore. Only thanks to the relationships I had

with friends and loved ones could I get my motivation back. Camila, a 28-year-old Brazilian, says that this story feels very familiar; she never thought it would be so hard to learn a language so similar to her own...

Behts arrived in Italy when she was 15. She did not choose to move to Italy. Her mother was already living there for some time and she had to join her. Italian was an imposition to her; she hated the language as much as the idea of leaving her country. Once she got there, she did not speak for a whole month: the Italian she studied seemed like a totally different language. And there was the fear of making mistakes. But the motivation slowly became stronger thanks to her schoolmates and teachers, the desire to attend the university and finally the job as a teacher of Italian! Behts gives a piece of advice to the students: you should not be afraid of making mistakes, they are vital in the process of learning a new language. Behts' s video is the most difficult for the students to understand, but it is also the one that strikes them the most. They see themselves in those words.

At the end of every video, the students pair up to fill in a table that helps them with the comprehension: name, language studied, difficulties, solutions—if any. They give advice, ask questions to understand better, speculate on possible ways to overcome their problems, draw inspiration to tell something about themselves. We spend some time thinking about the word 'motivation', and on the important relationships that can support it. They are a bit tired but very satisfied.

On Tuesday morning we brainstorm all together. At the centre of the blackboard, I write "learning Italian". The connections it sparks are endless. For all of them the most important skill to master is understanding, and only then come speaking, reading and writing.

Who and what can help us in this process? The schools of Italian, the teachers.

The children, if any: children-teachers who never miss a chance to make fun of us when we mispronounce a word or misconjugate a verb. Some of them say that their children prefer their fathers to go and speak with the teachers at school, they speak better Italian, they are a bit ashamed of us.

Sometimes our husbands help us, but not much because they work a lot and when they get back home they just want to relax and speak their own language.

Watching cartoons with the children, Cartoonito and Masha & Bear. They are much easier to understand than the news or other TV shows. Nadia, a woman from Bangladesh who always gets to class literally out of breath, with the headscarf disorderly hanging off her head and a crying child who does not want to get used to the school, says that her TV does not receive Italian TV channels, only those from Bangladesh. Someone offers to fix her antenna.

Sometimes internet. There are some websites where one can watch films from one's own country or American TV series with Italian subtitles, online dictionaries, google translator, which often lies though... I tell them about our proposal to start a Facebook page only for us where we can exchange information, share school materials, study Italian also from home when there is some spare time for it. They seem happy.

Then there is music: Tatiana loves Adriano Celentano and his songs. Camila shows us her notebook where she, right after her moving to Italy, used to write down the lyrics of songs by Laura Pausini and Elisa and then tried to translate them. Bangladeshi and Arab women struggle with Italian music instead: Poly gets a headache from it, the words go too fast, but she would love to know it more. We decide that this year we will study a lot of Italian songs together.

Headache, confusion, what are the places where language does not come out so easily? Or what are the moments when it is more difficult to understand it?

At the doctor's: sometimes they are nice and speak slowly, but often they are in a rush and impatient. There are women who never go to the doctor's without their husbands, those who always go with a friend, those who are ashamed to say they did not understand. When we do not understand we should not stay silent. What can we do? Rabia, an Afghan woman, pharmacist, who loves to study and has very clear ideas: speak

slowly, please, I did not understand. Can you repeat? What does it mean? Can you explain? We should not be afraid to ask.

Talking with their children's teachers. Going to birthday parties of their children's friends, where all the parents are Italian and talk a lot. My head hurts.

In the stores we speak very little and often here in Torpignattara we shop in stores owned by some fellow countrymen, *say the Bangladeshi women.*

Rabia says that the main problem for foreign women in learning the language is that there are not enough occasions to speak it. We stay at home with our children, and our friends are all from our home country. We teachers think that we could open an afternoon space for conversation. What Rabia says is true: languages are learned by speaking and practicing. Without being afraid of making mistakes. Mariam, an Egyptian woman who has been living in Italy for 6 years, said that once at the bakery she died of shame when she asked for 50 bread rolls instead of 5 and the lady started filling a huge bag for her. Mzia, a forty-something Georgian woman with a thunderous laugh, blushes and stops talking when someone laughs at her mistakes. Mousumi, a Bangladeshi woman who works in her husband's office, says that when her husband or other Bangladeshi people are around her she cannot speak Italian anymore; she feels judged.

The grammar and study of the language are important, all of them want to build complete and correct sentences. Alia, a 29-year-old Egyptian woman with 4 children—of whom two 1-year-old twins—wants to learn verbs in the present, past and future tenses. L., a Thai woman who is in the process of divorcing her husband, has a very good command of Italian; she mainly goes to school to spend time outside her house and meet other women. She would like to learn phrases. Fatima, a tiny fast-speaking Bangladeshi woman who slurs words into each other both in Italian and Bengali, says that the hardest thing for her is “persecutions”, meaning prepositions. We laugh together, it is true after all that prepositions are a persecution. Jacqueline, a Brazilian 19-year-old woman with a 1-year-old son, really cannot understand the double consonants in Italian. Some of the other women do not even know what they are.

Some words come out: correct, erase, make mistakes. At the end of the brainstorming we write this sentence:

no matter if right or wrong, it is important to speak and write, it is important not to be afraid.

Each of them chooses a word from the brainstorming and writes a sentence to describe its meaning.

The following week we move onto individual work. Each student writes a short presentation regarding the problems she encountered in learning Italian, what helps her, what blocks her and what she would like to improve this year. They write in order to put their ideas into order before talking in front of the camera, like we teachers did. We will watch the videos at the end of the year to see the progress in the pronunciation and verify whether they actually accomplished what they wanted to achieve. We teachers have the duty to guide them in the process.

Thanks to this work we have been able to understand many things: the attitude one has in learning a foreign language tells a lot about the person, their motivations, fears, strategies, allies, enemies. And what it means to be a foreign woman in Italy.