

# Volume 6

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# ICC Journal



 **ICC**  
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## FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to our special June special Conference issue of the ICC-Journal, following up on the presentations made during the Athens Conference from April 14-18. We have the Conference Programme and a number of articles listed in the order of presentation during the conference.

But we start with a KEYNOTE article by Professor Heiner Boettger of KU University in Germany on '*Exploring Foreign Language Anxiety in Adults*'.

Our EUROLTA update is also featured but we note that the organisation is promoting an enquiry into how they can improve their programme as one of the leading language teacher training organisations in Europe. Go to [www.icc-languages.eu/euroлта](http://www.icc-languages.eu/euroлта) to learn more.

One of our many stars this year was Nick Michelioudakis who presented at the conference and has just presented an ICC-Languages Webinar on *How to Study Effectively*. His five tips can be accessed at [www.icc-languages.eu/webinars](http://www.icc-languages.eu/webinars) and we'll be summarising it in our September issue. Nick also offers new teaching tips for language learning which really engage and involve learners in our Teaching Tips section on Page 67.

In our next issue we will have the pleasure of focusing on the Webinars in 2024 and offering more really exciting teaching tips and reviews of new publishing relevance to our language teacher's community. Don't miss the opportunity to joining Luke Prodromou on July 11<sup>th</sup> for his webinar on 'Shakespeare and AI'. See [www.icc-languages.eu/webinars](http://www.icc-languages.eu/webinars) for more information.

The list of subscribers to ICC-Journal continues to grow with teachers from all over the world showing interest. The ICC-Journal is an online academic journal published free of charge and can be accessed at [www.icc-languages.eu/ICC-journal](http://www.icc-languages.eu/ICC-journal).

We aim to offer practical support for language teachers and trainers and for teachers and trainers specialising in international culture. It is recognised by EBSCO and offers an exciting opportunity to publish your teaching and training experiences, ideas and research.

We would love to hear from you and if you are thinking of publishing an article on your work please do not hesitate to get in touch with me at [barrytomalin@aol.com](mailto:barrytomalin@aol.com). Enjoy this issue!

## EUROLTA UPDATE JUNE 2024

EUROLTA (European Certificate in Language Teaching to Adults) has gone from strength to strength, announcing its next series of training seminars starting on September 28<sup>th</sup>. Information and joining is accessible at [www.icc-languages.eu/eurolta](http://www.icc-languages.eu/eurolta).

Our new chairs of ICC-Languages are both involved in Euroлта, Myriam Fischer-Callus is also Project Manager of Euroлта and her ICC-Languages co-chair Tatiana Kovac runs the Euroлта centre in Serbia in St Nicolas School in Belgrade. She is also a EUROLTA trainer.

Two new members of EUROLTA from Cyprus made their debut at the 2024, Annual conference in Athens in April and Euroлта now operates in many European countries but also in Mexico and the USA.

Euroлта is an online teacher training course for teachers of languages, not just one specific language such as EFL (English as a Foreign Language), for example. One of its greatest contributions to language teacher training has been to offer free access to its courses for refugees from other countries.

Currently, a working group formed by the ICC is updating EUROLTA to make it even more appealing and practical for language teachers.


More on this in our next issue.


# KEYNOTE


## From Apprehension to Expression: Exploring Foreign Language Anxiety among Adults


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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine whether Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) exists among adults in German-speaking countries and how it manifests itself in order to develop didactic implications for intervention. An online questionnaire based on the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz et al., 1986) and respective modifications (Böttger & Költzsch, 2020) was used, along with closed and open-ended questions. The findings (n=412) confirmed the prevalence of FLA (31.7% with a strong manifestation), which was found to vary in different situations. Next to physical (e.g., palpitation) and behavioural symptoms (e.g., avoidance strategies), anxiousness and nervousness were reported and hinted to be person-dependent and situation independent. Finally, didactic consequences are drawn.

**Keywords:** foreign language anxiety, adult learners, cognitive-emotional manifestation, behavioural impact, physical symptoms.

## Introduction

The quest for multilingual proficiency often unveils a range of psychological hurdles, two of which – FLA and Xenoglossophobia – merit a nuanced understanding for effective pedagogical interventions. While FLA encapsulates a learner's self-perceived ability and performance anxieties in a foreign language learning milieu (Horwitz et al., 1986), Xenoglossophobia, recognized – though indirectly – as a mental disorder by the World Health Organization (WHO), extends to a pervasive fear of foreign languages, often debilitating individuals' social and occupational functioning (World Health Organization, 2023). The distinction between these psychological phenomena is paramount for educators, clinicians, and policymakers to tailor interventions and support systems accordingly. This chapter delves into the theoretical underpinnings and empirical findings of distinguishing FLA from Xenoglossophobia, shedding light on the intricate interplay of cognitive, affective, and socio-cultural factors shaping individuals' experiences with foreign languages. Thereby, it lays the foundation for understanding FLA better, before diving into its more or less pronounced manifestations in the result section.

## From Fear to Phobia

Fear is a ubiquitous emotion. Arguably, no individual can assert a complete absence of fear in any given circumstance at any given time. It has a neurobiological origin and functions as a psychological mechanism designed to preserve life. Inherently present in all normatively developed human brains, fear requires significant cognitive effort to control, typically achievable after brain maturation in adulthood, albeit only partially, through mental strategies or pharmaceutical interventions. Fear is characterized as an emotional response to a known or definite threat that activates the body's fight-or-flight response, and generally subsides when the perceived threat is removed (Öhman, 2008). It presents a concrete immediacy, eliciting the question "What of?", even before "Why?". Fears, such as claustrophobia, fear of the dark, solitude, or arachnophobia are palpable and can be explicitly described, although not always externally recognizable.

Conversely, anxiety manifests as an emotional response to an ambiguous or unknown threat, often characterized by dread or anticipation of potential danger, that persists even in the absence of a clear threat (Barlow, 2002). It can elicit physiological reactions that impact concentration, and the assimilation, learning, and application of new knowledge – especially languages. Individual negative cognitions and concerns, whether justified or not, may suddenly interfere with learning processes, depending on personal triggers, by diverting attention to a parallel negative realm of thought. This deflection ensures a focus on escaping the unsettling situation, thereby potentially pre-empting avoidance strategies of perceived or actual anxiety-provoking scenarios. This avoidance may lead to self-exclusion from groups, such as learning communities, delays in learning, task incompleteness, or abandonment of test situations. At this point, anxiety transitions to a nonspecific, exaggerated, and often unfounded state, bordering on a mental illness or phobia. It moves from being a life-sustaining condition to a psychological encumbrance with clinical manifestations.

Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) is specifically associated with the tension, apprehension, or nervousness that individuals experience when learning or using a foreign language. It is associated with language learning and is often perceived as a form of performance anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986). The concept, introduced by Horwitz et al. (1986), quantified this type of anxiety through the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), defining it as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process." FLA can significantly interfere with language acquisition, reduce learner motivation, and negatively affect learners' self-esteem and self-efficacy for language learning.

In case a controllable subthreshold of FLA is exceeded, one speaks of Xenoglossophobia, an illness. It marks the extreme fear of foreign languages or speaking foreign languages in particular (foreign language use anxiety). Accordingly, it subsumes extreme cases of FLA. The term Xenoglossophobia, akin to many medical and psychological terminologies, has its roots in Greek: *phobos* meaning fear, *xeno* denoting to foreign, and *glossa* referring to language or tongue. Within psychiatric categorization, Xenoglossophobia aligns with specific phobias (Horwitz, 2001), epitomizing an abnormal, suprathreshold, and exaggerated fear of foreign languages. Individuals afflicted with this phobia tend not only to avoid studying foreign languages, but also shun interactions with speakers of these languages. Feelings of embarrassment may besiege them in scenarios that require the use of a learned foreign language, such as professional meetings, conferences, discussions, interviews, or educational settings (e.g. classrooms). The avoidance of speech acts or language simplification, perceived not merely as sources of error or competence deficits, represents the epitome of negative anxiety reactions.

## **The Hormone Threshold**

The journey from minor anxiety to severe Xenoglossophobia (an intense dread of foreign languages) might be steered by a combination of cognitive, emotional, and socio-cultural aspects, alongside hormonal alterations. The hormonal reaction to anxiety, notably the discharge of cortisol, is pivotal in transitioning from a tolerable anxiety level to incapacitating Xenoglossophobia. Language anxiety,

cortisol secretion, and neurophysiological responses are interrelated through complex pathways moderated by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The potential existence of an individually specific cortisol threshold – beyond which anxiety becomes uncontrolled or permanent – underscores the critical balance within the neuroendocrine system necessary to maintain psychological well-being. The neuroscience of this process is as follows.

Language anxiety can trigger the body's stress response system. This is the case particularly in socially evaluative contexts such as language classes or bilingual family communication (Legatzke & Gettler, 2021). This stress response is moderated by the hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, a central player in the body's response to stress (Dziurkowska & Wesolowski, 2021). Perceived threats or stressors activate the HPA axis. It then stimulates the release of cortisol (a steroid hormone) from the adrenal cortex. Cortisol secretion follows a circadian rhythm. It peaks in the early morning hours and is regulated by adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH) and corticotropin-releasing hormone (CRH) (Balboa & Glaser, 2019).

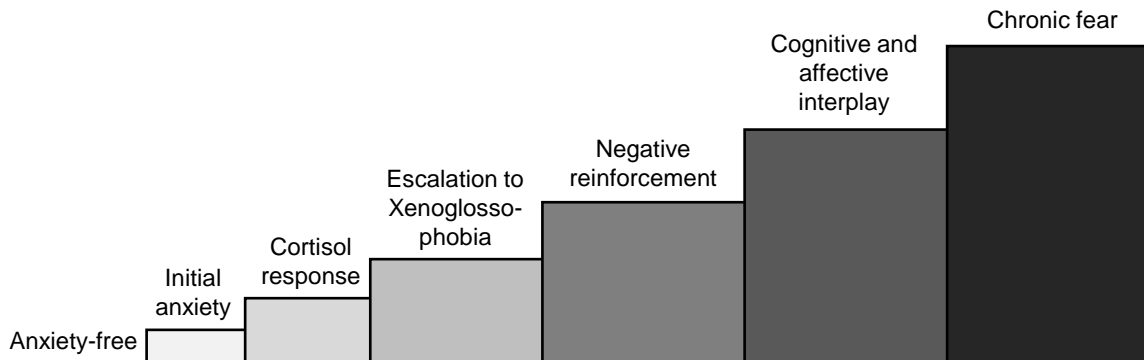
The neurophysiological pathway underlying this stress response begins in the amygdala. The amygdala is a structure within the limbic system involved in emotional processing. When a stimulus is perceived as threatening, e.g. a challenging social interaction or a difficult language task, the amygdala activates the stress response pathway. The result is an increased cortisol production, which can impair the functioning of the prefrontal cortex – responsible for higher cognitive processes like decision-making and social interactions – and promote conflict avoidance and protective behaviours (American Psychological Association, 2018).

The concept of a cortisol threshold is implicit in the context of chronic stress and anxiety disorders. Cortisol levels can remain elevated when the stress response system is persistently activated over time by language anxiety or other stressors. This chronic elevation may disrupt nearly every process in the body, and put individuals at a higher risk for various health problems. This also includes anxiety disorders (Fiksdal et al., 2019). A dysfunctional stress response system is indicated when steeper cortisol reactivity and slower recovery following stressors are shown (Hannibal & Bishop, 2014). Excessive cortisol secretion may exacerbate fear-based memories, which potentially leads to a vicious cycle of anxiety and, again, heightened cortisol response (Thau et al., 2022).

The transition occurs in several stages or steps (cf. Figure 1 and detailed description below):



**Figure 1**  
*Steps of Transition towards Xenoglossophobia*



**Step 1 Initial anxiety:** Learners may experience subthreshold anxiety when faced with foreign language situations. This state is often manageable and does not significantly interfere with one's ability to learn or use a foreign language.

**Step 2 Cortisol response:** Anxiety, especially FLA, triggers the release of stress hormones. At normal or subthreshold levels, however, the release of cortisol can enhance learning and memory. Increasing cortisol levels can begin to interfere with cognitive processes critical to language learning, such as memorizing words.

**Step 3 Escalation to Xenoglossophobia:** If FLA is not addressed and cortisol levels remain elevated, learners of foreign languages develop a more severe and overt fear of foreign languages: Xenoglossophobia. Prolonged exposure to high levels of cortisol can reinforce such a fear and the accompanying avoidance behaviours. The fear becomes more and more mentally ingrained and extremely difficult to overcome: Fear then becomes a phobia.

**Step 4 Negative reinforcement:** Avoiding foreign language situations may provide temporary relief and short-term healing, but indeed it negatively reinforces the phobia. This reinforcement can lead to a vicious circle: Avoidance behaviours are continually reinforced, further escalating the phobia.

**Step 5 Cognitive and affective interplay:** The interplay between cognitive (e.g. memory impairment due to high cortisol levels) and affective (e.g. fear and avoidance) factors can exacerbate the transition from subthreshold anxiety to overt Xenoglossophobia.

An additional step may be built by socio-cultural factors: These, such as stigmatization or lack of social support, can also play a role in the transition outlined. For example, lack of understanding or support from peers and educators may contribute to the escalation of anxiety to phobic levels.

## Methods

In this quantitative study, 412 adult foreign language speakers in German-speaking countries were asked to reflect on their emotional state before and during their foreign language performance in private and professional contexts. An online questionnaire was conducted in the German language (result section and appendix only includes the respective English translations of questions and items). The questionnaire included questions on how one responds to a variety of situations in which a foreign language is central (existence of FLA) in physiological, cognitive-emotional and behavioural manner (manifestation of FLA). It is based in parts on the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz et al., 1986). Questions were, however, broadened and adapted for contexts outside of classrooms. They are similar to those from the pilot study (n=108) by Böttger and Költzsch (2020). The closed and open individual questions were disseminated via e-mail, the social media platform LinkedIn as well as personal contacts. Data was analyzed with the statistical software SPSS.

Participants were adult foreign language speakers or learners post their formal education in school. This allowed the researchers to assume that they were able to self-reflect on their own foreign language performance in private or work-related contexts, central to the selected research design, and had more learning experiences than younger learners would have had to answer the respective items. Together, this makes them an ideal first target group in the German-speaking world, in which sensitivity to the phenomenon of FLA still seems to be low.

The following data on participants emerge from the social statistics: 27.8% of respondents are male, 71.4% are female, and 0.4% describe themselves as non-binary. Participants were born between 1939 and 2004 and are on average 47 years old. The oldest respondent is about 83 years old, the youngest is about 18 years old. 2.3% have a secondary school diploma, 12% a *Realschul*-diploma (middle school), 18.1% a *Fachabitur* or *Abitur* (A level), 57.5% a university degree (BA, MA, *Diplom*) and another 10% a completed doctorate or habilitation. The sample includes an above-average number of teachers (35%) and lecturers (4.6%). Moreover, most respondents listed English (85%) as their foreign language, while French (13 %) and other languages were less prominent.

In the following two sections, the quantitative data results are described and discussed. This allows us to answer the two questions raised: 1. Does FLA exist in adult foreign language learners in German-speaking countries? 2. If it does, how does it manifest?

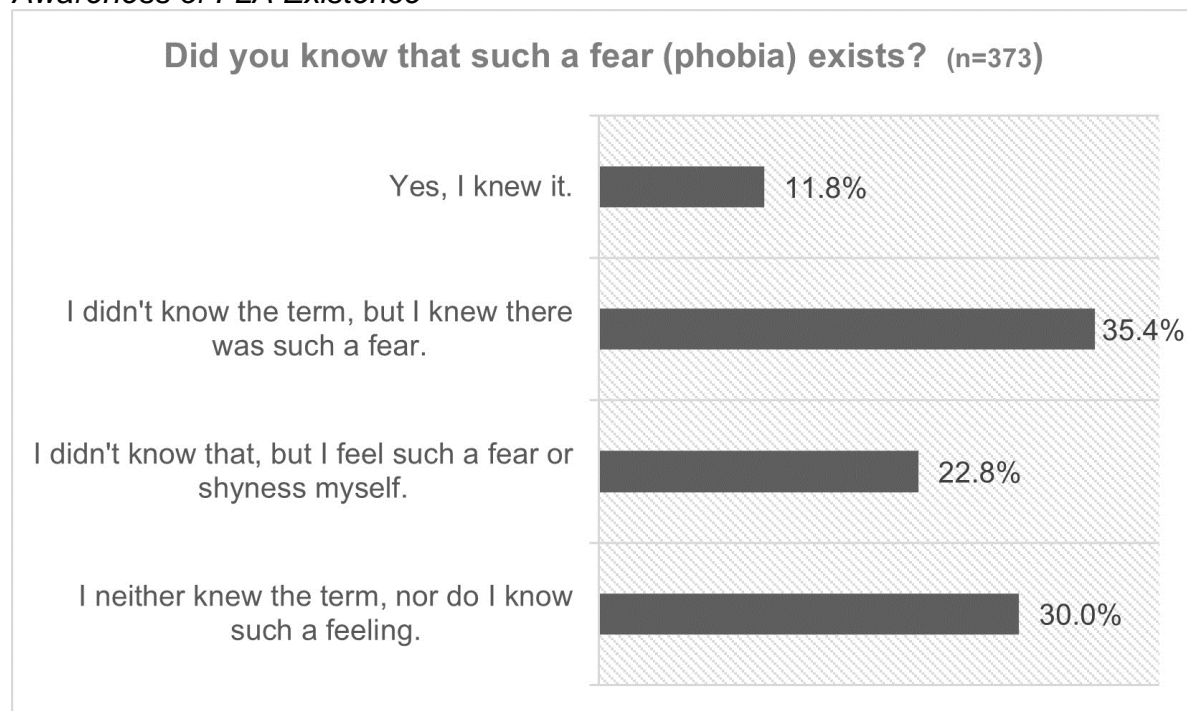
## Results

Prior to introducing the manifestations FLA can take, the point that it does exist has to be proven first.

### Existence of FLA Basis:

To find out the participants' awareness to FLA and Xenoglossophobia, they were asked if they knew the term Xenoglossophobia as well as if they knew that such a fear existed (n=373). According to the results (cf. Figure 2), 11.8% (44) responded that they knew about it, whereas close to double, or 22.8% (85), did not know about such a fear so far, but experienced it themselves. In addition, 35.4% (132) were not familiar with the term but knew that such a fear exists. Taken together, this makes for around 70% of participants that are aware that such a fear exists, of which only a minority knew the terminology. In contrast, only 30.0% (112) responded that they neither are aware of the term, nor do they know of such a fear.

**Figure 2**  
*Awareness of FLA Existence*

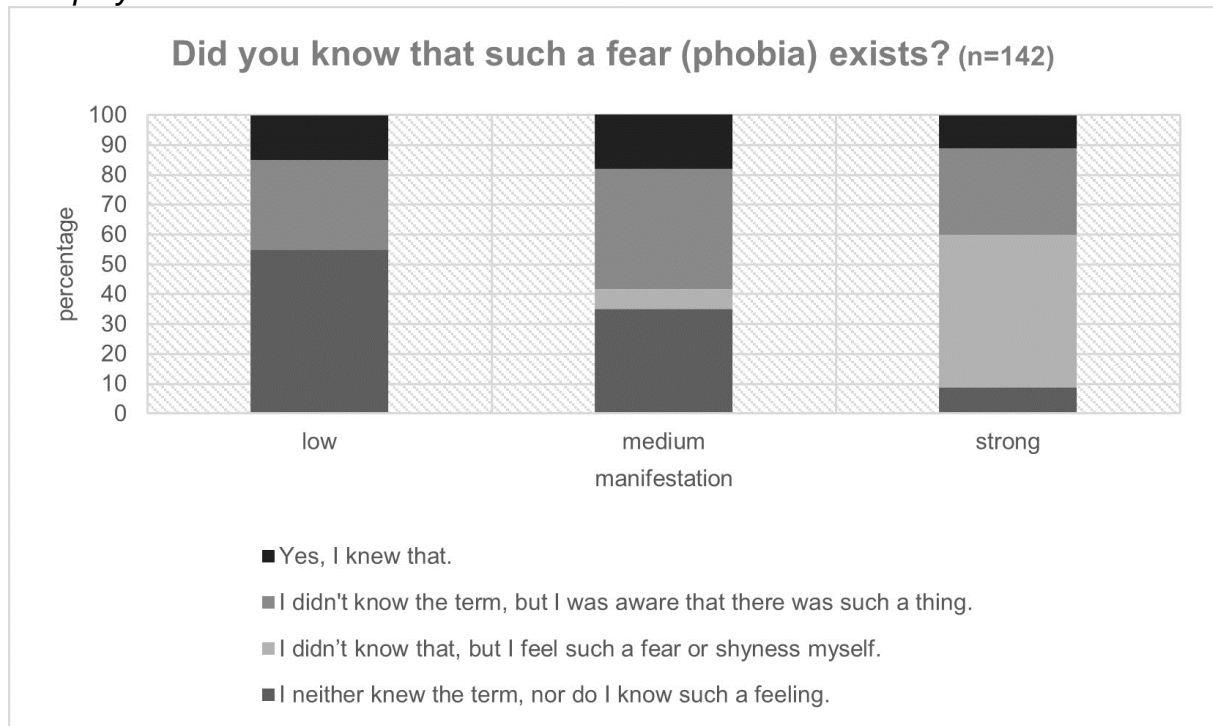


Taking their statements as a basis, more or less strong manifestations of FLA were measured with a total of 15 items (cf. appendix). It was found that a majority of participants who responded to all 15 items (n=142), or 54.2%, had medium manifestations. Interestingly, however, close to one-third (31.7%) were found to have strong manifestations. This stands in strong contrast to participants who were calculated to have low manifestations of FLA. As this number is lower than participants who indicated not knowing such a feeling (30.0%), awareness of FLA seems to be lower for this group than it is prominent.

Connecting the results of the question 'Did you know that such a fear (phobia) exists?' with the divergently strong manifestations of FLA (n=142), reveals the following (cf. Figure 3). Of participants with only a very low level of FLA, 0% agreed with the statement 'I didn't know that, but I feel such fear or shyness myself'. Of those with a moderate level of FLA, already 6.5% agreed with this statement, while of those with a high level of fear, a majority of 51.1% agreed. Moreover, 55% of participants with a very low level of FLA agreed with the statement 'I neither know the term, nor do I know such a feeling', whereas 35.1% of people with a medium

level and only 8.9% of people with a high level of FLA agreed. Taken together, this emphasizes that only a minority of participants of each group (low, medium, and strong manifestation) were familiar with the terminology. Differences, however, existed with respect to their stated knowledge of, or familiarity with, the feeling of shyness or fear. More precisely, the stronger the manifestation calculated, the more likely participants were to answer that they knew about or experienced such feelings themselves.

**Figure 3**  
*Interplay between FLA Manifestation and Awareness*



### **Specific Situations**

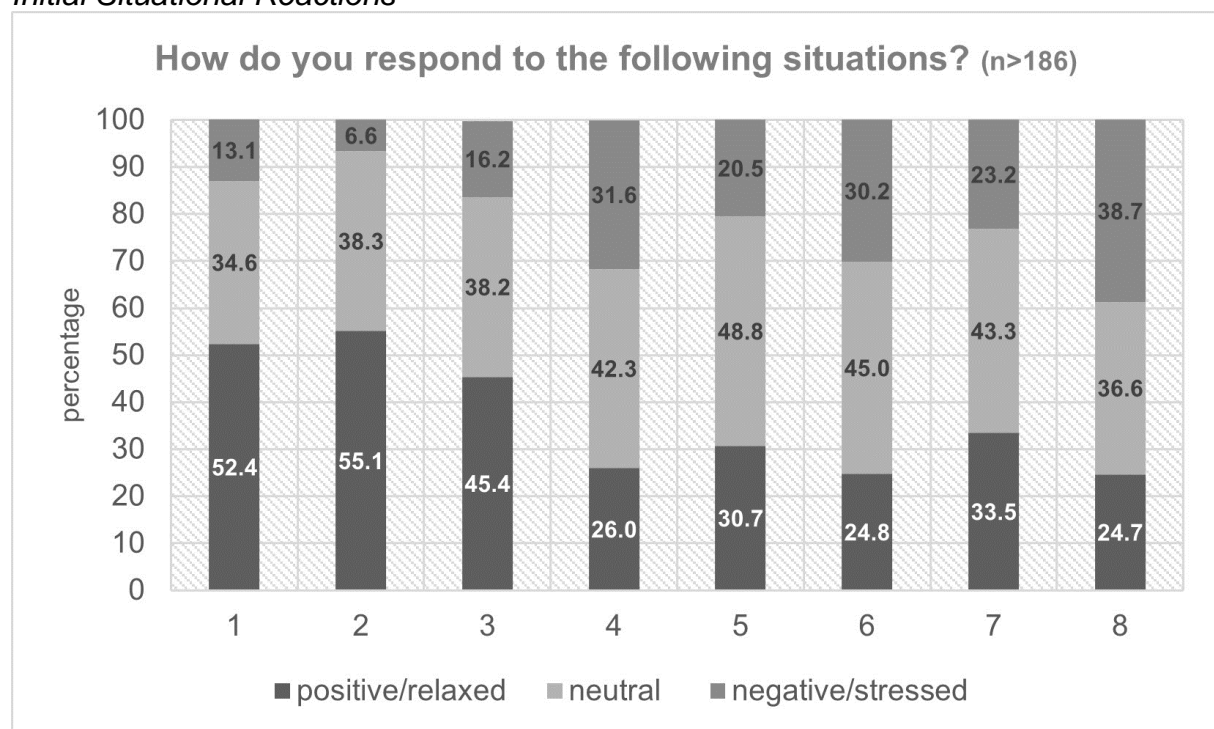
After questions on whether FLA exists and whether it is familiar to people affected in broader terms, more in-depth questions on how participants respond to specific situations, in which a foreign language is central, were raised (cf. Figure 4). These were designed as single-choice items with three choices of answering (positive/relaxed, neutral, negative/stressed) the question 'How do you respond to the following situations' and the following eight scenarios (number of respondents given in brackets after each item):

- 1 A person you know approaches you from a distance, with whom you will only be able to communicate in a foreign language. (n=191)
- 2 On the street, you are suddenly asked for directions in a foreign language. (n=196)
- 3 Unexpectedly, you are introduced to people who speak a foreign language only you know. (n=191)
- 4 You are talking to someone in a foreign language, and suddenly more people around you are listening to you. (n=215)
- 5 You suddenly have to introduce yourself in a foreign language, e.g. English. (n= 215)

- 6 You engage in dialogue and are linguistically corrected by an interaction partner. (n=222)
- 7 A foreign number appears on the display of your phone. You will need to speak English when you answer. (n=203)
- 8 Looking at the calendar, you realize that tomorrow the presentation will be in a foreign language. (n=186)

Participants responded more positively in different foreign language situations when they felt that there was no risk at all or less risk or challenge. For example, 55.1% selected the option 'positive/relaxed' when asked how they respond to suddenly being asked for directions in a foreign language. In contrast, only around one-fourth of participants selected 'positive/relaxed' for items 4,6 and 8, in which the situation brings more jeopardy with it (e.g. people listening to your conversation in a foreign language). Moreover, 'neutral' was chosen somewhat consistently for each of the eight situations, leading to percentages between 34.6 and 48.8. This highlights that shifts in distribution are more pronounced for the two poles of 'positive/relaxed' and 'negative/stressed'.

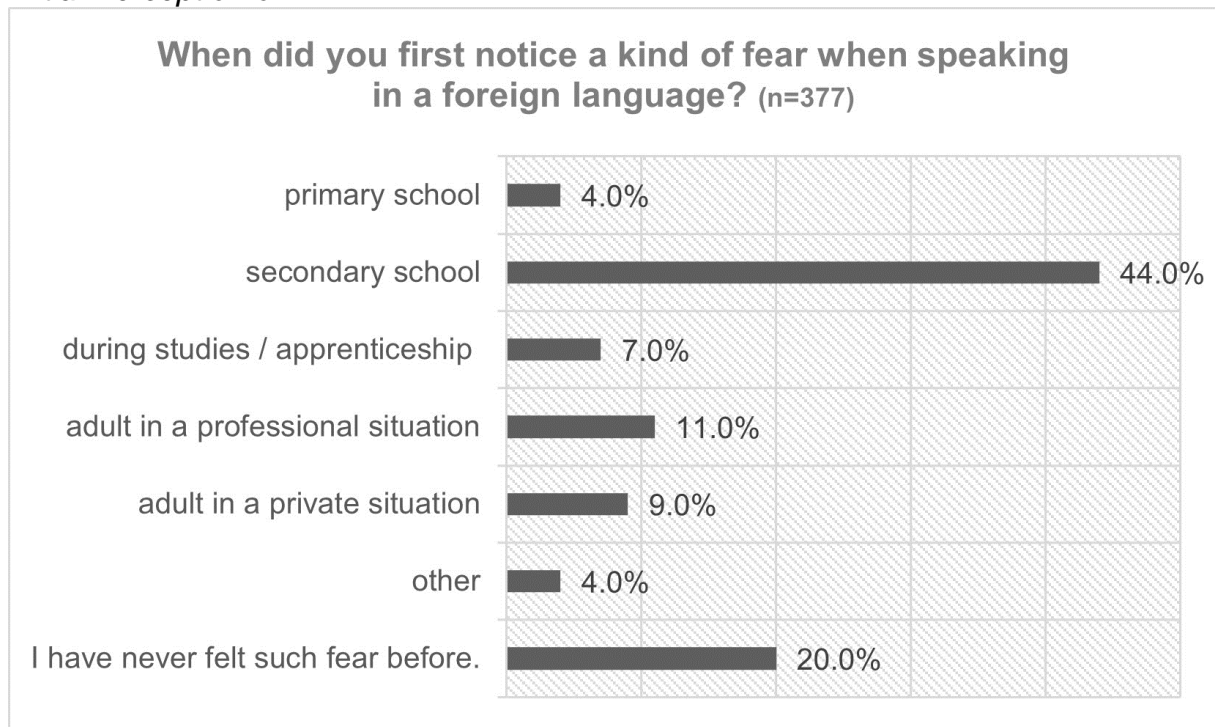
**Figure 4**  
*Initial Situational Reactions*



When participants were asked when they first noticed a kind of anxiety about speaking in a foreign language (cf. Figure 5), this fear occurred for the first time in secondary school for most people (44.0% = 121). On the other hand, the least frequent was in primary school (4.0% = 12), whereas only 20.0% of the participants indicated that they had never experienced such a fear before. Thereby, the difference in distribution between primary and secondary school may be explained by the transition from primary school, where language education is essential but not as challenging as in secondary school. In short, however, the fact that close to half of

the participants selected 'secondary schools' is notable and hints at a possible starting point for intervention purposes (cf. result section).

**Figure 5**  
*Initial Perception of FLA*



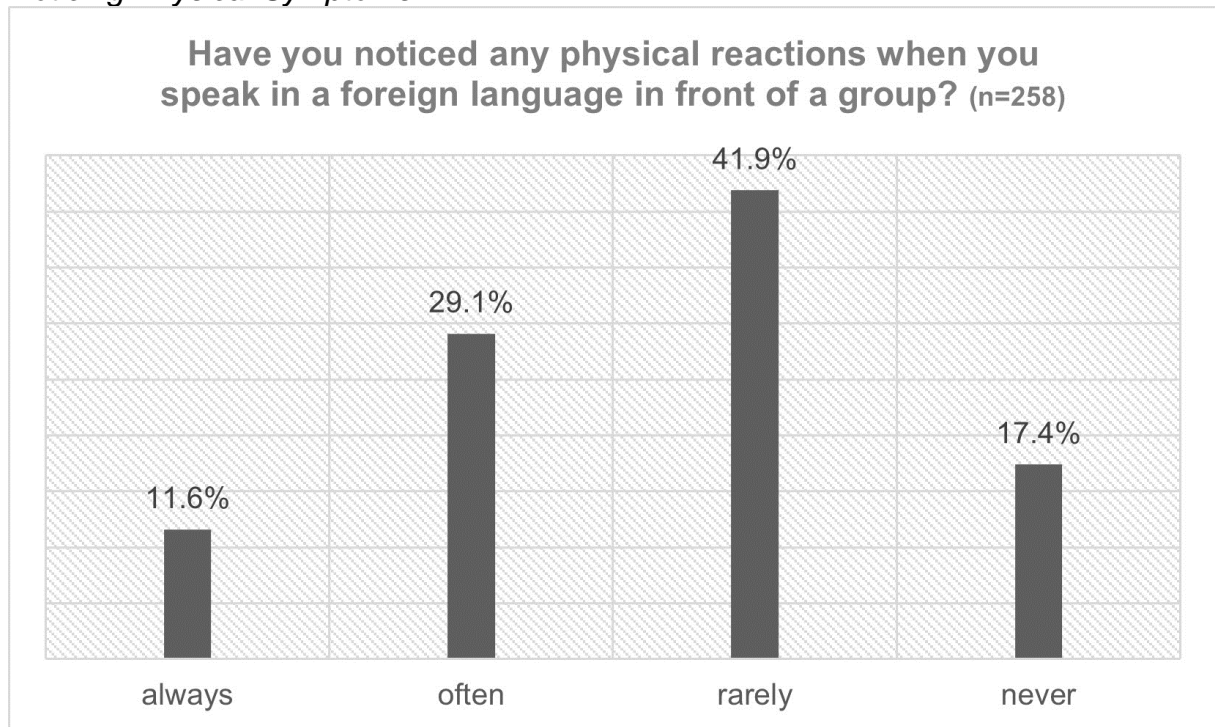
### **Manifestations of FLA**

After giving evidence that FLA exists, the following three passages introduce the results on manifestations of FLA, beginning with the physiological side of things.

#### ***Physical Symptoms***

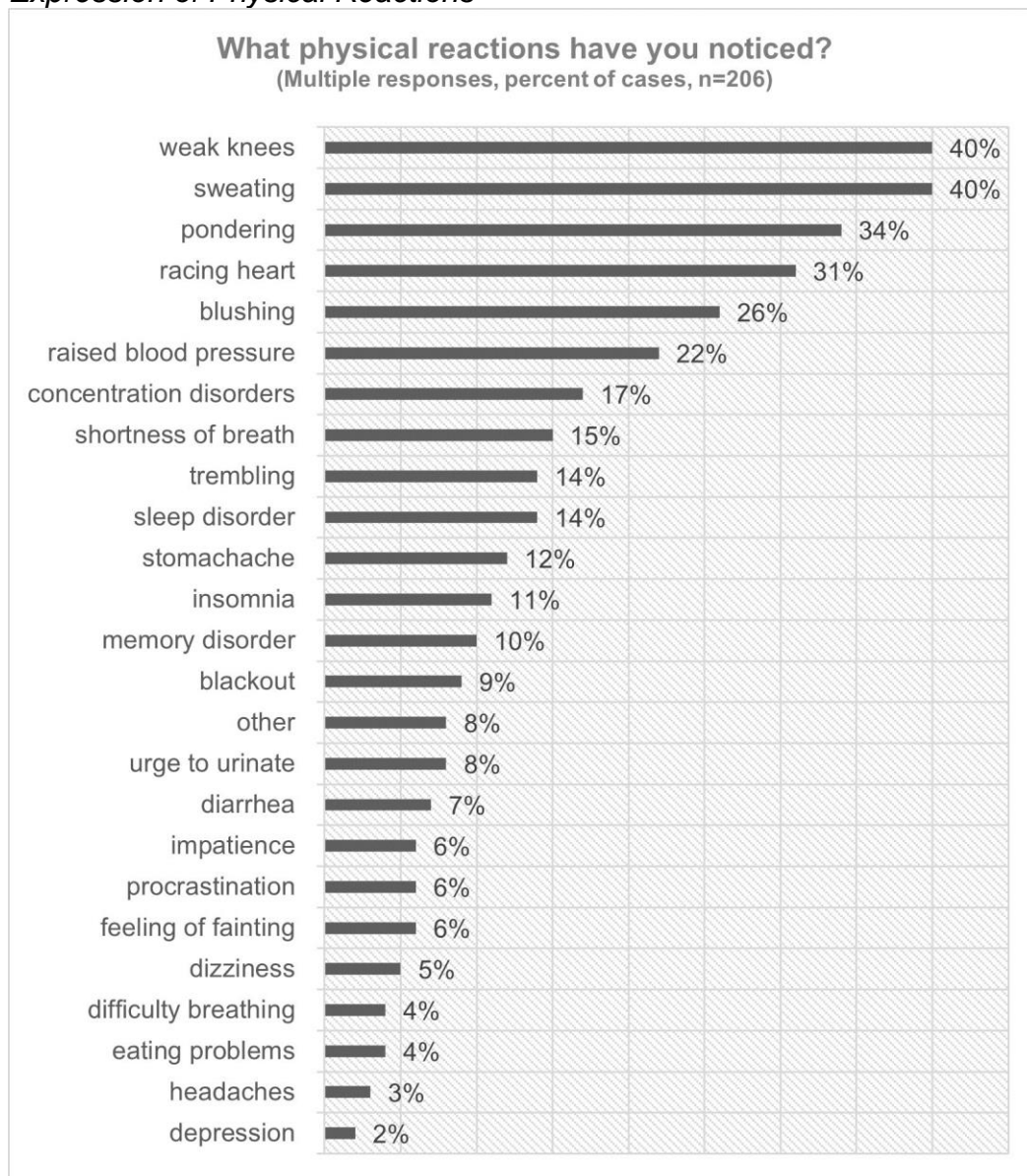
To begin, the closed question of whether participants noticed any physical reactions when speaking in a foreign language in front of a group was answered positively by over 40% (n=258). As depicted in Figure 6, 11.6% even indicated having physical reactions every single time, while close to 60% responded to only seldomly (41.9%) or never (17.4%) find themselves reacting physiologically in such situations. Taken together, this clearly indicates a divide between two groups of foreign language speakers or learners; it further highlights that physical reactions are by no means rare and can, or should, be counted as a manifestation of FLA.

**Figure 6**  
*Noticing Physical Symptoms*



Given the open question to name the respective physical sensations or reactions (multiple responses possible), participants most often listed sweating and weak knees (cf. Figure 7). Over a quarter of participants further answered that they feel their heart racing (31%) or blush (26%), while a raised blood pressure was listed by 22%. Interestingly, the list goes on and in total names 24 bodily sensations (e.g. trembling, diarrhea), which reveals that there exist a variety of bodily reactions people can notice as manifestation of FLA. Moreover, while a majority of these are situation-specific (e.g. sweating) and not of a more substantial nature (e.g. sleeping disorder, depression), only a few are invisible to interaction partners (e.g. blushing). This highlights that the most observable manifestation of FLA is also quite hidden from the naked eye.

**Figure 7**  
*Expression of Physical Reactions*



***Cognitive-Emotional Manifestations***

Even less discernable to outsiders is the cognitive-emotional side that FLA can take. Rooted in a 5-point Likert scale (point system from 0 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree)), participants' mean or average value given to the following statements highlight that this manifestation should, nevertheless, not be overlooked. These are given in brackets after the respective item:

- 1 I am always afraid of making mistakes when I speak in a foreign language. (2.5 mean)
- 2 I get nervous when I know I have to speak in a foreign language. (2.7 mean)
- 3 I feel uncomfortable when I am suddenly asked to speak in a foreign language. (2.4 mean)
- 4 Especially in test situations, I suffer from feelings of anxiety about speaking in a foreign language. (2.7 mean)



While the first one (mean value of 2.5) emphasizes that many participants are generally afraid to make mistakes when speaking in a foreign language, the second one points out that many even seem to be nervous when only knowing that they have to speak in a foreign language. Both connect the emotional and cognitive side in that people who are anxious to use their foreign language skills in oral communication are often aware of, or even anticipate, their own emotional reactions. This is similarly true for the latter two items stated above which mainly asked participants about their emotional responses. The results (mean value of 2.4 or 2.7) outline that the demand or need to spontaneously use the FL, and oral test situations in particular, can easily establish uneasiness or even feelings of anxiety.

Interrelationships of the items further indicate that people that feel uneasy or anxious in one situation, are likely to do so in another one that was part of the questionnaire also. For example, the higher the agreement with 3 (I feel uncomfortable when I am suddenly asked to speak in a foreign language.), the higher also the agreement with 2 (I get nervous when I know I have to speak in a foreign language.) ( $\rho = 0,718^{**}$ ). A similar interrelation exists between agreement to statements 3 and 1 ( $\rho = 0,710^{**}$ ). Together, this hints at the point that cognitive-emotional manifestations of FLA might be somewhat situation-independent, and more person-dependent.

### ***Behavioural Impact***

After outlining the physiological and cognitive-emotional manifestations of FLA, the behavioural ones are depicted in this passage. Most prominent were the high numbers listed for avoidance strategies generally, as well as with respect to language more particularly, which again are based on a 5-point Likert scale (point system 0 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree)). The mean value for each item was calculated and is given in brackets, beginning with four general (1–4) and two language-specific avoidance strategies (5–6).

- 1 I refuse to give presentations in a foreign language or need a disproportionate amount of preparation time. (2.6 mean)
- 2 I sometimes do not participate in conversations in a foreign language, although I could make an important contribution. (2.1 mean)
- 3 I generally avoid communication situations in a foreign language. (2.1 mean)
- 4 I have already failed to answer a call in a foreign language that I should have answered. (1.8 mean)
- 5 There are certain words in a foreign language that I avoid in conversations. (2.3 mean)
- 6 There are whole parts of sentences that I avoid when speaking in a foreign language. (2.0 mean)

For example, the mean values of 2.6 and 2.1 for the first two items listed emphasize that it is not at all uncommon for the adults who responded to the statements to either refrain from giving presentations in a foreign language / need a disproportionate amount of preparation time or stay silent during discussions, even if they had something important to add. Furthermore, not a few said that they refrain from using particular words or phrases whenever speaking in a foreign language. This can certainly have several reasons (e.g. pronunciation difficulty); however, the likelihood that it is caused by fear (e.g. of making mistakes) is arguably strongly marked.

This can be supported by the interrelations that some cognitive-emotional items have with behavioural ones. That is, a positive interrelation ( $\rho = 0,707^{**}$ ) was identified for item 3 (behavioural) and item 1 (cognitive-emotional). The more participants agreed with the statement, 'I generally avoid communication situations in a foreign language', the more they agreed with the statement, 'I feel uncomfortable when I am suddenly asked to speak in a foreign language'. Furthermore, the higher the agreement with, 'I sometimes do not participate in conversations in a foreign language, although I could make an important contribution', the higher the agreement with, 'I generally avoid communication situations in a foreign language.' ( $\rho = 0,715^{**}$ ).

Taken together, this not only hints at the enormous impact FLA can have on individuals themselves, but on their interaction partners, when avoidance strategies are chosen. Rooted in the high acknowledgments of feelings of FLA, this gives reason for discussing possible didactic implications alongside psychological and neuroscientific backgrounds in the discussion section.

## Discussion

### Existence of FLA

This portion of the investigation aims at probing the presence and manifestations of FLA among adult learners of foreign tongues in regions where German is chiefly spoken. The data derived from the online questionnaire provide a multidimensional understanding of FLA, especially about how learners perceive and respond to different challenging situations in which a foreign language is central.

The findings underscore a notable awareness and manifestation of FLA among the participants. Whilst 11.8% of participants were already familiar with the terminology, a significant proportion, 35.4%, were unfamiliar with it but recognised the anxiety when described. Additionally, 22.8% of participants, although not previously aware of the terminology, identified with anxiety. This variation in awareness and personal identification underscores a complex landscape of FLA recognition and experience among adult foreign language learners.

When comparing levels of FLA, it was observed that individuals with higher levels were more likely to identify with the described anxiety, as shown in Figure 3. This is consistent with the basic premise of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Horwitz et al. (1986), which posits that individuals may experience varying degrees of anxiety in foreign language settings. Interestingly, however, FLA awareness in an explicit sense still seems to be quite low, despite its prominence in experiences.

The data provided a complex picture of how FLA manifests in real-world situations. Participants were more at ease in spontaneous or casual interactions, such as being approached by someone they know or being asked for directions. However, they felt less comfortable in more evaluative situations, such as being linguistically corrected in a dialogue or having to give a presentation in a foreign language. One might therefore conclude that the more inconspicuous and the more unexpected a foreign language communication situation, the less anxiety-provoking

it is. These findings are consistent with the existing literature, which suggests that evaluative situations tend to exacerbate FLA (Horwitz et al., 1986). It also aligns with the theoretical underpinnings of FLA, which posit a correlation between the evaluative nature of a situation and the level of anxiety experienced (Gregersen, 2003; Young, 1991). The data also shed light on when individuals first notice a type of anxiety about speaking in a foreign language. The higher incidence of FLA recognition during secondary school, as shown in Figure 5, is consistent with existing research findings that pinpoint adolescence as a critical period for the emergence of language learning anxieties (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). This part of the study suggests a need for further exploration into mitigating strategies, especially in evaluative or formal foreign language use contexts. Moreover, there is a call for raising awareness of FLA to promote supportive learning and interaction environments. Understanding (of the existence) of fear, especially FLA, as well as the process of its development, forms the basis for all cognitive mental processes to be able to take preventive action, to intervene and to treat, both in a learning psychology and didactic sense.

## **Manifestations of FLA**

This section focuses on the physiological tapestry of FLA manifestations among adult foreign language learners in German-speaking countries. The findings not only confirm the multidimensional nature of FLA, but also open avenues for further research into the physiological, cognitive-emotional and behavioural facets of this anxiety and their interplay with the overall foreign language learning experience.

The physiological responses to speaking a foreign language, especially in a group setting, emerge as a significant aspect of FLA manifestation among the participants. Over 40% of the participants acknowledged experiencing physical reactions, with 11.6% stating that these reactions occurred every time they found themselves in such situations. This suggests that a significant proportion of the population experiences physiological symptoms associated with FLA, consistent with the conceptual understanding of FLA as having a physiological dimension (Horwitz et al., 1986). The variety of physical sensations described by participants, ranging from sweating and weak knees to heart racing and blushing, paints a vivid picture of how FLA can manifest physically. Interestingly, the wide range of 24 reported bodily sensations illustrates the diverse nature of physiological responses to foreign language interactions, each potentially having a different – if not counterproductive – impact on an individual's performance and overall foreign language experience.

An intriguing aspect of the findings is the visibility, or lack thereof, of these physiological symptoms to others. While many of the reported symptoms, such as sweating or weak knees, may be discernible to some extent, others, like heart racing or raised blood pressure, are not readily observable by interaction partners. This could play a role in how individuals manage or cope with their FLA, as well as how others perceive and respond to individuals experiencing FLA.

The evidence of physical symptoms as a manifestation of FLA underscores the importance of holistic approaches to foreign language education, such as e.g. bilingual education with relevant content and topics, that address not only cognitive but also emotional and physiological aspects of learning. The need for further

research into strategies for managing the physical symptoms of FLA, as well as exploring the interplay between physiological symptoms and other manifestations of FLA is obvious. That also includes the potential area of research into the social dynamics of FLA manifestation and perception in foreign language interactions.

The passage dives deeper into the cognitive-emotional aspect of FLA, which is often less discernible to outsiders, but has a significant impact on the learners' foreign language experience. Using a Likert scale analysis, this part of the study unveiled different cognitive and emotional reactions that participants experience in different foreign language speaking scenarios. The data highlights a common fear among participants of making mistakes when speaking in a foreign language, with a mean value of 2.5 on the provided statement. Similarly, a mean value of 2.7 suggests a notable level of nervousness among participants at the mere thought of having to speak in a foreign language. These findings reflect a cognitive-emotional link whereby the anticipation of, or actual engagement in foreign language communication, triggers anxiety. This is consistent with existing literature that has identified the fear of negative evaluation as a central component of FLA (Horwitz et al., 1986). The discomfort associated with being asked to speak spontaneously in a foreign language and the anxiety experienced in test situations (mean values of 2.4 and 2.7, respectively) indicate the challenging nature of unexpected and (even foreseen) evaluative foreign language encounters. These findings echo existing research that posits that the unpredictability and evaluative nature of foreign language speaking tasks can exacerbate FLA (Young, 1991). An intriguing aspect of the findings is the interrelation between different cognitive-emotional responses. Those who feel uncomfortable speaking spontaneously in a foreign language are also likely to feel nervous about speaking in a foreign language in general. This suggests a possible pervasive nature of cognitive-emotional manifestations of FLA, hinting towards a more person-dependent rather than situation-dependent experience of anxiety.

In extending the discussion of the cognitive-emotional manifestations of FLA, interrelationships between different items within the questionnaire reveal notable patterns. They highlight the intertwined nature of various aspects of FLA. For example, the data indicate a strong positive correlation ( $\rho = 0.718^{**}$ ) between the level of discomfort experienced when asked to speak spontaneously in a foreign language and the nervousness felt when anticipating speaking in a foreign language. This correlation suggests that the discomfort experienced in spontaneous speaking situations may contribute significantly to the broader nervousness associated with speaking in a foreign language. Similarly, a strong positive correlation ( $\rho = 0.710^{**}$ ) is observed between the discomfort of speaking spontaneously and the fear of making mistakes in a foreign language. This pattern suggests a common underlying anxiety mechanism whereby the fear of making mistakes significantly influences the level of comfort or discomfort experienced in spontaneous speaking situations. These interrelations indirectly, but logically suggest that addressing one aspect of FLA, such as the fear of making mistakes, could potentially have a cascading effect on alleviating other related anxieties, such as discomfort in spontaneous speaking situations.

Another significant positive correlation ( $\rho = 0.707^{**}$ ) was observed between the agreement with the statements 'I generally avoid communication situations in a foreign language' and 'I always fear making mistakes when I speak in a foreign language.' This suggests that the fear of making mistakes, a cognitive aspect, strongly influences individuals' behavioural tendencies to avoid communication situations in a foreign language. This interaction emphasizes the intertwined nature of cognitive apprehensions and behavioural avoidance strategies, highlighting a key area that may require targeted interventions. The data also revealed intriguing correlations between affective and behavioural items. A notable negative correlation ( $\rho = -0.787^{**}$ ) was found between feeling uncomfortable when suddenly asked to speak in a foreign language and avoiding general communication situations in a foreign language. This unexpected negative correlation might suggest different coping or adaptation strategies among participants, indicating the multifaceted ways in which individuals navigate their affective responses to FLA. Furthermore, a significant positive correlation ( $\rho = 0.715^{**}$ ) was found between avoiding participation in conversations to avoid making mistakes and general avoidance of communication situations in a foreign language. This correlation highlights a scenario in which the fear of making mistakes leads individuals not only to avoid participation but also to avoid communication situations altogether and in general, showcasing a heightened level of avoidance behaviour. This might outline another threshold towards Xenoglossophobia.

## **From Findings to Didactic Consequences**

The comprehensive exploration of FLA in 4.2 and its manifestations across physiological, cognitive-emotional, and behavioural dimensions in 4.1 provides several significant and relevant implications for language didactics. Considering these, educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers can create a more conducive and less anxiety-provoking environment for foreign language learning. In brief:

### **1. Fostering FLA awareness and acknowledgment:**

Language educators definitely need to be aware of the anxiety that learners may experience. Understanding the different manifestations of FLA, its causes, and its effects can equip educators to create a supportive learning environment. Encouraging learners to acknowledge and discuss their anxiety can be a first step towards addressing the issue. Open evidence-based discussions can furthermore destigmatise the anxiety associated with language learning.

### **2. Creating a supportive environment:**

Providing a learning environment where making mistakes is seen as a natural part of the learning process can help reduce anxiety. Positive reinforcement and active ongoing encouragement to learners can boost their confidence.

### **3. Planning adaptive teaching strategies:**

Given the variation in how learners experience and cope with FLA, personalized or adaptive teaching strategies might be beneficial. Incorporating relaxation and stress management techniques into the language learning curriculum can be a proactive approach to managing FLA.

#### 4. Encouraging skill-building and practice:

Providing learners with ample opportunities and competencies to communicate in the target language in a low-stress environment can help build their foreign language confidence. Constructive feedback and gentle correction, as opposed to harsh or public correction, can create a positive learning experience.

#### 5. Designing an anxiety-free curriculum:

Real-life, practical scenarios can make foreign language learning more relatable and less abstract, can potentially reduce anxiety and FLA. Reflective practices where learners can assess their progress and address their anxieties, e.g. in language learning diaries, could also be beneficial.

#### 6. Integrating technology:

Technologies such as language learning apps, online platforms, or virtual reality can build additional, low-pressure environments for foreign language practice.

#### 7. Professionalising language educators:

Offering professional development courses on understanding and addressing FLA can equip educators with the necessary skills and knowledge.

#### 8. Integrating action research and evaluation:

Regular assessment of learners' anxiety levels and the effectiveness of strategies implemented to address FLA can provide valuable insights for continuous improvement. Also encouraging further research into FLA and its impact on language learning can lead to the development of more effective strategies to mitigate its effects.

#### 9. Building communities:

Building a strong community where learners can support each other can also be a beneficial strategy to mitigate FLA.

#### 10. Involving parents:

Educating parents about FLA and providing them with strategies to support their children can also be a crucial step.

## Conclusion

Based on the extensive discussions and findings presented in this paper, it seems clear that FLA is a widespread and significant issue among adult foreign language learners in German-speaking countries. Of particular concern is the evidence that FLA can extend to mental and physical disorders, precisely to Xenoglossophobia as an illness, emphasizing the need to address this issue more comprehensively within foreign language education frameworks. Core conclusions therefore are:

- FLA is a real and pervasive issue among the participants, with varying levels of awareness and experience in foreign language contexts, significantly impacting their communication and learning processes and capabilities.
- The expressions of FLA interfere with communication and the learning process of English (or other languages), and show severe and serious signs

extending to mental and physical disturbances or even disorders like Xenoglossophobia may be a more serious problem than initially assumed.

- The data hint at the institutionalised learning context, notably secondary schools, as a potential source of FLA. A comparative study between learners educated in institutionalized versus non-institutionalised contexts could provide more insight into the origins of FLA and the role of formal education in its development.
- The findings underline the need for a multi-pronged and holistic approach to tackling FLA, not only from a psychological side but also from a didactic one. In extreme cases, therapy may be warranted to address severe manifestations of FLA, like Xenoglossophobia.
- Encouraging and facilitating abroad learning experiences could be a viable strategy to reduce FLA and improve foreign language skills in an authentic environment.
- Further research, both qualitative and quantitative, is needed to explore more deeply underlying causes of FLA, the full spectrum of its manifestations, and effective strategies and interventions for mitigating these.
- Policymakers and educators should work collaboratively to redesign language teaching curricula, to include more interactive, learner-centered, and real-world relevant methodologies to alleviate the negative effects of FLA.
- Training programs for educators on understanding, identifying, and addressing FLA can be instrumental in creating a more supportive and less anxiety-provoking learning environment.

In conclusion, addressing FLA is not merely an educational concern but a holistic endeavour that requires concerted efforts from educators, policymakers, researchers, and the community at large. By understanding the roots and ramifications of FLA, and by adopting innovative, learner-centred educational practices, a more conducive learning environment can be created that promotes foreign language proficiency while ensuring the mental and emotional well-being of learners.

### **Limitations**

The reliance on self-report measures and retrospective self-reflection may have introduced a recall bias. The focus of the study on German-speaking countries also requires caution in generalizing the findings to other linguistic or cultural contexts. Finally, the term Xenoglossophobia in the online questionnaire was used synonymously with what is defined in this paper as FLA. This inconsistency in terminology led to the choice of respective phrasing in the main text in order to accurately present the data obtained.

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## ICC–CONFERENCE 2024 PROGRAMME SPEAKERS

As we mentioned, a number of participants at the ICC–Languages Conference in Athens in April 2024 have summarised their presentations in print. We have published the follow–up articles in the order of presentation. Here is the list of speakers who presented and wrote up their sessions and their names are marked with an asterisk. \*

1. **Transforming Language Education:**  
**Why and how educators might focus on developing learners’ multilingual identity in the languages classroom**  
Linda Fisher, (Professor of Languages Education, Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge)
2. **Vocal in Need: Promoting Cultural and Linguistic Skills for Personnel Interacting with Migrants and Asylum Seekers across Europe**  
Kristin Brogan & Valerie McGrath (Ireland)
3. **Εργαστήριο εισαγωγής καινοτομικών Γλωσσικών Παιχνιδιών σε δια ζώσης μαθήματα για να ενδυναμώσουμε τη συμμετοχή των μαθητών μας**  
Nikos Konstantopoulos & Ifigenia Georgiadou (Greece)
4. **Adapting New Technologies to Empower English Language Teaching, Learning and assessment** \*  
Joe Dale (UK)
5. **The Influence of Learning Identity Dynamics on the Learning Process in the Foreign Language Lesson** \*  
Katerina Kanella (Greece)
6. **Unlocking Creativity: AI-Powered Language Teaching** \*  
Wioleta Anteck & Joanna Zielińska (Poland)
7. **A Gamified Experiential Learning Intervention for Engaging Students through Satisfying Needs**  
Loukia David (Greece)
8. **Artificial Intelligence in EFL: A Workshop on Innovative Teaching Tools**  
Elena Mizrahi (Israel)
9. **Developing Mediation Strategies as an Important Step towards Developing Plurilingual Competence** \*  
Nancy Kontomitrou (Greece)
  
10. **Enhancing Learner Assessment with ChatGPT: Practical Activities for Engaging Evaluation**  
Marwa Seif (Egypt)
11. **Corporate Adventure – an Entrepreneurial Project** \*  
Ridha Mejri (Germany)
12. **Happiness and ELT: Principles and Activities** \*  
Nick Michelioudakis (Greece)
13. **I Advance with AI**  
Dimitrios Kouroupis (Greece)

14. **Design Thinking: A Catalyst in Language Teaching**  
Barry Tomalin (UK)
15. **Multilingualism in Society and Education as the Driving Force for the Work of ECSPM** \*  
Guðrún Gísladóttir (General Secretary of ECSPM)
16. **Mediation as a Means to Interactive Learning in Multilingual Educational Spaces** \*  
Bessie Dendrinou (Professor Emerita, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens)
17. **Using Critical Incidents to Improve International Business Communication**  
Ian McMaster (Germany)
18. **The Art of Creating Learning Opportunities in the Diverse Language Class: Wellness as a Key Issue** \*  
Hassan Abouabdelkader & Soufiane Abouabdelkader (Morocco)
19. **Empowering Educators: Integrating Virtual Exchange for Global Competence in English Language Teaching** \*  
Yuliana Lavrysh & Iryna Simkova (Ukraine)

We hope to publish a few more follow-up articles in our September issue.

# Adapting and Utilising the latest AI and Technology Tools to empower English language teaching, learning, and assessment.

## Joe Dale

In April, I had the privilege of presenting at the ICC Languages Conference 2024 in Athens. The focus of my talk was on adapting and utilising the latest AI and technology tools to empower English language teaching, learning, and assessment.

It was a hybrid event, so I was presenting live online to an audience in the room as well as those joining virtually. I covered a wide range of practical tools and approaches, trying my best to give hands-on demonstrations despite a few technical hiccups here and there (ah, the fun of live demos!).

I began by framing the talk around the four core language skills - listening, reading, speaking, and writing - as well as touching on areas like assessment and differentiation. A few of the key tools I covered included:

**Mizou** - This educational chatbot allows you to create custom AI conversations for practising listening and speaking skills. Students can have dialogues on different scenarios like ordering at a cafe.

**AudioPen** - Transcribe audio recordings and get automated summaries, with language output options. Hugely time-saving for tasks like summarising meetings or student audio practice.

**Diffit** - Differentiate reading materials and instantly generate levelled texts, vocabulary lists, comprehension questions and writing prompts on any topic.

**Padlet's AI Image Generator** - Create custom images from text prompts that can be used for speaking/writing activities. I showed how to embed these images into multimedia books.

**BlockadeLabs** - Generate immersive 360° images that students can explore and describe. I demonstrated embedding these in Book Creator using Momento360 and adding text and recording audio.

**Quizizz AI** - Turn any web article or video with transcripts into a multiple-choice comprehension quiz.

I also touched on helpful extensions like **Voice Control for ChatGPT**, **Canned Replies for ChatGPT** prompt management, and more. Towards the end, I provided an overview of training opportunities I offer as well as some other AI resource recommendations.

There were quite a few engaging questions at the end around things like using chatbots for error correction, handling accented speech, identifying students'

favourite AI activities so far, and more. I was impressed by the level of interest and curiosity about leveraging AI for language learning.

If you'd like to view my slide deck from the talk, you can access it here:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1GQqLcwiAMsekIcBMxoxQzNVgKjDVgJ18O1gR04pPesA/edit?usp=sharing>.

# **The Influence of Learning Identity Dynamics on the learning process in the Foreign Language Lesson “Psycholinguistic approach to enhance Linguistic Competence”**

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## **Abstract**

The research in the field of Foreign Language Learning highlights the profound impact of “Learning identity” dynamics on the learning process in the Foreign Language Lesson (FLL). “Learning identity” is a conceptual artefact that enables reflection over the learning preferences, different learning requirements and needs that can affect the learning process in many ways. It encompasses a spectrum of factors, including learning type, learning style, learning strategies, age, interests and motivation, which collectively play a pivotal role in shaping the language learning process and influencing learners' outcomes.

Understanding how various facets of Learning Identity intersect with pedagogical approaches is essential for optimizing language learning outcomes. By recognizing and understanding the multifaceted nature of Learning Identity, educators can implement effective teaching strategies that optimize linguistic competence development.

Acknowledging and accommodating the diverse identities of learners is paramount for educators aiming to create inclusive learning environments tailored to individual learner needs and preferences. The study emphasizes the importance of adopting effective pedagogical strategies that align with learners' identities to foster engagement, motivation and language acquisition. Embracing diversity, fostering motivation and providing personalized learning experiences are key principles for promoting successful language acquisition and empowering learners to achieve proficiency in the target language.

## **1. Introduction**

Exploring the psycholinguistic approach to enhance linguistic competence is necessary to recognize the intricate interplay between identity and learning. Our identity, is shaped by a variety of heterogeneity factors, is not static but rather a dynamic construct that evolves over time. Within the context of language learning, our identity plays a pivotal role in shaping our attitudes, motivations and our proficiency in a foreign language.

The diversity of students has been a challenge since the beginning of modern pedagogy. This is not a novel scientific topic. On the contrary, it is a timeless research issue.

In every classroom, we can find a wide variety of learners bearing different characteristics. Learners differ for example in terms of their knowledge level, learning strategies, cultural and social background, experiences, gender, preferences in the perception and processing of linguistic information, language level or performance (Roßbach / Wellenreuther 2002: 44-57). All these factors can influence the learning process.

The many diverse dimensions of heterogeneity and the diversity of learners have - above all- a decisive influence on the learning and teaching process. Every day, educators face the challenge of meeting the needs of their students. For this reason, most educators need to adjust their teaching style and methods to the heterogeneity factors and individual needs of their students.

The psycholinguistic approach plays a pivotal role in addressing the challenges presented by diversity and enhancing the effectiveness of teaching processes. Delving into the psychological and linguistic aspects of language acquisition offers valuable insights into how learners perceive, process and produce language.

## **2. Four basic features in which diversity manifests**

There are four fundamental features that reveal the multifaceted nature of diversity in educational settings. These features serve as guiding pillars, shedding light on the diverse characteristics, needs, and potentials of learners.

Firstly, let us consider the knowledge base. Each learner has his or her individual prior knowledge, experiences, and cognitive capabilities, which brings forth a distinct set of learning requirements. Some learners for example may grasp certain concepts effortlessly, while others may require more time and guidance (Mandl/Friedrich 2006).

Secondly, we must also consider intelligence in the context of diversity. Intelligence encompasses not raw cognitive abilities, but the speed at which linguistic information is collected and processed (Rost 2013). In short, that means learners differ in how quickly they absorb information, how much information they store in working memory and how efficiently they can integrate linguistic information into their long-term memory.

Moving on to the affective components and motivation, we encounter a third basic aspect of diversity. The desire to learn, coupled with emotions such as for example fear, disappointment, excitement, apathy, or boredom, influences the learning process significantly (Aronson et. al 2014). While some learners may be intrinsically motivated and eagerly pursue knowledge, others may struggle with motivational barriers or apprehensions.

Fourthly, last but not least is meta-cognition, the awareness and use of learning strategies. Individuals differ not only in what they know but also in how effectively they can apply their knowledge to navigate learning tasks (Kaiser et. al 2018).

## **3. “Learning Identity”**

Based on the intricate interplay of the four basic features that affect the diversity of learners’ manifests, I have constructed “Learning Identity” for my research by

synthesizing specific learning, personality, and sociodemographic characteristics because in my teaching experience I realized and recognized the pivotal role they play for learners in the learning process (Kanella 2019, 2021). Learning identity serves as a dynamic framework aimed at enhancing linguistic competence.

### **3.1 The learning-specific characteristics**

#### **1. Intelligence**

- Processing of information
- Speed of learning/Aptitude
- Memory
- Learning Type / Learning Style

#### **2. Learning strategies in foreign language learning**

- direct learning strategies (memory and compensation strategies)
- indirect learning strategies (meta-cognitive, affective and social strategies).

Intelligence, aptitude, and memory serve as the building blocks of our cognitive abilities, influencing how we process information, absorb new knowledge, and retain it in memory over time.

Learning types and styles are a concept developed through learning psychology to describe the procedure or behaviour when acquiring knowledge (Looß 2007: 142). Learning theory states we approach different sensory channels in information acquisition and memory storage. Depending on their characteristics, this results in differences in visual, auditory and kinesthetic learning styles (Looß 2007: 144; VAK Modell von Dunn 2003; Röhl 2003: 131). Of course there are also mixed learning types. In the context of foreign language learning, understanding and accommodating different learning styles can contribute to the enhancement of linguistic competence significantly. Learning styles encompass four main categories: pragmatists, reflectors, activists and theorists (Honey/Mumford, 1992). Each style represents a distinct approach to learning and problem-solving.

In contrast to learning types and styles, learning strategies can be practised (Oxford, 2017). As a result, learners can actively use the Foreign Language and promote their autonomy.

Direct learning strategies, such as memory and compensation strategies, involve the conscious effort to memorize vocabulary, grammar rules, and language structures. These strategies enable learners to internalize and retain in memory new linguistic information more effectively (Kanella 2022).

On the other hand, indirect learning strategies encompass a broader range of cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social approaches to language learning. Metacognitive strategies, such as goal setting, self-monitoring and reflection, enable us to regulate our learning process and adapt our strategies based on our evolving needs and goals. Affective strategies, including motivation, anxiety management and confidence-building techniques, empower us to cultivate a positive attitude towards language learning and overcome motivational barriers (Kanella 2022).

### **3.2 Personality-specific characteristics**

#### **1. Emotions**

#### **2. Interest and motivation**

- extrinsic/intrinsic motivation
- self-efficacy, self-concept and performance motive

In the realm of foreign language instruction, understanding and incorporating personality-specific characteristics is paramount to fostering effective and engaging learning environments.

Emotions, whether positive or negative, play a pivotal role in shaping our engagement, motivation and overall well-being in the learning environment (Hascher/Hagenauer 2011). When we experience for example feelings of enthusiasm, curiosity and joy, we are more likely to approach learning tasks with eagerness and perseverance. On the contrary, feelings of anxiety, frustration, or boredom can hinder our ability to focus, retain information and perform at our best. Positive, activating emotions are beneficial to learning motivation, while negative emotions weaken it.

The most relevant emotions in the school context are fear, joy, boredom but also hope, pride, shame, disappointment or surprise, which can influence the learning motivation and performance to a large extent.

Interest refers to how important or useful a topic is for the language learner (Edmondson/House 2006). Motivation, on the other hand, is THE WILL to achieve a goal. In the context of foreign language learning, this refers to the desire to learn. There is a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic learning motivation. Extrinsic motivation, driven by external rewards such as grades or praise, can provide a temporary boost in performance but may not sustain long-term engagement or intrinsic satisfaction. In contrast, intrinsic motivation fuelled by personal interest, curiosity and a sense of autonomy, fosters a deeper, more enduring commitment to the learning process (Βηδενμάιερ 2014; Wiedenmayer/ Chita 2022: 2-4).

Learners with a keen sense of efficacy are more likely to challenge themselves with difficult tasks and be intrinsically motivated. Furthermore, our beliefs about our own abilities shape our educational experiences and outcomes. Those with high self-efficacy believe in their capacity to succeed in challenging tasks, persevere in the face of setbacks and exert control over their learning outcomes. Those with low self-efficacy may doubt their abilities, avoid challenging tasks and experience heightened levels of anxiety and self-doubt.

Self-concept encompasses the perception and knowledge of personal characteristics, abilities, preferences, feelings and behaviour.

Performance motive is one of the most researched aspects of motivational psychology. The two most important components of performance motivation are confidence or the hope of success and the fear of failure.



### **3.3 Sociodemographic-specific characteristics**

- Age
- Gender
- Influence of the native language

Sociodemographic-specific characteristics, with a particular emphasis on age, gender and native language play a significant role in shaping our educational experiences and outcomes.

Biological age is a crucial factor in learning a foreign language from both a cognitive psychological and a psycholinguistic perspective (DeKeyser 2012: 185-205).

Age can impact linguistic competence significantly. In early childhood, language acquisition occurs rapidly and effortlessly, with children absorbing language structures and vocabulary from their environment. Young learners often demonstrate remarkable linguistic flexibility in acquiring multiple languages simultaneously, a phenomenon known as "critical period" in language acquisition. Adult learners may approach language learning with different motivations, goals and learning strategies compared to young learners.

A variety of studies observe gender differences in cognitive behaviour (Hyde 2014 / Halpern 2012). This does not mean that one gender is more intelligent than the other, but there are specific cognitive functions in which women and men differ from each other. For example, females tend to exhibit greater verbal fluency. They may use more elaborate language structures in certain contexts.

Moreover, gender roles and stereotypes can shape language learning experiences, affecting learners' confidence levels and participation in classroom activities. Educators should be mindful of these dynamics and strive to create an inclusive learning environment that encourages all students to engage actively and express themselves without fear of judgment.

The influence of native language in the foreign language lesson is profound and multifaceted (Apeltauer 2011). Learners tend to transfer for example linguistic structures, vocabulary and pronunciation patterns from their native language to the target language. While this can facilitate language learning in some instances, it may also lead to interference or errors, especially if the two languages differ significantly in terms of grammar or phonetics.

Additionally, the influence of the native language extends to language learning strategies and cognitive processes. Learners may rely on familiar strategies or mental frameworks from their native language when acquiring the foreign language, which can both aid and hinder the learning process.

However, educators can leverage the learner's native language as a valuable resource in the learning process. Drawing parallels between the two languages, explicitly addressing areas of contrast, and providing opportunities for cross-linguistic comparison can enhance understanding of linguistic concepts.

#### **4. How can we address diversity in Foreign Language Lessons to enhance linguistic competence?**

1. To address diversity in FLL (Foreign Language Lessons) and enhance linguistic competence, educators must first incorporate learning-specific characteristics into the instructional process. This entails recognizing and accommodating individual learning types, preferences and cognitive processes. By understanding the diverse ways in which students absorb and process information, educators can adjust their teaching methods and materials to suit the needs of each learner.

For example, visual learners tend to benefit from instructional materials such as diagrams, charts and videos to convey information. Implementing visual elements into language lessons can help this learning style to better understand and retain vocabulary, grammar rules, or other language structures (Kanella 2019, 2021). Incorporating interactive exercises, role-playing, into language instruction can engage kinesthetic learners and reinforce their language learning through movement or in group activities (Kanella 2019, 2021).

Auditory learners, on the other hand, excel in environments where information is presented verbally and through auditory cues. Providing opportunities for listening exercises or oral drills, auditory learners can enhance their learning process by listening comprehension (Kanella 2019, 2021).

By integrating measures for visual, auditory and kinesthetic learning types into the instructional process, educators can create a multi-modal learning environment that appeals to diverse learner preferences. This approach maximizes engagement, understanding and retention of language skills (Kanella 2019, 2021).

Educators should also assess the learning styles of their learners and adapt their teaching methods accordingly. Most learners prefer a few individual methods to deal with stimuli and information. If learners know their own learning style (i.e., activist, theorist reflector, pragmatist), they can acquire the learning material effectively as it increases their awareness. On the other hand, they can also create a profile of their strengths and weaknesses in learning, which gives them the flexibility to switch between different learning strategies and thus better meet the demands of different tasks.

For example, pragmatists prefer a connection between the learning material and the exercises or tasks. The activation of prior knowledge plays a significant role in consolidating the grammatical structure, which can be facilitated through revision. Games, role-playing activities or group work can have an effective impact on the learning process (Kanella 2019, 2021).

Reflectors need more time to think about a task: they need adequate preparation time and background information. The revision of the learning material at certain time intervals is also necessary for this learning style, and individual work is preferable (Kanella 2019, 2021).

Activists, on the other hand, are active and prefer group work. Learning is best achieved through games and mind maps (Kanella 2019, 2021). Theorists learn best

by associating and elaborating, which link the learning material to their prior knowledge. Adequate time is needed to think about a task (Kanella 2019, 2021).

**2.** Strengthening learners' motivation in the foreign language lesson can inspire them to actively engage and work towards achieving their language learning goals. Providing meaningful tasks that are authentic, encourages active participation and deepens their investment in the learning process. A supportive learning environment is equally crucial. Cultivating a classroom atmosphere where students feel valued, respected and encouraged fosters a sense of safety and belonging conducive to learning. Clear goal setting also empowers students to track their progress.

Educators can also enforce intrinsic motivation by fostering an environment that cultivates autonomy by providing learners with opportunities to pursue topics and activities that align with their interests and passions and by encouraging learners to set personal goals, celebrate their progress and reflect on their achievements (Kanella 2019, 2021).

**3.** Another aspect to address diversity and enhance linguistic competence in the foreign language lesson is to empower learners' autonomy with the use of strategies. Learners take control of their own learning process and become more self-directed and motivated.

Memory, social, metacognitive and affective learning strategies play a pivotal role in the learning process. Memory strategies encompass techniques that help students encode, store, and retrieve information more effectively. Among the various memory strategies, visualization, association and connecting content to images or graphic illustrations are particularly effective techniques for enhancing linguistic competence (Kanella 2019, 2021, 2022).

On the other hand, social learning strategies refer to techniques and approaches that learners employ to engage with others. Group work and teamwork provide opportunities for learners to engage in collaborative language learning activities. By working together, learners can practise their language skills in authentic communicative contexts, receive immediate feedback and benefit from shared knowledge and perspectives. Group work encourages active participation, fosters a sense of community and promotes support.

A "student-assisted system" (Kanella 2019, 2021) can further enhance social learning. In this system, advanced learners or designated "experts" provide guidance, assistance and feedback to their peers who may be having difficulties with language learning tasks. This peer mentoring approach not only facilitates language practice and skill development but also promotes mutual respect, cooperation and collaboration among learners.

Metacognitive and affective learning strategies play a vital role in fostering learners' autonomy by promoting self-awareness, self-regulation and emotional engagement in the language learning process. One important aspect of these strategies is the confirmation of the good course and success of the learners, which involves providing feedback, recognition and validation of learners' progress and achievements.

By understanding the diverse range of strategies learners utilize, educators can meet the needs and preferences of individual students. This involves actively engaging with

learners, observing their approaches to learning and providing guidance and support to enhance their strategy use.

4. Diversity in age, gender and native language presents both opportunities and challenges in language learning environments. Educators must adopt inclusive practices to address the unique needs and backgrounds of all learners effectively.

By selecting interesting topics that cater to learners' diverse interests, according to their gender or age and aligning them with different learning types and styles can significantly enhance linguistic competence. When learners are engaged and motivated by topics that resonate with their interests and preferences, they are more likely to actively participate in language learning activities (Kanella 2019, 2021).

The relationship between the learner's native language and the structure of the target language is a fundamental aspect of language acquisition. When learners are familiar with the structure and patterns of their native language, they often apply these linguistic frameworks when learning a foreign language.

Educators can highlight similarities and differences between the native and target language. Drawing parallels and making comparisons can help learners recognize patterns, make connections and develop a deeper understanding of the target language's structure.

#### **4. Research in Greek high schools**

In one of my research projects (Kanella 2021) the primary objective was to examine how these diverse characteristics of Learners "Learning Identity" influence the process of language learning of Greek 13-year-old students learning German as a foreign language. This research study included seventy-eight (78) learners from public high schools in Athens.

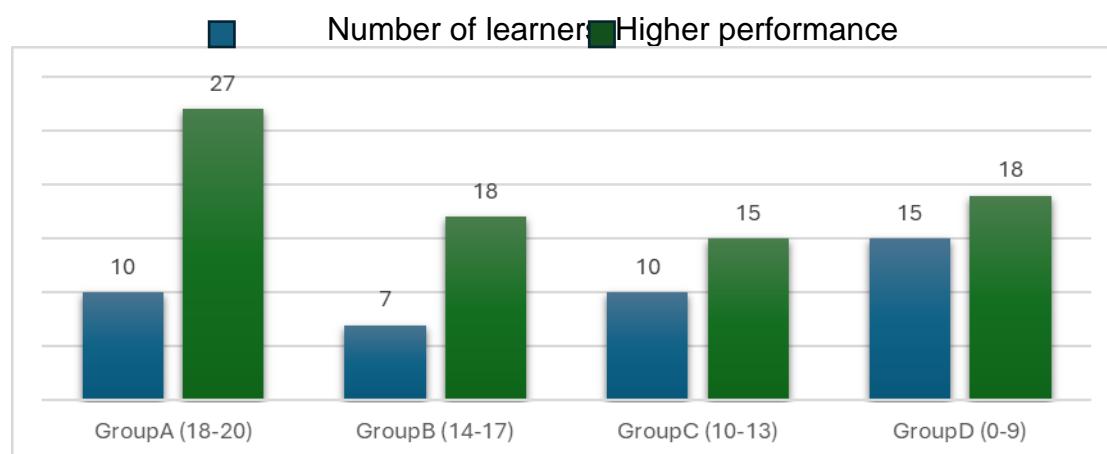
All these factors were analyzed to ascertain their impact on the language learning process, particularly with a keen focus on enhancing linguistic competence. Recognizing that learners' interests play a crucial role in their motivation and engagement, I implemented instructional materials and activities in the teaching process that aligned with their individual interests. This approach aimed to enhance students' intrinsic motivation and promote deeper engagement with the language learning process.

Acknowledging the diverse learning pace and aptitudes among students, I implemented various learning strategies to reinforce learner autonomy and motivation, I aimed to create a dynamic and supportive learning environment where students felt empowered to take ownership of their learning and motivated to achieve their language learning goals.

Also, the speed with which learners acquired the content of lessons and coped with tasks was considered. Slow-learning students worked with pre-worked materials or even lighter tasks, while faster students received more demanding work materials, which were characterized by a higher or more time-consuming degree of difficulty.

In addition to accommodating diverse learning paces, I also prioritized differentiation according to learning types and styles. I incorporated a range of methods and activities ensuring that each student could engage with the material in a way that resonated most with them.

In designing tasks, I established a student-assisted system where learners functioned as resources for one another, fostering collaboration and peer support within the classroom. Through this system, students were encouraged to seek assistance from their peers and provide support to others, promoting a sense of community and collective learning. I developed differentiated exercises for each performance group, ensuring that tasks were appropriately challenging and aligned with students' proficiency levels. By providing exercises at varying levels of difficulty, I aimed to accommodate the diverse range of abilities and provide targeted support as needed. A sample result, among many others, extracted from my research indicates a significant correlation between “Learning Identity” and enhancement of linguistic competence.



Using the common Greek grading scale of 0-20 (10 considered to be the pass limit) according to which the students are assessed in Greece, they were divided into four performance groups.

As we see, more than 50 percent of the learners (42 learners) achieved a higher level of performance. It was shown that Group C and especially Group D achieved a higher level of performance while Group C and D maintained and expanded their good performances (which means that their motivation did not decrease).

## Conclusion

Today's understanding is that we cannot teach anything successfully without wondering how learners can learn best. Foreign Language Learning is a complex process that is affected by a wealth of factors.

Central to this process is “Learning identity” which profoundly influences the learning process. By addressing these diverse elements within the instructional practice, educators can create a learning environment according to the needs and preferences of each learner and foster effective language acquisition.

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# Unlocking Creativity: AI-Powered Language Teaching

**Joanna Zielińska**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has revolutionized various aspects of our lives, e.g. our lifestyle, professional engagements, and educational methodologies. Nowadays AI is definitely transforming language education which traditionally has relied on textbooks, classroom instruction, and human tutors. While these methods have their merits, they often fall short in addressing individual learning needs. In the realm of language education, AI emerges as a formidable ally, offering educators an outstanding opportunity to harness its capabilities and enables efficient lesson planning, personalized content creation, and various dynamic classroom activities.

## **The Role of AI in Language Teaching**

### **Customized Lesson Preparation**

The essence of integrating AI into language teaching lies in its role as a facilitator, revolutionizing lesson preparation and delivery. Integrating AI into language teaching fundamentally changes the way educators think about their lesson preparation nowadays. AI can significantly reduce the time spent on lesson planning. By creating effective prompts, teachers can encourage critical thinking and creativity. AI assists educators in generating tailored lesson materials. Whether teaching online or in person, AI adapts to the teacher's style and provides customized content for each student. This personalized approach makes learning more engaging and effective in a classroom where AI assists teachers in real-time, adjusting content based on student age, progress and preferences.

### **Copilot vs. Chat GPT: A Crucial Distinction**

When discussing AI models, it's essential to differentiate between Copilot and Chat GPT. Copilot stands out by referencing real-time internet searches, ensuring the relevance and accuracy of information. In contrast, Chat GPT relies solely on pre-embedded knowledge, necessitating verification of its responses' reliability. Moreover, Copilot's accessibility as a free resource offers an economical alternative to paid versions, delivering comparable outcomes without financial constraints. It is noteworthy that the content generated by Copilot is not static. It is amenable to enhancements and modifications. Educators have the liberty to adjust the complexity of the language and adapt the material to align with their students' proficiency levels and age groups.

## **Practical Applications of Copilot in Language Teaching: Examples**

### **Vocabulary Development**

Copilot serves as a versatile resource for practising language skills. One notable application is vocabulary development. Teachers can input their own word lists or request Copilot to generate relevant words based on specific topics. With the right

prompts, Copilot can create various vocabulary activities, e.g. definition matching, multiple-choice exercises, and identifying the odd one out. These ready-made activities save time and ensure targeted language practice.

### **Conversation Starters and discussion prompts**

For conversation classes, Copilot offers a treasure trove of discussion prompts. Teachers can access sets of thought-provoking questions or quotations to stimulate student engagement. Whether exploring current events, literature, social or cultural topics, Copilot provides a rich pool of conversation starters. Educators can adapt these prompts to suit their students' language proficiency levels and age groups.

### **AI-Generated Images**

Beyond textual content, AI's prowess extends to generating images that transcend mere visual appeal. These AI-crafted images serve as catalysts for imagination and are instrumental in enhancing communication skills. By employing various AI tools, educators can create lifelike and captivating images that invigorate students' creative faculties and augment their linguistic competencies. Detailed prompts guide AI in producing relevant images, enriching lesson materials and presentations. The utilization of these images in language classrooms is limited only by one's creativity.

### **Best Practices for Effective AI Utilization**

1. **Detailed Prompts:** The cornerstone of maximizing AI's potential in educational settings lies in the formulation of precise and comprehensive prompts. Clearly articulate your requirements, specifying the context, language level, and desired outcome. The more information you provide, the better the results.
2. **Adaptability:** Copilot's flexibility allows teachers to modify activities according to their students' language level, age, needs and learning preferences. Adjust the language complexity, tailor examples, and align content with age-appropriate themes. **AI acts as a flexible and dynamic resource that adapts to your teaching goals as they evolve.**
3. **Ethical Considerations:** While technology continues to evolve and AI enhances language education, educators play a vital role in shaping its impact on students and must remain mindful of maintaining the balance between innovation and ethics. Ensure that while creating a more effective environment, AI-generated content aligns in your classroom with educational standards and promotes positive learning experiences.

The role of AI as an educational companion becomes increasingly significant, promising a future where learning is both enjoyable and tailored to individual aspirations. As language educators, we stand at the intersection of tradition and innovation. By embracing AI tools like Copilot, we can elevate language teaching, empower students, and create dynamic classrooms. Let's welcome AI as a powerful ally to shape a brighter future for language education.



**End note:****A personal comment from Joanna Zielinska**

I had this incredible opportunity both to attend and be one of the presenters at the 2024 ICC-Languages Annual Conference in the historic city of Athens. As a language enthusiast and educator, this experience left me inspired and motivated. The conference was a melting pot of ideas. From workshops on innovative teaching methods to research presentations, I eagerly absorbed the knowledge. It was refreshing to see educators from different backgrounds come together to share their expertise. I met fellow educators who are as passionate about languages as I am. We swapped stories, discussed best practices, and even planned future collaborations. My part of the presentation focused on a few practical ideas on how AI can be used in language education and applied in our language classrooms.

# Developing Mediation Strategies as an Important Step towards Developing Plurilingual Competence

**Dr. Nancy Kontomitrou**

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Department of German Language and Literature

The main goal of my workshop was to underline the importance of developing mediation strategies presented in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001) and its Companion Volume (2020), for developing plurilingual competence.

*Plurilingual competence* is considered as a very important competence, which learners of languages should develop in order to be able to communicate in the “multilingual world” (ICC, 2019). This competence plays a significant role in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001) and in its Companion Volume (2020), together with the *pluricultural competence*.

There are a lot of important dimensions, which teachers should take into consideration regarding the development of the plurilingual competence of learners of a foreign language. For instance, they should take into consideration the “plurilingual repertoire” (ibid.) of learners (e.g. which is their mother tongue, which languages they are learning and which level they have achieved, which other languages they have come in contact with etc.) and the specific characteristics of the learner group. They should also include different text types in different languages according to the characteristics of the specific learner group in the lesson process, as one of the dimensions which pluricultural competence includes is to be able to “call upon the knowledge of several languages to make sense of a text (oral or written)” (Dendrinos 2019: 19). Moreover, they should take the intercultural contents of teaching materials and of materials that assess language performance into account (Kontomitrou 2022, in press). Finally, they should include mediation activities in the teaching process.

*Mediation* plays a significant role in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001) and in its Companion Volume (2020) and Can-Do-Statements

have been developed, which can help teachers teach and assess mediation in the different levels of language proficiency.

Research into Mediation, such as the METLA project of the Council of Europe (2003) (European Centre for Modern Languages), has shown how important it is to include mediation in “teaching, learning and assessment” (Council of Europe 2003).

Mediation plays a very important role in modern curricula, such as the Common Curriculum for Foreign Languages in Greece (Ενιαίο Πρόγραμμα Σπουδών Ξένων Γλωσσών / ΕΠΣ-ΞΓ) (Δενδρινού 2011 / Δενδρινού & Σταθοπούλου 2013).

Mediation is one of the language activities tested in the State Certificate of Language Proficiency in Greece (KPG). “The KPG multilingual examination suite is governed by the Central Examination Board, appointed by the Minister of Education” (RcEL, online). It is “offered by the Greek Ministry of Education, on a national scale, to people living, studying and working in Greece.” (ibid.). “The KPG is a system which is based on the belief that degrees of literacy in several languages and a multilingual ethos of communication help people face the challenges of globalisation, and facilitate mobility and growth” (Dendrinou & Karavas 2013: 14).

Foreign language learners should develop mediation strategies in order to be able to act as mediators. “In order to mediate successfully, the language user is required to use different strategies, or techniques which will enable him/her to mediate successfully” (Stathopoulou 2015: 88).

*Mediation strategies* in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001) include “planning”, “execution”, “evaluation” and “repair” (CEFR 2001, 88). In the Companion Volume of the CEFR mediation strategies include “strategies to explain a new concept” (CEFR, Companion Volume 2020, 118) and “Strategies to simplify a text” (ibid. 121). To the first category belong “Linking to previous knowledge” (ibid. 118), “Adapting language” (ibid.) and “Breaking down complicated information” (ibid.). To the second category belong “Amplifying a dense text” (ibid. 121) and “Streamlining a text” (ibid.).

In my workshop I presented an example of a mediation task, which was based on a text and a mediation task used for testing mediation at the KPG exams (Ministry of

Education, Religious Affairs and Sports 2023: 12), and exercises were discussed as examples for developing mediation strategies in order to perform successfully.

As a next step a part of a learning scenario (Kontomitrou 2023: 14,15, 23-27) was discussed and how according to the contents of the learning scenario mediation strategies can be developed. In this context it was discussed how important it is that learners have the opportunity to choose different texts of the same subject in different languages, to choose one or more texts in a language/ in more than one language of their plurilingual repertoire, to combine information of the different texts and to act as mediators according to the given task using mediation strategies for one or more texts in different languages in the steps of the mediation process.

Finally, the importance of integrating mediation strategies in alternative assessment methods was discussed. In this context the importance of the documentation of the use of mediation strategies in a learners' portfolio (separately and combined with other strategies used to act as a mediator according to the mediation tasks), the importance of the collaboration of learners in peer-assessment and assessment in groups and the importance of using self-assessment grids to ensure whether mediation strategies have been used and which mediation strategies were helpful for learners were discussed. " 'Self-assessment', as a form of formative assessment, gets learners to reflect on their own performance on the basis of a set of criteria" (Council of Europe 2023: 96). In the context of integrating mediation strategies in alternative assessment methods the aspects which a self-assessment grid focusing on mediation strategies can include were discussed and a self-assessment grid based on mediation strategies was presented.

This workshop ended with the conclusion that taking into consideration the positive results of including mediation strategies in foreign language teaching can also have positive results in developing pluricultural competence. In this way a positive effect on teaching and learning foreign languages can be achieved.

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## **“Corporate Adventure” An entrepreneurial project**

### **Ridha Mejri**

Ridha Meiri is a Senior Lecturer in Business Communication & Intercultural Management at the University of Applied Sciences in Worms, Germany. He holds a Master's degree in Applied Linguistics. He also works as an in-company trainer and consultant.

“Corporate Adventure” is a business project where students create their own company. This project consists of four units: company profile, market profile, elective subject & recruitment day. The students create a company and decide whether they will offer a service or sell a product. They also think about the company structure, its mission statement and its organigram. They also identify their target market and create a consumer profile by conducting a telephone survey to gather consumer data. Moreover, the students create a job advertisement including a description of the ideal candidate and they prepare an interview questionnaire. Finally, the various teams present their company to a big audience pursuing venture capital. They show their self-created video commercials and their flyers. They should highlight their USP (Unique Selling Proposition) to convince venture capitalists to invest in their companies. On balance the students improve their 4 C’s skills: communication, creativity, collaboration & critical thinking. They also develop their presentation, digital, marketing, intercultural, conflict management and decision-making skills.

The project aimed at equipping students with the skills necessary to excel in the global marketplace. Nowadays leaders face many challenges in the evolving global landscape and therefore they need to adapt to increased talent mobility, diverse team structures and rapid organisational changes. Employment opportunities are transforming, necessitating the development of new employability, thinking, and social skills.

The entrepreneurial project includes several units, each focusing on different aspects of business development and management. Unit 1 "Company Profile" requires students to create an organisational structure, mission statement and job descriptions while Unit 2 "Market Profile" involves identifying target markets, analysing competition, and conducting consumer surveys. Unit 3 "Elective Subject" allows students to apply their field of interest, such as marketing, HR, or finance to the project, while Unit 4 "Recruitment" involves creating a job advertisement, interview questionnaires and application letters. Subsequently a job fair is simulated where students interview each other and hire the potential candidate for the advertised job. Unit 5 "Presentation" focuses on delivering a comprehensive presentation to potential investors or venture capitalists to convince them to invest in the project idea. Unit 6 "Feedback & Reflection" emphasises the importance of feedback from both students and lecturer.

After the completion of the project, participants are encouraged to provide feedback and engage in reflection to evaluate their learning experience and the skills they have acquired. This process allows students to assess their strengths and areas for improvement, leading to personal and professional growth.

On balance the project stresses the importance of developing a wide range of skills including digital, conflict management, presentation, self-management and leadership skills among others. The project further emphasizes the importance of critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills, aligning with the project's objective of preparing students for the dynamic and demanding global marketplace. The project's structure, practical assignments and focus on skills development collectively aim to equip students with the necessary competencies to excel in the corporate world.

Additionally, it encourages students to think creatively and innovatively, offering diverse ideas for potential company products or services, such as lifestyle, coaching, sports-related, home-related and AI-related concepts. The project aims to provide students with a shared experience, allowing them to apply their best thinking, feelings, and actions to the challenges at hand.

The project also addresses the challenges that leaders face in the global marketplace. The project is designed to tackle the increased flows and mobility of international talent, the formation of multicultural, matrixed, and virtual teams, rapid changes in organizational vision, values, and policies and the push to promote a global sense of organizational culture. The project has been inspired by the rapid change of employment opportunities, the future job requirements related to new employability, thinking and social/life skills as well as the need to embrace new ways of teaching and learning.



# HAPPINESS AND ELT

## [Principles and Activities from the field of Positive Psychology]

**Nick Michelioudakis**

**A few quotes:** While reading around on the topic of happiness I came across some amazing quotes: 'My wife and I were happy for 20 years... and then we met!' Or 'Money cannot unlock the secret of happiness; ...but it can help you pay for the key!' Or my favourite: 'Happiness is having a large, loving, caring, close-knit family.... in another city.' (Don't you feel happier already? Read on... 😊 )

**What is Positive Psychology?** Positive Psychology is only a few decades old. The person credited with starting the whole discipline is Martin Seligman. Back when he was starting out as a psychologist, the field was all about trying to help people with mental problems such as depression, anxiety issues and the like. Then Seligman had a brainwave. What if the therapists tried the techniques they had developed with 'ordinary' people – people who were not suffering from any serious problems? Would they still work? So, the therapists tried them, and apparently many of the techniques do actually work!

**Why should we as educators care?** Well, the most obvious answer to such a question is that if we as teachers used some of these techniques in our classes, this would make our students happier and they would be more motivated to attend our lessons. What is more, numerous studies have shown that happiness is associated with positive learning outcomes. In the words of one researcher, "Research shows that happy people are more creative, open to new information, and flexible and efficient in their thinking."

Conveniently, many of the techniques used by therapists to make people happier actually involve using language, which is excellent for us language teachers. Our learners can use English and increase their level of happiness at the same time! So – what are some of the discoveries of Positive Psychologists? In what follows we are going to look at five of them – as well as some practical ideas for making use of them in class.

**Principle 1 - Doing things for others:** One of the most interesting findings of Positive Psychology is that doing things for other people makes us happier. This is not particularly surprising perhaps, but sometimes what is surprising is how large a particular effect is. In this case, it turns out that doing things for others makes us even happier than if we were to do similar things for ourselves. In one study, some people

were asked to spend money and buy something for themselves, while others were asked to spend similar amounts on buying things for others. This is what happened: <https://tinyurl.com/k9dhdaee>

**An Activity ['Random Acts of Kindness']:** We can make use of this principle by asking students to brainstorm things they could do for the people around them. This could be little things such as getting someone a little card, or buying them a coffee or even paying them a compliment. Students can write about what they did on a piece of paper and paste it on the classroom board (or on a Padlet); their classmates could then read these little notes and try to figure out who did what.

**Principle 2 - Present Refocus:** Interestingly, it seems that nature does not want us to be happy! Nature wants us to be successful (in the Darwinian sense). Nature uses the promise of happiness as a 'carrot' to get us moving in a certain direction. For instance, we feel that if we work hard and get our PhD, or get promoted, or get tenure, we are going to be happy for ever (which of course is not true). Now, while there is nothing wrong with pursuing long-term goals, the problem here is that in focusing too much on the future, we forget to be happy in the present. But it does not have to be like this.

**An Activity ['Count your Blessings']:** Psychologists have discovered that by getting people to redirect their attention towards reasons they have for being happy in the present, they can increase their happiness. One of the easiest ways to do this is to get people to 'count their blessings'. Students can make a list of things they are grateful for (e.g. 'I have many friends' or 'I can pursue my musical interests') and then compare notes with a partner. This is a very simple activity in the best 'humanistic' tradition, as students also get to discover each other's values.

**Principle 3 - A Sense of Achievement:** An amazing discovery in the field of positive psychology is that while experiencing a pleasurable moment (e.g. when we achieve a goal of ours) can raise our levels of happiness. Recalling the experience can produce a very similar effect – and this is incidentally one of the reasons why it makes sense to celebrate successes. Simply getting people to recall moments which show them at their best can produce the desired boost in happiness. However, one of the problems with getting people to share such moments is that it is not normally acceptable to engage in self-praise, but the next activity neatly sidesteps this difficulty.

**An Activity ['This flower is for you']:** In this activity, students draw a flower on a piece of paper (a real one will also work!) and they then present it to a classmate of theirs. The thing is that the recipient of the flower then has to say something that they have done in the past which they believe entitles them to the flower. This can be a really small thing, such as helping an old person across the street, or something harder, such as rescuing a stray kitten. The important thing is that the activity legitimises behaviour which would otherwise be construed as showing off.

**Principle 4 - A Sense of Purpose:** In his great TED talk on Positive Psychology ( <https://tinyurl.com/yunjtukb> ) Marty Seligman distinguishes between three kinds of happiness: simply enjoying pleasurable sensations (e.g. food), finding yourself in a state of 'flow' when doing something you are really good at (e.g. making music if you are a master musician), and finally doing things for a cause which is bigger than yourself (e.g. volunteering for 'Doctors without Borders' or helping to protect the environment). Indeed, studies have shown that engaging students in such activities can give them a sense of purpose and higher motivation.

**An Activity ['Free Rice']:** One way of making use of this idea would be to involve our students in various projects aimed at helping the community and then get them to write reports or give presentations. An easier way would be to get students to play 'Free Rice'. The game is simplicity itself; you answer vocabulary M/C (Multiple Choice) questions and for every correct answer, you get 10 grains of virtual rice. At the end of the game, these grains are converted into real rice and given out to people in the third world. Brilliant! (watch this ad: <https://tinyurl.com/4m57ejhn> ). (NB: In the same game, there are also countless other categories of questions, ranging from History to Geography to Art).

**Principle 5 - Humour:** Stating that humour, jokes and laughter can put us in a good mood certainly qualifies for a 'Captain Obvious' award. After all, this is the reason why we watch comedies or go to stand-up gigs. What is less well-known however, is that this heightened euphoria also has the effect of strengthening the bonds between people. Subjects watching funny clips with strangers later felt closer to them, compared to people who simply watched documentaries together. The moral for us teachers is clear: if we want motivated students and a cohesive class, it pays to add a good dollop of humour to our lesson plans.

**An Activity ['A Funny Ad']:** When it comes to funny activities we are spoilt for choice; getting students to share jokes is an obvious one, but there are also comedy clips, film spoofs, practical jokes and pranks (which students can describe to each other), funny songs, funny short stories – the list is endless. If forced to choose, I personally would go for commercials. Most of them are really short, and many of them are simply hilarious. Even if they contain little or no language, we can ask students to provide it. For instance, the dog in this ad clearly wants to be adopted; what does he promise to do for his future masters? (Click here: <https://tinyurl.com/54zthczr> ).

**Last words:** You may have noticed that all these ideas share something in common: they have to do with other people. This even goes for the last one – humour is a social bonding mechanism; we don't normally laugh out loud when we are alone. There are many self-help books out there which promote the idea that 'Happiness comes from within'. Actually, this is wrong. In the words of Jonathan Haidt: 'Happiness comes from between' 😊 .

**End note:**

Nick Michelioudakis (B. Econ., Dip. RSA, MSc [TEFL]) has been active in ELT for many years as a teacher, examiner, presenter and teacher trainer. He has worked for many publishers and examination boards and he has given seminars and workshops in numerous countries.

He has written extensively on Methodology, though he is better known for his 'Psychology and ELT' articles which have appeared in numerous newsletters and magazines.

His areas of interest include Psychology, Student Motivation, Learner Independence, Teaching one-to-one and Humour.

For articles, videoclips or worksheets of his, you can visit his YouTube channel (<https://tinyurl.com/k3scpams>) or his blog ([www.michelioudakis.org](http://www.michelioudakis.org)). See also his **Teaching Tips** on Page XX.



# PRESENTING

## the European Civil Society Platform for Multilingualism (ECSPM)

*By Guðrún Gísladóttir*  
*ECSPM General Secretary*

### THE IDENTITY OF ECSPM

- We are a European **civil society** (the space that exists as an intermediary between the private sector and governments).
- We are a **platform** (our political agenda being to promote the languages spoken in Europe).
- We work to ensure that **multilingualism** is treated as an asset and a commitment of the European Union.

### TYPE OF ORGANISATION

- We are structured as **an umbrella organisation** for 29 associations, networks, and research centres who are presently our members and we have signed partnership agreements with four establishments.
- Of the 29 institutions who are our **members**:
  - Twenty (20) are academic centres, researching bilingualism and multilingualism (see the ECSPM-CURUM)
  - Four (4) are European and international networks for the teaching, learning, and testing of languages (ALTE, EDiLiC, ICC, FIPLV)
  - One is a community of organisations with over 30 branches in Europe, Asia, and North America
  - Four (4) are European networks for the promotion and support of European national, regional and minority languages (EFNIL, FUEN, NPLD, Saarland Language Council)
  - Two (2) are European associations related to the arts (literary translation and visual arts)
- The 4 institutions with which we have signed partnership agreements:
  - ECML (European Centre of Modern Languages) and we are an active member of their Professional Network Forum (PNF)
  - CCERBAL Canadian Centre for Studies and Research in Bilingualism and Language Planning at the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute (OLBI) of the University of Ottawa
  - Cracking the Language Barrier (CRACKER) a federation of European projects and organisations working on technologies for a multilingual Europe
  - LLLP (The Lifelong Learning Platform) a European Civil Society Platform for Education

### THE OUTREACH OF ECSPM

- Currently our members and partners **represent more than 200 institutions** that are concerned with covering all issues concerned with language rights, language education and the use of languages in society. Our members **reach out to thousands of beneficiaries.**

## THE AIM OF ECSPM

- We work for greater **linguistic justice** and **language equality**, driving for **change in attitudes towards languages** especially the monolingual ethos of communication in education and other social institutions.

## HOW ECSPM FUNCTIONS

- We are a leading **European social and academic platform**, making it possible to share ideas, policies, research, and good practice with stakeholders across Europe.
- We also collectively advocate actions which aim to ensure that **all languages spoken in Europe** (national, regional, minority and migrant languages) are seen as assets that need to be supported, promoted, and protected.
- As an **NGO**, we function independently of the European Commission, but we are enrolled in its Transparency Registry.

## ECSPM MISSION & MOTTO

- Our mission is to disseminate research and practices based on the view that multilingualism is an asset for European economic, social, and cultural development, as well as a facilitator for intellectual growth, social, and personal development. Our motto coincides with that of the EU “**MULTILINGUALISM IS THE LANGUAGE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**”

## ECSPM'S CONCERNS

- We research and take action to promote:
  - Individual multilingualism
  - Social multilingualism
  - Institutional multilingualism

## CONCEPTS AND VIEWS UNDERLYING ECSPM'S WORK

- ECSPM recognises the importance of the notion of **multilingualism**, understanding that languages (like German, French, Portuguese, Greek and Chinese) are real entities which co-exist, parallel to one another in societies, communities and among individuals. But ECSPM also appreciates the notion of **plurilingualism** – the view of languages as being interconnected with one another, as being potential resources of communication, i.e., resources that may be heterogeneous and varied in nature.

## ECSPM'S ACTIONS, PROJECTS, EVENTS

- Participation & creation
  - We have participated in the European Education Summits on an annual basis to understand, discuss and recommend multilingualism policy priorities proposed by the European Commission.
  - In 2018 we inaugurated the **Cluster of University Research Units for Multilingualism (CURUM)** and have since been expanding the first such alliance in Europe. The CURUM is a communal space for research, the results of which can contribute to the development of a European Education Area by 2025, taking forward the European Council's mandate, comprised of proposals including the improvement of the teaching/learning of languages to ensure Europeans' multilingual

habitus and awareness raising regarding Europe's shared linguistic and cultural heritage.

- ECSPM is a member of the Professional Network Forum (PNF) of the Council of Europe's European Centre of Modern Languages (ECML) which meets once a year at ECML's headquarters in Graz to exchange information with the other PNF partners, to support the work of and provide counsel to ECML concerning its activities.
- We have become members of the **Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA)**, consenting to the Agreement on reforming research assessment – a venture supported by the European University Association, Science Europe, and by more than 700 organisations from over 50 countries.

### ECSPM'S PROJECTS

- We have been one of the partner institutions of the European Language Equality (ELE) project, which involved the development of a strategic agenda and roadmap to develop full digital language equality in Europe by 2030.
- ELE research findings show that there are still significant language barriers that hamper communication and the free flow of information across the EU. Multilingualism is a key cultural cornerstone of Europe and signifies what it means to be and to feel European. Many studies and resolutions, as noted in the recent European Parliament resolution "Language equality in the digital age", have found a striking imbalance in terms of support through language technologies and issue a call to action.
- Connection with the European Language Grid (ELG), which constitutes **one** Platform for all European Language Technologies, a platform with tools and services and various other language resources.
- We are members of CoARA Multilingualism Work Group, along with representatives of 28 European universities, organisations and associations concerned with making multilingualism a positive indicator for the assessment of scientific research and publications, teaching and learning in universities
- We were involved in the MUDExI project which involved a *Case Study on Linguistic Mediation in Higher Education*.
- We provided support to the ECML 2020-2022 project on "Mediation in Teaching and Assessment".

### ECSPM'S POLITICAL ACTION

- We participated in the event of the European Parliament Interest Group of the Life-Long Learning Platform, organized to discuss "Skills for Life, Skills for the Future" with Members of the European Parliament, representatives of the European Commission and the European Council
- We have prepared the "**Declaration for Multilingualism in HE**". The text is on our webpage in 26 languages, and it has been uploaded in English on the "change.org" platform as a petition to make HEIs multilingual spaces. On our front page on [ecspm.org](http://ecspm.org) you will find a banner with a link to the Declaration page and a link to [change.org](http://change.org).

### ECSPM EVENTS

- **2017 ECSPM Symposium "BEYOND LANGUAGE BARRIERS"** hosted by the Hellenic Open University, in Greece, it addressed the following themes a) the

social, aesthetic and linguistic literacies for the creative participation in European societies of displaced populations and people in adversity; b) the role of translation, technology and linguistic resources for the safeguarding of multilingualism in Europe.

- **2018** ECSPM Symposium “PARADIGM SHIFT IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION” was hosted by the Technical University of Darmstadt, in Germany, where we met to discuss how we can best change not only the way languages are taught and learnt in formal educational settings, by resorting to a new language didactics paradigm, but also the way that language teachers are trained at universities and professional development centres.
- **2019** The ECSPM Symposium “*MEDIATING CHALLENGES: Mediating images, languages & language pedagogy*” hosted by the University of Reading, in England, focused on mediation as a critical aspect of communication in multilingual and multicultural educational settings, and as a crucial competence involving vision, creativity and language skills.
- **2020** The ECSPM Symposium “LINGUISTIC & CULTURAL (SUPER)DIVERSITY AT WORK” hosted by the University of Tilburg, in the Netherlands, dealt with the role of technology, digital resources and practices for multilingualism, and with concerns regarding linguistic justice, support for minority and regional languages, as well as speakers’ linguistic rights. Multilingual policy in education was also one of the symposium focal points – hence the keynote presentation and the lively panel discussion on the issue.
- Annual symposia 2021-2023
- **2021** ECSPM Symposium “MULTILINGUALISM IN HIGHER EDUCATION (HE)” hosted by the University of Konstanz, in Germany, and the European Reform University Alliance (ERUA), focused on the role of English in HE, linked to the internationalisation and commercialisation of European universities.
- **2022** ECSPM Symposium “LANGUAGE(S) AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE IN EUROPEAN HE” hosted by the University for Foreigners in Siena, Italy, focused on explicit and implicit policies of HE institutions, as well as multilingualism, academic literacies and the linguistic construction of academic knowledge in European universities.
- **2023** ECSPM Symposium “THE SOCIAL ROLE OF HE: Developing the civil society’s awareness and impacting policies on the role of multilingualism in education” hosted by the University of Strasbourg, France and supported by the Education Department of the Council of Europe, focused on HE as producer of knowledge, and its important role in democratic societies through increasing access to quality education for all, raising awareness about issues of social importance, helping transform societies for sustainable development through technology transfer and practical application of knowledge and ideas, and engaging with the community at local and transnational levels in pursuit of human and social development.



- **2024** ECSPM Seminar & Workshop: “MULTILINGUALISM IN RESEARCH AND ASSESSMENT IN HEIs” hosted by the Centre for Multilingualism, University of Konstanz, Germany in collaboration with the CoARA Multilingualism Work Group (WG) members was held on 4-5 April 2024, bringing together scholars working on language studies and multilingualism, academics and researchers from other fields of study, as well as technology and publishing professionals to discuss issues related to the generation of valid and reliable criteria for the assessment of multi-/plurilingual teaching, research, and academic publishing.
- **2024** ECSPM Symposium: “PLURILANGUAGING IN MULTILINGUAL EDUCATIONAL SPACES” hosted by the University of Ghent, Belgium, 22-23 May 2024, aimed to investigate tolerance of the construction of language reality and knowledge in hybrid linguistic and discursive formations – a concern that stems from the shift of attention from linguistic fixity to linguistic fluidity, and the fervent preoccupation in recent years with translanguaging and plurilingual pedagogical approaches.

# Mediation as a means to interactive learning in multilingual educational spaces

Bessie Dendrinós

## Introduction

When the notion of cross-linguistic mediation was introduced by the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* (CEFR) published by the Council of Europe in 2001, it was disregarded by the international foreign language community, mainly because of the monolingual paradigm which was still dominant in foreign language teaching, but also because the notion had not been described with scaled can-do statements as other activities like reading, listening, speaking and writing had.

Only Germany and Greece adopted the notion of linguistic mediation as a curricular element at that time. In 2003, the former, i.e. Germany, included cross-linguistic mediation in its national standards and its federal foreign language curricula, while the same year Greece included both cross-linguistic and intra-linguistic mediation test-tasks in its high-stakes national foreign language exams, known by the acronym KPG.

Today, cross-linguistic but also intra-linguistic mediation is attracting considerable attention due to its inclusion with detailed scaled descriptors in the *CEFR Companion Volume* (CEFR CV) – the final version of which was published by the Council of Europe in 2020. Defined in a similar manner, as it had been by the KPG exams, foreign language professionals in Europe and beyond are considering how best to include it in their teaching and assessment programmes.

However, as I argue in my book, *Mediation as Negotiation of Meanings, Plurilingualism and Language Education* (Routledge 2024), mediation is not only an object of study or a learning-element to deal with in foreign language classes. It is a valuable social practice that we all engage in, with an intuitively developed ability we can improve with experience and proper guidance. To provide such guidance, we need sociolinguistic and ethnographic data about why and how people mediate across and within the same language, in different social contexts, as they interact with others. Yet, such data are lacking, and the deficit is what led me to the decision to carry out a Case Study whose aim was to investigate university students' intra-linguistic and cross-linguistic mediation practices, so as to find out the ways in which they mediate, what kind of mediation actions they perform and, when they mediate, how they make use of their plurilingual competence.

The opportunity was provided through a project, entitled “Dynamic multi-/plurilingualism as a basis for excellence in inclusive higher education” (its acronym being MUDEXI), funded by AUF (L'Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie). The project was carried out by a consortium of the following institutions: Babeş Bolyai University (Romania), Ngaoundéré University (Cameroon), University of São Paulo (Brazil), Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski (Bulgaria) and the University of Strasbourg (France), which led and coordinated this project, as well as the European Civil Society Platform for Multilingualism (ECSPM) that was responsible for Action 2 of the project, entitled “Case study on linguistic mediation in higher education”.

This project, in which I took part as the ECSPM representative, and directed its Action 2, had recently been completed and the purpose of my talk was to present the rationale and results of this study. It is to be noted that in this Case Study two more academic institutions participated, as members of the ECSPM; that is, L'Università per Stranieri di Siena (UNISTRASI) and the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA).

### **Case Study of linguistic mediation in higher education rationale**

Knowing that social agents mediate differently in diverse social contexts, since mediation is a socially situated communicative practice, this Case Study attempted to investigate a particular social group's mediation practices, given the critical need to fill the gap resulting from the lack of data from ethnographic and sociolinguistic studies which allow language professionals to understand linguistic mediation practices in different situational contexts. Research, specifically, into how university students mediate intra-linguistically (within the same language) and cross-linguistically (across different languages) has not been investigated before and it seemed important to understand their practices, especially in their academic setting. It was essential to know the reason for and the impact of university students' mediation practices with their peers and the result in cooperative and collaborative learning.

The Case Study was carried out in two phases. During Phase 1, a survey was conducted through an online questionnaire to (a) establish the *multilingual profile* of a sample of 291 students from eight different academic institutions from Europe, South America and Africa, and (b) discover what *type of mediation tasks* they perform for what communicative and educational purpose, on which occasions, how they perform them and what is required of them to be able to do so efficiently. During Phase 2 of the Case Study, a smaller sample of those who participated in the survey-questionnaire took part in the Case Study. A select group of university students, acting as junior researchers, were asked to perform intra-linguistic and cross-linguistic mediation tasks with their peers, in the context of their university studies, and to prepare Verbal Protocols for each mediation instance they were involved in, so as to provide information regarding the type of task they performed, in which situational context, how they performed it, and what was required of them to do so efficiently.

### **Findings of the Case Study**

The findings from Phase 1 of the Case Study have been described in detail in the extensive *MUDEXI-November 2023 Report*, which was a project deliverable. To summarise, it is important to point out that respondents from the project's partner institutions provided information about the languages they speak, where and how they use them, and the mediation tasks they perform with their family, friends, community members and their university peers. One of the most interesting findings to be recorded here is that the sample population of 291 university students speaks more than 50 languages. However, about 70% of them identify themselves as monolingual and about 30% identify themselves as bilingual. The languages they speak at home or in their community are not necessarily the same as the main language of the country in which they live, and the mediation tasks they perform with family, friends and community members are different from those they perform with their peers in the academic context. Finally, it is interesting to note that there are some significant differences between how students from different countries and universities manage their linguistic repertoire. Use of their linguistic and other semiotic resources seems to

largely depend on whether students are studying at a university whose official language is the same as the country/ community in which they live, or the official language of their institution is the same as the official language of the country/community/home they live in. It also depends on whether they are international or home students and on whether they are students of language(s) or in other areas of study.

The findings from Phase 2 of MUDExI-Action 2 are described in detail in the January 2024 MUDExI Report which was also a project deliverable. It involved 15 university students acting as junior researchers from the Universities of Strasbourg, Babes Bolyai University, National & Kapodistrian University of Athens and of the University for Foreigners of Siena, who produced 114 Verbal Protocols giving detailed accounts (in either English or French) of the intra-linguistic and cross-linguistic mediation instances in which they were involved. What became clear from this phase of the action is that linguistic mediation mobilised students to use their linguistic repertoire in their academic context, to become aware of the social meaning of their practices and to use their mediation practices for peer learning exchange of knowledge production and transmission.

Analysis of the data collected revealed the ways in which this particular social group performs mediation tasks, and how they linked (pluri)language meanings with the different languages that they know, the languages they use at university – not only the official language of the university but also languages they are learning as part of their studies and languages they use with their peers for their work and socialising in the academic context. They do not use these languages separately but mix them in communication, as they are involved in genuine translanguaging practices with the various languages they have in their repertoires.

All in all, this Case Study unveiled interesting results, specifically that:

- The mediation tasks that university students perform:
  - are collaborative, concerted and involve two-way communication;
  - are meant to help and learn from one another;
  - provide occasions for pluri-language speaking.
- University students are involved in translanguaging practices: when they mediate, they do not use their resources in their repertoire separately; they mix them with one another.
- Mediation performance between university students rarely involves either just intra-linguistic or just cross-linguistic mediation; it usually involves both.
- In order to participate successfully in communicative events involving mediation practices, students need to resort to the linguistic and cultural awareness they have and in accessing this awareness they develop it further.
- University students' mediation tasks are not speaker-centred or unidirectional (as the descriptors in the CEFRCV). They are bi-directional and engage all the interactants involved.

The results are considered useful because they confirmed that mediation is a socially situated communicative practice and, thus, that the mediation tasks performed by university students are very different from those enacted in other social contexts (eg. volunteers assisting immigrants and refugees in social services, children of immigrant families helping their parents participate in the social life of their host country, or by lawyers for their clients or doctors with their patients).

Furthermore, the results may be of use to those interested in enriching the scaled descriptors of the CEFRCV which are not the result of research into how people mediate in different social domains but de-contextualised inventions.

Contextualised descriptors of mediation are likely to provide:

- standards which are more relevant to learners in different educational systems that aim at the development of their ability to mediate effectively;
- criteria for the training of professional and volunteer mediators facilitating cross-lingual communication in various local and international social environments.

A significant implication of this study is the consideration of the usefulness of students' cross-linguistic and intra-linguistic mediation practices for peer learning in higher education (as well as other levels of education), with learning outcomes, such as the following:

- Teamwork in a (multilingual) learning community
- Critical enquiry, reflection and plurilingual exchange
- Managing and (re)constructing knowledge
- Managing plurilingual learning and how to learn

It would be interesting to replicate such a Case Study with lower-level education students communicating with their peers in school.

## **End note:**

About the plenary speaker:

Bessie Dendrinou is Professor Emerita at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA), Director of the Research Centre for Language Teaching and Assessment (RCeL), and Head of the Scientific Committee of the Centre of Excellence for Multilingualism and Language Policy (CEM) at the NKUA. Since 2003, she is President of the Examination Board of the Greek national foreign languages examination suite (known as KPG). Her research interests lie in foreign language pedagogy, curriculum and materials development, plurilingual competence and intra-/cross-linguistic mediation, language testing and assessment. Yet, her keen interest in socially accountable applied linguistics has also led her to investigate the bureaucratic discourse in Greek public documents, as well as linguistically construed gender ideology and the linguistic representations of poverty and of ecology. She publishes in English and Greek, but some of her publications have also appeared in Spanish, Portuguese and French. The *Hegemony of English* (Routledge), co-authored with D. Macedo and P. Gounari received the 2004 American Educational Studies Association Critics' Choice Award in the USA, and was later translated in Portuguese, Spanish and Greek. She has been President of the ECSPM (<https://ecspm.org/>) since 2014 and instigator of the ECSPM-CURUM.

# **Integrating Virtual Exchange for Global Competence in English Language Teaching**

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The globe is gradually moving towards more interconnectedness. The coming generation should know how to solve major global problems which are, in almost all cases, intercultural and multi-disciplinary, and secure themselves a job in an environment that is more diverse and globalized. Education exchange and study abroad programmes are effective practices to get the youth out into this world. This, in turn, develops the inclination and ability to negotiate various cultures and communicate and work together with people from different cultures. However, just about 1% of young individuals rise to the challenge international programmes offer. The solution is Virtual Exchange which permits every youth to get into enhanced global intercultural education and be involved in international interactions across a wider range.

Within the framework of Virtual Exchange (VE), students of different educational institutions work together in virtual space on interactive assignments, exchanging thoughts or ideas or co-creating a product and its presentation. Virtual Exchange can take place throughout the whole semester or contribute only to specific elements of a course. Virtual Exchange activity should always be acknowledged by both institutions that grant learning credits or are a part of other activities that contribute to learning credits (O'Dowd, 2023; Helm, 2018).

VE goes further than just the theoretical materials by laying the foundations for students to integrate authentic language skills as part of real-life situations. Working on collaborative assignments enhances not only a student's language proficiency, but also creates a sense of world citizenship. When VE assists students in erasing initial fears of communicating in a foreign language, language barriers are eliminated and communication skills flourish within a safe and engaging environment. Intercultural interactions through VE allow for developing communication, collaboration, empathy, language ability, and problem-solving skills in addition to building practical workplace competencies. Apart from boosting motivation and self-esteem, participants also create a global friendships' network. In addition, it is an economical and scalable method, which meets the needs of diverse participants who may have been deprived of opportunities for global exposure.

## **Communicative approach framing for VE**

Considering the fact that the Communicative Approach (CA) is a core theme of various publications that researched and described VE, we decided to focus on the aspects of CA, associated with VE. The foundation of VE in language education is built upon communication. A relationship extends between VE and CA as seen in many scholarly texts (Bueno-Alastuey, Kleban, 2016; Chun, 2015). We should

acknowledge how this methodology has affected the field of language education for the last fifty years as well as influencing the development of VE in language learning and instruction. It is true that the Communicative Approach is a somewhat rather ambiguous and polysemous issue, which also involves ongoing debates but at the same time it is still one of the most popular frameworks in the EU for designing language materials, planning language classes, examinations, teacher training, and course curriculum (Helm, Acconcia, 2019). However, VE distinguishes itself from other types of CA teaching by its central focus on interactions between language teachers and students in different geographic areas which need to be designed with the help of more than one teacher through carefully designed tasks and activities.

The Communicative Approach is a comprehensive framework facilitating the VE programme that unveils the process of developing and implementing the language learning process. As researched by educators Dooly and Vinagre (2021), through the Communication Approach, the school will also include assessing the effectiveness of the language learning process. It refers to the progression of inter-social fluency that includes functional communication, sociolinguistic aspects, grammatical aspects and discourse skills as well as strategic competencies. The methods of this strategy involve the use of language as authentic as possible and at the same time acceptable, which means that it reflects the way the real language is used. One fundamental element of the Communicative Approach is the idea that both fluency and accuracy should be viewed as symbiotic instead of conflicting. This point reveals that the tasks used for education should also be similar to the communication activities that happen in real life and, this puts more priority on activities that the learners will use even beyond the classroom. Besides that, the Communicative Approach has the potential to foster independent language learners that could be a major factor in their success in a journey of acquiring new knowledge. This requires an enormous transformation of the traditional classroom, with teachers more likely to act as facilitators and students being actively involved in their own learning in an interactive setting. Within the communicative method, cooperative and collaborative learning situations are the ones that stand out; providing students with vibrant interactions with others and the possibilities of giving and receiving in their mother tongue. One of the ways in which students become proficient in a foreign language during collaborative work is in solving problems, developing teamwork abilities and interpersonal skills.

### **Global competence development through VE**

Evidently, VE can facilitate global skills development through the linking of classrooms across borders, which introduces global and intercultural competencies, and offers learners the possibility of taking part in real-life situations. The groups within this exchange are working to analyse obstacles and advantages at the individual, institutional and interactional levels, developing 21st-century skills such as intercultural communication, collaborative problem-solving, and teamwork. It is resonant that virtual exchange is incorporated into formal education to prepare students with the necessary skills in a globalising world (Bruun, 2018).

In fact, virtual exchange is one of the most important technologies to enable global competence development as it gives students a way to experience the diversity of viewpoints. Global competency, according to the research results, is a set of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours that a person needs to possess in order

to be successful and to actively contribute to a global community that is highly connected, diverse, and rapidly changing. It is all about the application of critical thinking, problem-solving, cultural sensitivity, and empathy, as well as the recognition of the need for continuous learning and keeping an eye on what is going on around us. In the modern world, where people are highly interconnected, global competency must be developed for students to prosper and contribute positively to their local and international communities. Education at large is a significant factor in providing the environment where they can explore these critical 21st-century competencies and attitudes.

VE students have a chance to interact with other people from various backgrounds. This leads to a better understanding of global issues and other viewpoints. Such practices not only develop students' communication skills but also builds their cultural tolerance, which are the very things that make a good global citizen (Lin, 2021). Furthermore, virtual exchanges sharpen analytical skills and the ability to tackle issues through active dialogue concerning problems that might arise. The dialogues that happen within these exchanges develop intercultural competence, which leads to appreciating and respecting cultural differences as well as building skills in conflict resolution and diplomacy.

Ultimately, virtual exchanges are about the process of building global awareness and participation which are critical requirements for most people to be effectively engaged in today's world. Virtual exchanges would allow students to acquire the skills and the right mindset for them to be successful not only in the local community but also in the global community which is now interconnected and diverse.

### **Case Studies and Success Stories**

#### **1. European Youth Goals: Awareness Campaign (University of Leon, Spain & Igor Sikorsky KPI, Ukraine).**

##### **Outcomes:**

##### ***Language Competence:***

A realistic situation boosts confidence in speaking a foreign language.

##### ***Global Competence:***

Building awareness in the event of international issues and challenges.

The skills of critical thinking and innovative problem-solving are developed through exposure to different perspectives.

The cultural understanding of the interrelation of cultures is enhanced.

##### ***Intercultural Competence:***

Communication skills in communication with people of other cultures developed to a high level Individually, participants learn to be more sensitive and more respectful towards each other.

Lower cultural discrimination and prejudice.

Deepened understanding of empathy.

Understanding of diverse viewpoints.



## **2. COIL Sustainability Project (UNCW, USA & Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute, Ukraine).**

### **Outcomes:**

#### ***Language Competence:***

Develop grammar and vocabulary skills by navigating language differences.  
Adapt their communication style to express themselves in multicultural settings.

#### ***Global Competence:***

Include an emphasis on intercultural interactions and understanding.  
Encourage active student learning and teamwork.

#### ***Intercultural Competence:***

Significant intercultural experience within the course of study.

## **3. Ibunka (Yokohama National University, Japan & Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute, Ukraine).**

### **Outcomes:**

#### ***Language Competence:***

Confident use of grammar and precise vocabulary choice.  
Mastering formal and informal styles.  
Proofreading and editing skills development.

#### ***Global Competence:***

Understanding cultural values and traditions.  
Global perspective and awareness of issues.  
Mastering conflict resolution strategies.

#### ***Intercultural Competence:***

Sensitivity to cultural differences.  
Clarity and conciseness in international writing communication.

### **Conclusions**

Having performed seven VE programs, we can conclude that VE provides youth with the opportunity to develop global competencies by giving them the possibility to communicate across borders, learn through meaningful activities, build their communicative abilities in other languages, guarantee themselves a high degree of autonomy and empowerment and become more responsive and socially engaged, motivated, and attentive to the aftermath of trauma where it occurs. Such encounters satisfy a student's desire to be part of the global audience. Therefore, the foreign language class does not remain a standalone entity but rather a part of life with direct applications. Virtual learning programs create optimal conditions that result in continued motivation during the most trying times. Underlying it, we claim that virtual exchanges serve as a tool for students to embark on their journey of becoming global citizens who are knowledgeable enough to cope with the challenges of the connected

world and who are compassionate, ethnically tolerant, and empathetic to other people's perspectives.

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# Teaching Tips

**Nick Michelioudakis**

As well as his ICC Conference plenary speech (See page 49) Nick writes and publishes unexpected but exciting ideas on teaching, focusing on attitudes and activities language teachers can use in their own lives and in the classroom. In this issue we include two very entertaining and practical articles by Nick.

**Article 1: A Gamification Tweak**

**Article 2: Why Not Just Take Something Away?**

More to come in future ICC Journals.

# A GAMIFICATION TWEAK [INTERMITTENT REWARDS II]

[Psychology for Educators]

As the saying goes: 'If it works, don't fix it!'. Imagine you have a game you have used countless times in class. It's a very simple vocabulary revision quiz. You divide your class into two (or more) groups and then you read out the clues: 'What do you call someone who is always on time?' The first person to raise their hand and answer correctly scores two points for the group. It's simple, it's easy and it's great fun. Why change anything?



Now consider the following study (Shen et al., 2015). Researchers organised an auction in which people could bid for a lot which contained five chocolate coins. On average, the bidding went up to \$1.25. They then organised another auction in which people could bid for a lot which contained either three or five chocolate coins (but the number was unknown). Incredibly, this time the average bid went up to \$1.89!! OK – let me say this again: people were

prepared to pay *more* for *less* (on average, the mystery lot contained four chocolate coins). Why?? The answer is that people were prepared to pay a certain amount for the choccies (slang for chocolates) *plus some more* for the uncertainty! When it comes to rewards, uncertainty is motivating! 😊

Consider a second study – one that involves students (Ozcelik et al., 2013). The latter were involved in a concept-learning game (gamification!). There were two conditions: in the first one, every correct response won a set number of points; in the second, the participants did not know how many points they had won – every time they got the right answer, the researcher rolled the dice and the points awarded depended on the number that came up! What did the researchers find? You guessed it: students spent more time in the game and they were more accurate too. Fantastic! But what about us teachers? Do we make use of what the researchers have discovered? Of course not. '...only a few teaching games involve uncertain rewards, and, perhaps as a result, games are often no more effective than standard teaching programs.' (Wood 2019 – p. 125)

The take-away here is obvious. Take a leaf out of the researchers' book: whenever you are playing a game with your class, don't just award the same number of points for each correct answer. Just roll the dice (you don't even need to have one – just click here: <https://freeonlinedice.com/>). Quite apart from the excitement generated by the uncertainty, there is also the added advantage that even if a team happens to be weaker or way behind in points, they are still in with a chance because, well – dice are dice!



There is one last, more general point I want to make. Remember the original game? Yes, it is good and yes, it will work again next time – even in the simple form. But why not tweak it? Why not make it better? Here is the big take-away: '(Even) If it works – fix it!!' 😊

[Read: W. Wood 'Good Habits – Bad Habits' – pp. 124-125]

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# WHY NOT JUST TAKE SOMETHING AWAY?

[Psychology for Educators]

Some years ago, Leidy Klotz, an engineer and behavioural expert, was playing with his son using Lego bricks. They had made a bridge, but it wasn't level as one of the columns supporting it was shorter than the other. Klotz turned around to find a brick to add to it, but by the time he turned back, his son (aged 2.5) had simply removed a brick from the longer column. Problem solved.

That set Klotz thinking. Why hadn't he thought of that? Could it be that humans have a built-in propensity to 'complexify'? Along with some colleagues, Klotz decided to test this.

One of the experiments involved a Lego structure with a little figure standing under a ceiling precariously supported by a single brick. The subjects had to make the ceiling



solid enough so that a standard brick could be placed on top of it without the whole thing collapsing. As the researchers had suspected, most people (59%) tended to add extra bricks instead of simply removing the one brick that made the structure unstable. This tendency was revealed again and again across eight different experiments (Adams et al., 2021).

Adam Alter (2023 – p. 128) summarises the findings succinctly: 'For whatever reason, people are more likely to add to or complicate a situation before they even consider subtracting from or simplifying it.' Watch this fascinating 6-

minute video: <http://tinyurl.com/9zpy9sk6> .

So, is there a moral for educators here? Yes, there is: consider simplification first. Here are three examples:

- You have a lesson on grammar, but you cannot find an activity to go with the last use of the Past Simple. Why not just remove it?
- You are writing an essay, you have five ideas on a topic, but if you develop all of them fully, you will go over the word limit. Why not scrap one or two of the ideas?
- You have a good intermediate group, but one of the students is weak and you find it hard to keep adjusting your activities. Why not move the student to another group?

There are countless possible applications of the same principle, but the basic idea is the same: before complexifying, think about taking something away.

I have to say, when watching the video my favourite example was the one with the kid and the bicycle. How do you help little ones learn to ride on two wheels? You add training wheels, right? Wrong. In fact, a much better idea is to simply remove the pedals! That means less wobbling, so the child can master the basic skill of balancing before learning to ride properly. Brilliant! Now watch that video again.



[Read: Adam Alter 'Anatomy of a Breakthrough' – pp. 128-129]

[Read: Adams, G., Converse, B., Hales, A. & Klotz, L. (2021). *People systematically overlook subtractive changes*. *Nature*. 592. 258-261. 10.1038/s41586-021-03380-y.]



# ICC Journal



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