

Volume 8 (1)

Spring Issue 2026

ISSN 2747-9862

ICC Journal is
indexed on EBSCO

ICC Journal



CONTENTS

From the Editors Barry Tomalin and Ridha Mejri	5
CONFERENCES	8
Conference Report: 33rd Annual Conference of ICC - The International Language Association <i>Zürich, Switzerland, 8–10 May 2026</i>	
Ridha Mejri	
EUROLTA Update Tatjana Kovac	11
KEYNOTE ARTICLE 1	13
A small case study exploring Leadership Practice in a Chinese Complementary School in England through Kempster’s Leadership Development Framework.	
Dr Sharon E. R. McIlroy	
KEYNOTE ARTICLE 2	40
Adult English-Language Learning and Teaching in Multicultural Contexts: Respectful, Impactful and Enjoyable*.	
Rolade Berthier, PhD.	
KEYNOTE ARTICLE 3	47
Language for Employment from Task-Based Needs Analysis to Curriculum Development: Integrating Employability Literacy into Greek Language Courses for Adult Refugees and Migrants	
Georgia Mouzakiti	
KEYNOTE ARTICLE 4	70
From Feedback to Fluency: Why Speaking Activities Often Fail – and What Teachers Can Do About It	
Barnaby Griffiths	
KEYNOTE ARTICLE 5	78
Haycraft Memorial Day at International House London: Family and Friends Reunite to Honour Brita and John Haycraft, founders of International House. Maurice Cassidy, Dominique Vouillemin and George Pickering with poetry from Caroline Turner	

KEYNOTE ARTICLE 6 **86**

**Learning Maltese for Work and Professional
Integration in Malta** **Jacqueline Żammit**

TEACHING TIPS **126**

Nick Michelioudakis

TEACHING TIP 1 Rhyming works!

TEACHING TIP 2 Some lessons are more important than others.

FROM THE EDITORS

Barry Tomalin

Ridha Mejri

Hello and welcome everybody to the first issue of our ICC Journal in 2026. As always, we focus on your experiences and ideas in language teaching, linguistic understanding and intercultural teaching and business training and also provide an opportunity to present your academic research in the way you like it.

2026 has seen changes in our board of directors with great appreciation of the work of Myriam Callus and Tatjana Kovac over the last three years and welcome to our new leaders and In addition, as you see, the ICC Journal now has two editors, Barry Tomalin and Ridha Mejri.

In May 2026 ICC Languages held its annual conference in Zurich in Switzerland and Ridha summarises it on Page 8.

A key change in the organisation and delivery of EUROLTA, ICC Languages' leading teacher trainer certificate is discussed by Tanja Kovac on Page 11.

In the first of our Keynote articles on Page 13 Dr. Sharon McIlroy assesses the practice of leadership in a CSS (Chinese Complementary School) in the UK using the Kempster Leadership Development Framework on how to analyse leadership and its practice. Choosing a heritage school she examines how leadership in education can help the successful integration of foreign students (in this case Chinese) in a foreign (in this case, British) environment.

In Keynote Article 2 on Page 40 Rolade Berthier explores how to make the learning and teaching of English to adults, 'respectful, Impactful and enjoyable' in a multicultural environment.

Focusing on the teaching of Greek in her article on Page 70 (Keynote article 3) Georgia Mouzakiti explains how to ensure task-based needs are included in teaching syllabi to integrate employability literacy into courses.

Our Keynote Article 4 offers a really useful analysis of why speaking activities in the language classroom often fail and what you can do to make them succeed. Barnaby Griffiths' essay explains why failures occur and offers practical approaches teachers can use to get positive results and help their students achieve success as conversationalists.

In our Keynote Article 5 on page 78, Maurice Cassidy and Dominique Vouillemin, former teachers at one of the world's leading language teaching centres and George Pickering an international teacher and trainer celebrate the memory of IH founders, John and Brita Haycraft, and their contribution to language teaching and learning. You can also enjoy a poem written by Caroline Turner, Director of Operations at IH London today.

A new direction for us, ICC Journal would be delighted to publish our members' memories of the teaching organisations they have belonged to and their contribution to the teaching of languages and intercultural communication. Would the hosts of our 2026 annual conference, ICC Languages, Switzerland, Flying Teachers like to start?

Our Keynote Article 6 on page 86 by Jacqueline Zammit examines the problems faced in teaching languages in Malta and how to deal with the relationship between learning Maltese for work and how it affects professional integration.

Finally, as always, Nick Michelioudakis offers two useful and thought-provoking teaching tips on page 126. First is the value of rhyming in

Rhyming Works and second in explaining how and why some lessons are more important than others.

As always, we'd be delighted to hear from you and to publish your ideas and your experiences in our Autumn 2026 issue. Our focus as always is on the practical experience of studying the languages and intercultural styles of communities around the world and our roles as language, linguistics and intercultural teachers. Feel free to send anything you'd like to publish to us at barrytomalin@aol.com or mejri@hs-worms.de. We'll look forward to reading it and publishing it.

Many thanks to our authors. Enjoy this issue and sit back, relax and enjoy the summer. See you in September!

Conference Report: 33rd Annual Conference of ICC - The International Language Association

Zürich, Switzerland, 8–10 May 2026

Ridha Mejri

The 33rd Annual Conference of ICC - the International Language Association took place in Zürich, Switzerland, from 8 to 10 May 2026. Organised in collaboration with Flying Teachers, an institutional ICC member and the primary sponsor of the event, the conference was held under the theme "Multilingualism and Migrant Integration in Adult Language Education: Practices, Challenges and Opportunities." More than one hundred participants from across the globe convened at the Landesmuseum Zürich - the Swiss National Museum - a setting whose historical distinction complemented the gravity of the themes under discussion. Switzerland's own four-language landscape provided a particularly apposite backdrop for an event dedicated to multilingualism and integration.

The opening address was delivered by Regula Mader, Vice Director of the Swiss State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), who articulated the indissoluble link between migration policy, language provision and social integration. The keynote was given by Professor Terry Lamb of the University of Westminster and President of FIPLV, who examined the transformation of language education in Europe and affirmed the central role of language educators in sustaining democratic participation. Professor Christiane Hohenstein of ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences delivered the plenary address, offering a nuanced account of inclusive multilingual education for adults in German-speaking

Switzerland, with specific attention to diglossia and its intersection with migrant multilingualism.

The two-day programme featured talks, workshops and panels across four thematic areas: inclusion and integration; innovation, teacher development and policy; intercultural communication and mediation; and adult learning in multilingual contexts. Contributions from researchers and practitioners representing Ukraine, Pakistan, Malta, Romania, Greece, Germany, Italy and beyond reflected the breadth and diversity of the ICC network.

Two panel discussions generated particularly rich debate. The first, "Migrant Integration and Employability," moderated by Michael Carrier, brought together Matilde Grünhage-Monetti, Ivan Al-Azm, Ian McMaster and Ridha Mejri to examine the relationship between language proficiency and labour market access, and to consider how adult language education might better serve migrants and refugees entering the workforce. The second panel, "Multilingualism and Adult Language Education," moderated by Thomas Tinnefeld, featured Diana Ibarra Santa Cruz, Maria-Elena Gomez-Parra, Terry Lamb and Kurt Kohn in a cross-national discussion of inclusive pedagogical approaches and the realities of diverse adult classrooms.

Both panels crystallised a conviction that ran throughout the conference: language education is not a purely technical matter but an instrument of social cohesion, democratic engagement and individual agency. The ICC reflects with pride on an event that strengthened international professional exchange and charted new directions for the future of the field. Sincere thanks are due to all speakers, panellists, the

co-organiser Flying Teachers, and the many delegates who contributed to its success.

EUROLTA UPDATE

Tatjana Kovac

Director of Studies, St. Nicolas School, 11000 Belgrade

EUROLTA continues to evolve in response to the changing needs of language teachers. This year marked the successful completion of the first updated online EUROLTA course, bringing together an international group of language teachers from different educational and cultural backgrounds. The diversity of the participants once again highlighted one of EUROLTA's greatest strengths: providing a collaborative learning environment in which teachers exchange ideas, reflect on their practice, and learn from one another.

The updated programme has been redesigned to offer a more streamlined and focused learning experience. The course now consists of six modules instead of eight, making it more concise while maintaining its strong emphasis on reflective, learner-centred teaching. A significant addition is a dedicated module on digital teaching and learning, which explores the effective use of educational technology and the growing role of artificial intelligence in language education. The revised programme equips teachers with practical strategies for integrating digital tools into their teaching while critically evaluating their pedagogical value.

EUROLTA is also extending its international impact through a new teacher education initiative in Pakistan. In cooperation with Flying Teachers, ICC is delivering a 16-week online EUROLTA programme for current and aspiring German language trainers as part of a project supported by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), in partnership with the Higher Education

Commission (HEC), National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE) and the National Vocational & Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC).

The initiative aims to strengthen the quality of German language teaching by developing a sustainable pool of qualified trainers, promoting learner-centred methodologies, digital competence, and inclusive educational practices.

These developments reflect ICC's ongoing commitment to ensuring that EUROLTA remains a relevant, forward-looking qualification that responds to the evolving realities of language teaching while supporting teachers and institutions across an increasingly international community.

KEYNOTE ARTICLE 1

A small case study exploring Leadership Practice in a Chinese Complementary School in England through Kempter's Leadership Development Framework.

Dr Sharon E. R. McIlroy

Rationale for this article.

This short case study adopts a focused, in-depth approach to examining the experiences and practices of a single heritage language school leader in the UK. Heritage schools often operate at the intersection of community initiative, educational policy, and cultural preservation, placing particular demands on leaders that are not fully captured in mainstream educational research. By focusing on a single individual, this study aims to explore the complex interplay among personal biography, leadership strategies, and the sociocultural context in which the school is embedded. Such an approach allows for a rich, contextualised understanding of how leadership is enacted in practice, including decision-making, community engagement, and responses to challenges such as resource constraints or shifting linguistic priorities. While not intended to be generalisable, the case provides a meaningful, illustrative example that can illuminate wider themes in heritage language education and contribute to theorising leadership in complementary schooling contexts. It is also important to recognise that in some international contexts heritage or weekend schools benefit from greater institutional support, reflecting a stronger recognition of the value of intercultural communicative competence fostered through such provision, a competence that is equally vital for sustaining cultural diversity in British society and for shaping the outlook of a multicultural British youth.

By illustrating how heritage schools contribute to cultural diversity and student inclusion, the study calls for policies that integrate complementary schooling into national discussions on multilingualism, social cohesion, equity in education, training and support for certification. Even as a single case, the study provides an evidence-based narrative offering a compelling, human-centred account that policymakers can draw on to complement quantitative data, helping to shape more

Case Study Introduction

The purpose of this small-scale qualitative study was to explore the practice of a head teacher in a Chinese Complementary School (CCS). I aimed to examine and analyse the results of my research against qualitative work on leadership practice and, through a life-story approach, to identify whether pertinent theories remain robust, could evolve, or be extended in such a diverse educational leadership setting. This was in response to Kempster's (2006, p. 10) observation of the need for greater 'in-depth contextually based examination' and specifically focused on the influence of life events and notable people on the head teacher's career trajectory. I considered that this study would be of interest to those exploring heritage school leadership in other countries.

Complementary and/or supplementary schools, often referred to as Heritage language schools in England, provide educational provision to support the linguistic and cultural heritage of minority ethnic groups. Such schools have existed since the 1960s (Li, 2006) but remain on the periphery of mainstream education and state-funded institutions. Heritage language schools mainly operate on a part-time basis, enabling and consolidating state school learning, and research indicates they make a valuable and necessary contribution to the well-being and

development of their pupils' educational, cultural, and identity formation (Francis et al., 2010; Nwulu, 2015).

The total number of such schools in the UK in 2015 was estimated to fall between 3000 and 5000 (Evans & Thomas, 2015). However, in the specific case of Chinese schools over the last two decades, there has been a rapid expansion of the UK Chinese population, leading to greater demand for educational support for Chinese families and their children (Wang, 2014).

The UK Federation of Chinese Schools (UKFCS) (<http://ukfcs.info/sc/>) and the UK Association for the Promotion of Chinese Education (UKAPCE) (<http://www.ukapce.org.uk/>) report that there are over 200 registered Chinese complementary schools, which include Chinese supplementary schools, Chinese community schools, Chinese weekend schools, Chinese schools and Chinese Saturday schools, which I will continue to refer to as Chinese complementary schools (CCS). The meagre research carried out in CCSs has included community language teaching, teacher training and development, language acquisition and ethnic identity. Leading and managing such schools is distinctively challenging; however, little is known about CCS headships and their leadership practice (Thorpe, 2011).

Whilst this study offers insight into only one individual's subjective experiences, the aim was to capture, in rich detail, the often tacit, informal, or experiential underlying influences of learning leadership practice (Kempster, 2009), which are often apparent only on or after reflection (Day, 2000) and to provide a case study of one such educational leader.

The main research questions address professional identity and the impact of notable people and major events or situations on the career trajectory of this CCS head teacher. The literature review, methodology, results and analysis will also be discussed.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The concept of leadership.

Leadership research has resulted in a myriad of views and training programs to teach it. Many theories have emerged explaining various conceptualised traits, qualities and abilities, but there has been a failure to identify a universal set of characteristics. The resulting literature offers many recipes for making a successful or effective leader; by comparison, less attention has been paid to leadership practice or to the factors that influence effective leadership, particularly in education (Day, 2000; Bush, 2009). Kempster (2009) noted that rather than look to what a successful leader is, attention should turn instead to what successful leaders do and how leadership is learned. To capture the nature of leadership practice, researchers need to look into the life story of what has led to the making of a leader and how they have learned to lead (Kempster, 2009).

Each leader's story is individual and, as such, does not lend itself to comparison with a prior theoretical framework (Turner & Mavin, 2008). By offering a timeline for one CCS leader, I aimed to capture the process of becoming a leader by examining how influential people and events shaped this leader's career trajectory and decisions.

This study responded to a call for more research into leadership practice (Day, 2000) and how it is learned, specifically in diverse educational contexts and, in this case, the charitable sector.

2.2 Complementary school leadership.

Complementary schools or heritage language schools make significant contributions to the educational support and development of their pupils. Research shows that, while schools are rooted in the community, they are often overlooked in discussions concerning educational development in Britain (Maylor, 2010; Mau et al., 2009).

Despite these facts, the majority of complementary school leaders take up their positions voluntarily, often receiving little or no remuneration. (Evans & Gillian-Thomas, 2015; Li, 2006). Leadership is fraught with challenges, ranging from financial constraints to a lack of classroom premises. The schools exist only because they receive small grants from community members, while also experiencing (if existent) fragile relations with mainstream schools and a lack of interest and support from governmental educational departments. (Nwulu, 2015; Ramalingam & Griffith, 2015; Evans & Gillian-Thomas, 2015) The stability and development of these schools are hampered by a lack of resources, even though they have been established by migrant or minority groups endeavouring to teach language, culture and religion to consolidate state school education (Thorpe, 2018). Research carried out to date on the leadership and management of these schools in England has uncovered a range of challenges, often specific to each school. It has been shown that while rooted in the community, they are often overlooked in discussions concerning educational development in Britain (Maylor et al., 2010; Mau et al., 2009)

Prior research had tended to focus on pupils, staff, and the language and cultural needs of the wider communities they represent, rather than on head teachers themselves and their specific underlying motivations and life stories (Maylor et al., 2010). I aimed to identify the life situations

that initially led to the role and to establish under what circumstances these had changed or developed throughout the course of the participant's leadership role. In doing so, I endeavoured to identify what the personal experiences or life stories of such a leader include to establish how this head teacher has learnt to lead. Many such leaders may not have taken up their leadership roles through a conventional educational route (Thorpe, 2018). Their identities, particularly their professional identities, may have undergone considerable change depending on individualistic socialisation experiences (Johnson, 2004). Their personal biographies help reveal notable people who have influenced and shaped their professional identity, and lead to an understanding of their leadership practice.

There is a consensus that leadership practice and development are influenced by hardship, notable people, and contextual learning or line experience (McCall, Lombardo, & Morrison, 1988). Bandura's (1997) social learning theory combines observed, modelled contextual behaviour with the innate thinking, experiences, and emotions of those within a specific context or environment to bring about learning. Leadership learning behaviour and identity, then, is a product or process of later applying or modelling what has been learnt through observation and social interaction. Although this is social cognitive theory that looks to understand the cognitive processes involved, it relates to Lave and Wenger's (1991) social learning theory of situated learning and communities of practice (COPs).

Learning here is a contextual social process of 'legitimate peripheral participation' through which social interaction and collaboration are essential components of those who participate in groups or COPs engaged in a collective learning process. As a result, beginners learn

through collaboration, interaction, and engagement, progressing toward becoming experts while passing on their experiential knowledge to newcomers, thus building identity and self-efficacy through increased recognition of their enactment (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

2.3 Kempster's framework

These lenses are incorporated by Kempster (2009) into a framework (Figure 1.1) for analysis of leadership development and learning. Central to Kempster's (2009) work is the notion that leadership development and practice are a contextual process through which leaders accumulate tacit, informal knowledge, and that their practice and how they have learnt to lead are inextricably bound.

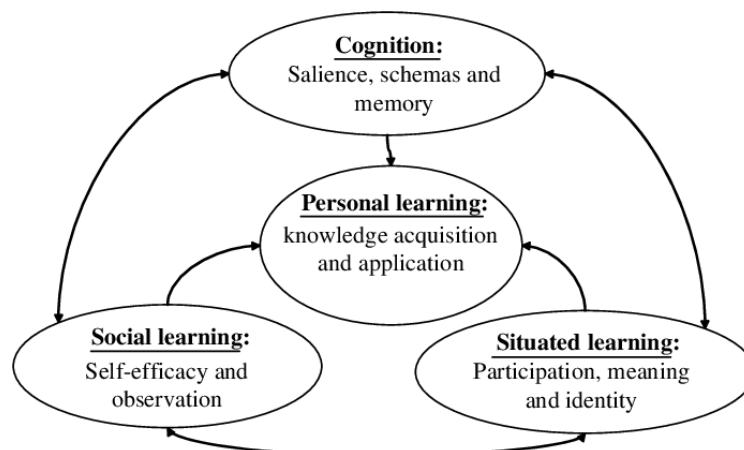


Figure 1 Kempster's Framework

In applying a social theoretical perspective to leadership learning and practice to analysis, Kempster (2009) brings together Bandura's (1997) social cognitive learning theory (including self-efficacy and observation) and Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory, encapsulating participation, shared meaning and identity. These two socio-theoretical elements are integrated with cognition, building and exerting influence

on an individual's personal learning. The specific aspects of cognition in Kempster's (2009) framework centre on how knowledge is constructed, or how schemas are individually created to make sense of or interpret lived events. When leadership is salient, top-down approaches help a leader interpret events by applying conceptualised data or information from previous experience to the situational context, thereby constructing perception through cognition (Walsh, 1995). Bottom-up approaches are applied when perception directs cognition, leading to actions such as behaviour and decision-making, and are markedly related to short-term memory, as such processing is instantaneous (Walsh, 1995). Both top-down and bottom-up processes are linked to long-term and short-term memory, respectively. While memory is selective or related to what we wish to remember and relate in a life story (Shamir, B., & Eilam, G., 2005), in this framework, it is mostly related to procedural memory or 'savoir-faire' and most often lies below the levels of conscious awareness and as such is elusive (Walsh, 1995). Kempster (2006) refers to this as a 'process of apprenticeship' through which tacit knowledge is built. Yet, it is often difficult to capture, describe, or relate, as learning, identity, and leadership development are never static and are ever-evolving. Furthermore, at the core of Kempster's (2009) framework lies personal learning pertaining to Kolb's theory (Kolb, 1984 as cited in Vince, 1994) of learning through stages of experience; a transformational process through which experiencing and critically reflecting on social situated interaction result in knowledge growth that can then be applied. While each element feeds from and into the other, it is clear that there will be overlapping phenomena that relate to more than one element. Leadership development and learning would thus be achieved as an ongoing evolving process in context through social

exchanges, events, and interaction with appropriate communities (Kempster, 2009).

However, Kempster further develops his framework, intent on capturing in greater detail the powerful subtleties operating at a deeper level. Here, he makes a cogent case of how context (social and situated learning, cognition and personal learning as shown in Figure 1) or what he terms 'interrelational influences' are intermingled with a helix of identity, salience and self-efficacy. These self-perpetuating 'intra relational influences', create even greater momentum and offer a clearer understanding of the driving force propelling leadership practice and development throughout the context (Kempster, 2009). I intended to investigate the extent to which the lenses thus defined could be applied in this case of CCS leadership practice.

3. Methodology and Methods

3.1 Paradigm Rationale

As the paradigm lays the foundation for the methodology (Bryman, 2016), I adopted a qualitative interpretivist approach to allow for a subjective understanding of social phenomena rather than explanation. Thus, the aim was to capture the perceptions and subjective understandings of social beings in their world (Ernest, 1994). It requires in-depth fieldwork for the researcher to uncover how specific knowledge is constructed through social interaction, particularly socially constructed learning, such as leadership (Kempster, 2009). Life stories allow for exploration and disclosure of lived experience and influences, thus enabling in-depth insight into self-perceptions and individual experience. Furthermore, the life story reveals identity and self-concept through the stories selected and disclosed (Bruner, 1986) and beliefs in their own and others' leadership (Shamir & Eilam, 2005).

The participant was asked to compile and reflect on a lifeline that identified influential people, major events, and/or turning points. This supported my exploration of the participant's unique lived experiences and leadership practice. This approach is grounded in personal perceptions and experiences and requires naturalistic methods, such as interviews and observations, to capture participants' interpretations of the world around them.

3.2 Contextual background to the case study

'Languages for the future' (British Council Report, 2017) has identified Mandarin Chinese as one of the top five languages for the UK's prosperity following Brexit, and yet only two per cent of eighteen-to thirty-four-year-olds can hold a basic conversation in Mandarin. Global connections are needed for international trading power and depend on communication language skills, which are requisite if we are to avoid losing out both culturally and economically. (British Council, 2017) China is now a major global economic leader.

Against this background, over the last two decades, there has been a rapid expansion of the UK Chinese population, leading to greater demand for educational support for Chinese families and their children (Wang, 2014).

CCS schools offer a social meeting place for Chinese in Britain and thus play an important role in shaping and fostering British Chinese ethnic identity (Creese et al., 2006; Li & Zhu, 2010). This is of vital importance as it has been recognised that the mainstream educational system has failed to meet the needs of ethnic minority children. Support is offered for English proficiency, but for ethnic minority children and their communities' language, customs and culture, there has been no provision. (Li, 2006, p.76). Furthermore, complementary schools face

significant financial challenges and exist only because they receive small grants from community members, while also experiencing (if any) fragile relations with mainstream schools and a lack of interest and support from government educational departments. Insight into the influences and choice to lead such a school is compelling. The decision to take up such a role calls into question the nature and values of such a leader.

3.3 Data collection

I conducted a transcribed interview online via Teams (a communication platform) after my participant returned from China late. This was to my advantage, as I was able to replay the interview many times, capturing not only the voice and words but also paralinguistic features. I employed a semi-structured interview technique with prepared questions and a timeline provided in advance, but allowed the interviewee the opportunity to relate how her leadership had evolved. This interview included a 'life history approach' (Turner & Mavin, 2008, p. 382) to provide structure and facilitate recognition of significant people and events. I continually reminded myself not to be influenced by what I had reviewed regarding leadership practice; however, my participant was incredibly forthcoming, and while I recognised it was not necessary to intervene, I would have had little opportunity to do so. I watched and listened iteratively during and after transcription before applying transcription codes of meaning. Access to the data was available at any time during the data collection process and afterwards if required.

3.4 Data analysis.

I adopted an iterative thematic analysis approach, grounded in grounded theory, to systematically identify and analyse recurring patterns and themes within the research questions and resulting data (Braun & Clark, 2006).

To gain deeper insight into the unseen, underlying influences of leadership development and practice, I repeatedly returned to the transcript after applying a sense-making process (Turner & Marvin, 2008), condensed it into a written side commentary. I formulated 'sense making' codes (Turner & Marvin, 2008: p. 382) shown in Appendix VI and VII, followed by the lenses of both inter and intra relationships in a further side column (shown in Appendix VIII). Therein it was apparent that both inter and intra relational influences were not only interwoven, but they were also inseparable, the one perpetuating the other.

3.5 Validity and Reliability.

Validity and reliability must be considered in any research; however, while reliability is more precisely understood and demonstrated through replication of similar methodologies within positivist epistemology (Bryman, 2016), it can also be shown through focused attention to the conceptualisation, data collection, analysis, and interpretation. In this way, when the study's results are consistent with the analysed data, reliability is demonstrated (Merriam, 2009).

Validity concerns the accuracy of measurement and asks whether the research measures successfully what it set out to measure. In qualitative research, the researcher may be guided by a predominant theoretical framework but must remain flexible in analysing the data gathered. The direction may be familiar, but until details are gathered, the path may not be well-lit (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Therefore, in this study, careful consideration has been given to the design, research procedures, data collection and analysis to ensure rigour and transparency. Furthermore, to minimise bias and its implicated preconceptions, beliefs and personal experiences, I have

avoided leading questions and have encouraged fidelity and integrity in the responses offered.

3.6 Ethical considerations

I complied by adhering to the following:

The participant had the right to withdraw at any stage and had been informed of this choice from the outset. I ensured confidentiality by securely storing all data, including participant responses and other personally disclosed information. The participant's name remained concealed by a code in all records. All transcribed audio-recorded interviews were deleted from the recording device. The transcription, consent form, and any other related personal information were stored in a locked office cabinet, and any electronically stored information was password-protected and accessible only to the researcher. The participant, henceforth referred to as Lyn (pseudonym), was given consent forms to read and sign prior to any data or related information being collected, along with an information sheet explaining the purpose of the research and why she had been selected as a participant. Lyn had also been given a copy of the ethical approval form and assured that all data would remain confidential and anonymous. I explained the arrangements for storage, retention, and disposal to Lyn and provided a standard statement outlining the ethical review process.

4. Analysis, Results and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

On analysis, the application of Kempster's helix, combined with numerous instances of social context, is clearly evident in Lyn's practice. Her life story contains many social milieus, most often self-precipitated,

which I will primarily discuss before showing the individual subtleties of leadership psyche that Kempster also endeavoured to capture.

4.2 Inter-personal Influences: Notable people and events

Lyn's leadership process began in 2001, when 'John' (pseudonym), along with Dr XXX, approached her to propose establishing a Chinese school. She refers to John as '*devoted and committed*' and is inspired by his efforts to establish a Chinese community after securing lottery funding; they were able to proceed under Dr XXX's leadership. When Dr XXX left one year later, Lyn took over, propelled by the '*salience*' (Kempster, 2009) of the Chinese family community desire to learn the language and culture and John as the primary notable person who impacted her unfolding leadership:

.so, when I took over from Dr XXX as a head teacher I was very passionate about it. Basically, I think, you know, these children, they want to learn the language and their parents want this too, so, I actually put a lot of effort, and worked closely with JOHN.

I have used a verbatim transcription of the interview with Lyn, meaning that her responses are recorded exactly as spoken and may therefore occasionally differ from Standard English. Verbatim transcription is widely regarded as essential for maintaining the integrity of qualitative analysis and the accurate interpretation of verbal data.

Souza & Arthur (2020) note that social interactions between leaders and teachers in CCSs facilitate collaboration, the sharing of experience and knowledge, and the negotiation of roles and power. Many of those who become head teachers, as in Lyn's case, have themselves taught in the schools they now lead or had previously very different careers (Thorpe, 2011).

The unfolding narrative had less focus on individual notable people. Instead, Lyn presented a succession of situations and/or contexts, or COPs, that offered numerous instances of social interaction, social and situated learning, and ultimate role enactment throughout Lyn's leadership progression. It was very clear that Kempster's framework was exemplified throughout Lyn's practice and was evident in her timeline (Appendix IX). What is striking is that Lyn very purposefully sought out these interactions, often venturing into what could be considered as unknown and arduous territory. Her more formal contexts included school committees, school governor positions and associations such as UK FCS: a voluntary organisation for community Chinese Schools in the UK, from which she gained applicable knowledge:

I'd like to say that group, actually, I think their operation, the, their precision operation way was very professional because the majority of them, came from NOT MAINLAND CHINA REMOVED, eh actually brought a lot of democracy, eh, eh, system into this group. For example, a new election and we had a general meeting, have meeting minutes, actually, I learnt from them the community work, so have a meeting and have meeting minutes, and have a vote. Have an election and so on. And I was elected as a committee member.

Social sharing and collaborative learning were exemplified along with Lave & Wenger's (1991) situated learning (applied in Kempster's framework), in which learning occurs best when embedded in authentic situations where the activity, belief, behaviour, or culture to be learned is taking place. Lyn proactively looked for opportunities to collaborate, often motivated by economic need, but once bonds were established, she furthered her leadership learning of state school management:

...So, this was an excellent opportunity for us, I think at the time probably we are the only one (CCS). You work in this way, linking bonds with a main school...

And also, I volunteered to be a school governor, as a community governor and which gave me some inside knowledge about how a state school is run and also, I worked on the discipline committee. So, I got the chance to go to school to attend these meetings that were to do with inspiring naughty children.

And...

But five months working in this HIGH SCHOOL NAME REMOVED school actually made me, you know, understand state school management.

As presented above, skills or knowledge were gained through experiences and the consequences of using observed or previously acquired behaviour or skills, and from seeing the positive consequences of one's own and others' behaviour (Bandura, 1997). This results in leadership enactment and self-efficacy through personal judgment and recognition of one's success in applying or enacting the new knowledge or skills (Bandura, 1997), evidenced below early in Lyn's leadership:

I remember in the interview and the head said to me, tell me, how do you think you can fit into a state school? You don't have experience, but I think I said no, actually, I think I may not have teaching experience, but I have transferable skills. For example, I was the principal project engineer, a project manager in ENGINEERING COMPANY NAME REMOVED, I worked with a large team and these management skills actually, I think are transferable...

Collaboration also plays an important role, often through a community of practice or a group engaged in a collective learning process (Souza & Arthur, 2020). This form of social learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991), again exemplified in the framework, is clearly evident even when, after a location change, Lyn found herself without a position and joined a local community centre group:

And I learnt accountancy then. So, basically, this was very good. I think I enjoyed this because it let me work outside my home and reconnect with people and also, I learnt something from the others,

In reviewing successful leadership in rural schools within the US, Preston et al. (2017) found that effective leadership came about as a result of collaboration: strong interpersonal relationships with community stakeholders, pupils, parents and staff or in other words, collaboration through social capital. This refers to the networks and social bonds built in formal and informal settings, both within and between communities, personal and professional. Within the community group, Lyn formed a contact who then informed her of an advertised post of interest. This resulted in Lyn again securing collaboration with a state school head. Later in Lyn's career, such social learning and collaboration were respected and celebrated:

I'm in my 11th year and, and my deputy head teacher was probably eight years or something, so it's not a problem with one volunteer but its hundreds and hundreds of volunteers, even parents put a lot of effort, so we had a big celebration.

The above extracts quite clearly show how notable people and events had impacted Lyn's leadership development and practice, but specifically point to how committed and proactive Lyn was in accruing

learning through social and situated experiences and contexts. However, to fully comprehend Lyn's leadership practice, it was necessary to investigate beyond context to reveal the personal attributes that make up who she is and, consequently, how she was leading.

4.3 Intrapersonal influences:

When the context offered a learning opportunity that conflicted with Lyn's values and principles, Lyn, immersed in her identity, resigned. This clearly showed the saliency of her leadership and her commitment, along with the nature and depth of her leadership practice:

And I, I, I said, you know, we need to obey this constitution. We said we should, you know, have no benefit, not have a benefit from this, and actually what you want to do is against it, yeah? So, these were some kinds of things then, and I started to feel unhappy about this. So, I just wrote an email, wrote a letter saying I would resign in 2008 because I didn't think that was the things, I wanted to be involved in. The thing is, I want to serve. That sort of organization is not what I wanted, it was against my principles away,

Consequently, it can be understood that Lyn's professional identity and subsequent practice and 'enactment' were inextricably linked to her 'self-efficacy', which was borne of her situational learning and collaboration (Bandura, 1997). It is her constant reinvestment (Wenger, 1998) to gain access to such contexts from which she could extract learning that also shows the 'saliency' she assigned to such opportunities for her development and ultimate practice (Kempster, 2009). These are, however, interwoven in her story as in the extract above (identity and saliency) and again below (saliency and self-efficacy), wherein Lyn set an example by engaging in her own professional development:

. . .because I think you know, quality is more important you know, with high quality you can, eh, attract more people.

And also, I'm thinking as a leader, you need to set a good example. So, from 2011, I studied to learn.. I've got a PhD degree but I'm actually self-taught to teach even in a private school, or state school but thinking in long term I wanted to improve my teaching standard also, that's a good example for my colleagues...

Having re-read the transcript iteratively, it was ungratifyingly clear that a record of people and contexts, or an account of Lyn's 'observed, enacted and situational learning', does not fully capture all that underlies and fuels her motivation and dynamic strategic approach. Kempster's cogent case for processes of observed, enacted and situational learning as 'interpersonal influences' fused with 'intrapersonal relationships' became even more apparent. The Intrapersonal helix consists of identity development, saliency, and self-efficacy permeating observed, situated, and enacted learning experiences in a systemic manner (Kempster, 2009).

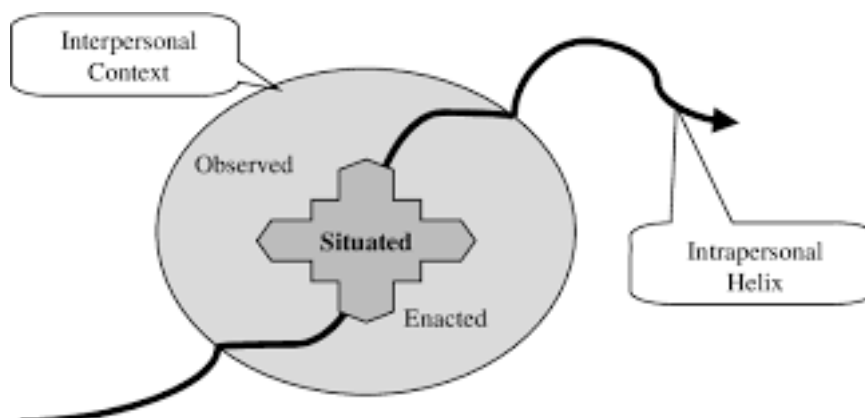


Figure 2 Process of inter- and intra relational influences.

Figure 2 shows a single interpersonal context which is perpetuated by the intrapersonal helix. Leadership, however, is ever-evolving, continuously in flux between the seen and the unseen influences, either sustained or elaborated by the individual leader's initiatives. This suggests that a larger-scale study of multiple leaders could provide insight into the meanings, purposes, values, and identities that heritage leaders may share. It would also be interesting to note if there is commonality within the charitable education sector.

Closer inspection of the analysis of Lyn's intra -relational influences and specifically her leadership identity construction showed her identity was initially embedded in a deeply ingrained vocation and aspiration, primarily to teach from an early age:

I always wanted to be a teacher. When I was young, I just wanted to be a teacher because, I just felt you know, teachers are so cool so, so cool you know because as young children, a young child, you probably feel you know, teachers are like God.

In her family, she notes fifteen teachers, both male and female, in various educational positions, many in leadership or headship roles. Schools are not small in China and such leadership is no easy feat.

In spite of having an uncle who was beaten to death by the Red Guards on account of being a maths teacher, she still wished to pursue a teaching career.

But you probably know, or know as well, during the cultural revolution, teachers were not wanted by the red guards. My Uncle was beaten to death when he was 31.

R: Oh oh dear..

P: He, he was a maths teacher, very young handsome man with a four-year old son, but anyway, so my parents both my parents, said NO! Definitely not go into teaching that is a dangerous career, yeah.

Being offered a post-doctoral teaching position at the same British university where she had completed her PhD would seem to have secured her 'dream job', but numerous family relocations reddiverted her path. Undeterred in new locations, the saliency of her indelible values and identity propelled her into leadership to serve the public and the Chinese community and to foster increased communication and understanding.

I like people to understand China and the Chinese. Because that's the key, understanding (China and the Chinese) is the key to, to, to, to bring the society and the wider community more harmony - more together, because with understanding and then you can... you can communicate. I think there is a lot of social discrimination, which is bad. Yeah, yeah, so I want this to disappear.. So, these two things are important, are my agenda right from the beginning....

In both of the above interview extracts, there is a clear indication of hardship and struggle referred to as '*critical events*' (Luthans & Avolio, 2003, p.247) and defined by Bennis & Thomas (2002, p.39- 40) as '*transformative experiences*' or '*crucibles*' that exert developmental impetus on leadership competence. Both situations show the fundamental values in Lyn's identity that leave her undeterred in her vocation. Hardship, challenge, and resilience recur throughout her leadership, as a lack of funding compels her to seek collaboration with local state schools, ultimately resulting in developmental experiences and, consequently, enactment and self-efficacy. In approaching various

schools, what Lyn terms ‘*ambition*’ to create a ‘*bridge*’ or link illustrates her self-efficacy and the salience she accords to her mission.

The helix of identity, saliency and self-efficacy are inextricably intertwined in her individualistic leadership in the following extract, exemplifying how Lyn empowers and does so voluntarily:

Within Lyn’s leadership helix, there is a resounding sense of purpose that Kempster (2011) recognises as deserving of greater investigation:

The thing is, I want to serve.....

And so, I, I think, you know in complementary, supplementary schools, this leadership is a big thing. If you can't empower people if you don't set the example and it can be from your personal pocket, it could be wrongly done very quickly.

Not only does Lyn conceive her role as salient, but there is also a resonant sense of purpose to strive to achieve something significant for students, teachers and the wider community. The work of MacIntyre (2004) incorporates the Aristotelian notion of ‘*telos*’ as the fulfilment or sense of purpose one gains when motivated to pursue ‘*internal goods*’: mission and accomplishments benefiting the whole community, such as greater communication, the dissolution of social discrimination, understanding, and harmony, all referred to by Lyn. Her leadership role is imbued with responsibility, actuating and self-perpetuating, and exemplary in the values and practices she has pursued with purpose.

5. Conclusion

This small case study set out to examine how notable people and events impacted the career trajectory and subsequent practice of a CCS leader. Through the study, it becomes apparent that, seen through the lens of interpersonal or contextual influences integrated with the intrapersonal

influences or helix identified by Kempster (2009), a lucid, more comprehensive understanding of the development and practice of this one headship can be reached. The intricate, intermingled forces at play in the lived narrative reveal how this leader's identity, compelled by vocation, values, and purpose, and the salience of her mission, propelled her into numerous learning contexts and opportunities for enactment and ultimate self-efficacy. Further exploration of identity and values could also complement our understanding of leadership development in heritage language schools in the UK.

This study answers both a call by Thorpe (2011), who notes that little is known about CCS headships and their practice, and Kempster's (2009) observation of the need for in-depth qualitative leadership research into '*an understanding of the lived experiences of leadership*' (Kempster, 2006, p. 2).

The implications of this study point to training and support for prospective CCS leaders; developing the identification of initiatives within communities to build and/or extend collaboration; support for their schools concerning organisation, training, and funding; and possible measures or ventures to sustain sustainability.

This is only one narrative and indicates the need for inquiry into other complementary and supplementary school leadership contexts, in which I anticipate that further exemplary leadership practice may be identified.

References

- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: Freeman and company. Milano: F. Angeli.
- Bennis, W., & Thomas, R. J. (2002). *Crucibles of leadership*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.

<https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>

British Council. (2017). Retrieved from

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/contact/press/top-languages-uk-needs-most-post-brexit> (accessed 25th June 2020)

Bruner, J. S. (1986). *Actual minds, possible worlds*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social Research Methods* (5th ed). Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press.

Bush, T. (2009). *Theories of Educational Leadership and Management*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, (3rd ed).

Collay, M. (2006). *Discerning professional identity and becoming bold, socially responsible teacher-leaders*. Educational Leadership and Administration: Teaching Program Development California State University.

Creese, A., & Martin, P. (2006). Interaction in complementary school contexts: Developing identities of choice – an introduction. *Language and Education*, 20(1), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500780608668706>

Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice*, 39(3), 124–130. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip3903_2

Day, C. (2000). Effective leadership and reflective practice. *Reflective Practice*, 1(1), 113–127. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713693134>

Ernest, P. (1994). University of Exeter, School of Education, & Research Support Unit. *An introduction to research methodology and paradigms*. Exeter, England: School of Education, University of Exeter.

Evans, D., & Gillan-Thomas, K. (2015). *Supplementary schools research report. Descriptive analysis of Complementary school pupils' characteristics and attainment in seven local authorities in England 2007/8- 2011/12*. London: Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

Francis, B., Archer, L., & Mau, A. (2010). Parents' and teachers' constructions of the purposes of Chinese complementary schooling: 'Culture', identity and power. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 13(1), 101–117.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13613320903550089>

Johnson, A. S. (2004). Recruiting and recognizing multiple socially situated identities: Consonance and contradiction in the pedagogy of a male pre-service early educator. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 5(1), 19–34.

<https://doi.org/10.2304/ciec.2004.5.1.5>

Kempster, S. (2006). Leadership learning through lived experience: A process of apprenticeship? *Journal of Management & Organization*, 12(1), 4–22.

<https://doi.org/10.5172/jmo.2006.12.1.4>

Kempster, S., & Parry, K. W. (2004). The lived Experience as Leadership Development: In *18th Annual Conference of the Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management*.

Kempster, S. (2009). *How managers have learnt to lead*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230234741>

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge [England]: New York: Cambridge University Press.

Li, W. (2006). Complementary schools, past, present and future. *Language and Education*, 20(1), 76–83. <https://doi.org/10.1080/095007806008668711>

Li, W., & Zhu, H. (2010). Changing hierarchies in Chinese language education for the British Chinese Learners. *Teaching and Learning Chinese in Global Contexts: Multimodality and Literacy in the New Media Age: London Continuum*, 11–27.

- Luthans, F., & Avolio, B. J. (2003). Authentic leadership development. *Positive Organizational Scholarship*, 241–258.
- MacIntyre, A. C. (2004). *The unconscious: A conceptual analysis* (Rev. ed). New York: Routledge.
- Marshall, J. (2001). *Self-reflective inquiry practices. Handbook of action research: The concise paperback edition*. London: Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE.
- Mau, A., Francis, B., & Archer, L. (2009). Mapping politics and pedagogy: Understanding the population and practices of Chinese complementary schools in England. *Ethnography and Education*, 4(1), 17–36.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17457820802703473>
- Maylor, U. (2010). Great Britain, Department for Children, S. and F., & London Metropolitan University. *Impact of supplementary schools on pupils' attainment: An investigation into what factors contribute to educational improvements*. Department for Children, Schools and Families. Retrieved from:
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RR210.pdf>
- Merriam, S. B., & Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Nwulu, S. (2015). *Beyond the school gates: Developing the roles and connections of supplementary schools*. Presented at the RSA Action Research Centre.
- Preston, J. P., & Barnes, K. E. (2017). Successful leadership in rural schools: Cultivating collaboration. *Rural Educator*, 38(1), 6–15.
- Ramalingham, V., & Griffith, P. (2015). Saturdays for success: How supplementary education can support pupils from all backgrounds to flourish. Retrieved 9 November 2020, from IPPR website:
<https://www.ippr.org/research/publications/saturdays-for-success>
- Sachs, J. (2001). Teacher professional identity: Competing discourses, competing outcomes. *Journal of Education Policy*, 16(2), 149–161.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930116819>
- Shamir, B., & Eilam, G. (2005). “What’s your story?” A life-stories approach to authentic leadership development. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16(3), 395–417.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.03.005>

- Souza, A., & Arthur, L. (2020). The impact of leadership on the professional development of teachers in complementary schools. *Management in Education*, 34(4), 141–148. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0892020620942509>
- Thorpe, A. (2011). *Leading and managing Chinese complementary schools in England: Leaders' perceptions of school leadership* 6–8. Retrieved from <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/204556.pdf>
- Thorpe, A., Arthur, L., & Souza, A. (2018). Leadership succession as an aspect of organizational sustainability in complementary schools in England. *Leading & Managing*, 24(2), 61-73.
- Turner, J., & Mavin, S. (2008). What can we learn from senior leader narratives? The strutting and fretting of becoming a leader. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 29(4), 376–391. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01437730810876168>
- UK Federation of Chinese Schools: <https://www.ukfcs.info/sc/>
- Vince, R. (1998). Behind and beyond Kolb's learning cycle. *Journal of Management Education*, 22(3), 304–319. <https://doi.org/10.1177/105256299802200304>
- Walsh, J. P. (1995). Managerial and organizational cognition: Notes from a trip down memory lane. *Organization Science*, 6(3), 280–321. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.6.3.280>
- Wang, D. (2014). Profession or passion? Teaching Chinese in London Chinese complementary schools. *London Review of Education*. <https://doi.org/10.18546/LRE.12.1.05>
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

KEYNOTE ARTICLE 2

Adult English Language Learning and Teaching in Multicultural Contexts

Rolade Berthier, PhD

English Language Teacher, DIE and Intercultural Communication Trainer at the EU Court of Justice, National Education Training Institute, and Université Populaire in Luxembourg

PhD (Sociology) Thesis - Ethnicity, Inequality and the Criminal Justice System: A Case Study of the Criminality of Asian Migrants

Master of Social Planning and Development (MSPD) Thesis - BLISS Housing Programme of the Philippines (Case of Bindoy and Makati)

Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Development Education (BSADE) Development Communication major, Cum Laude. Thesis: Content Analysis of the Front Pages of the Philippines Newspapers Published Before and After Martial Law

ABSTRACT

English became the international language of business, travel, and social interaction because of historical, economic, political, and technological factors. International migration and labour globalisation have created a growing demand for adult English language courses, particularly among individuals living and working in countries where they do not speak the local language.

Established pedagogical practices have approaches that help learners develop English language skills applicable to everyday life professionally and socially. Challenges, however, persist in teaching multiculturally-diverse adult learners, and there is a need for inclusive resources, differentiated instruction, and appropriate classroom management style.

Although discussed in the English language context, the principles and practices presented in this paper apply to the teaching and learning of any language.

Key Words: English language learning, English language teaching, Humour in teaching, Responsive and inclusive pedagogy, Task-based learning

INTRODUCTION

In our increasingly interconnected and digitalised world, English language learners come from any or all corners of the Earth. According to the International Labour Organisation, there are an estimated 167.7 million international migrant workers worldwide (ILO, 2024). In 2023, the European Union (EU) had 12.9 million non-EU citizens in its labour force (European Commission, 2026). Multicultural countries like Luxembourg and Switzerland depend on other nations for their workforce; around 60–61% of the former and 33–34% of the latter (Mort, 2025).

In globalised workforce and multicultural societies, English has become the de facto language of business and social interaction. Workers and their families need to learn or improve their English language skills while dealing with new or unfamiliar systems, decoding cultural norms, and rebuilding professional and personal identities. Their learning can be immediate and purposeful, or can be gradual and characterised by detours. These challenges can make teaching demanding, requiring responsive and inclusive pedagogical approaches that recognise the linguistic, cultural, and professional realities of diverse learners.

EXPERIENCE, OBSERVATION, AND RESEARCH

Based on my experience, responsive and inclusive pedagogy in multicultural contexts means respecting individual learners (i.e. building

on what they already know and their existing experiences), being flexible (i.e. adapting to goals, schedules, levels, and circumstances), and fostering an engaging and supportive learning environment.

English language learning happens face-to-face or online in classrooms, workplaces, public spaces, and intercultural interactions. How and wherever it takes place, I have observed that the following teaching strategies support adult learners' English language journey:

I. Communication over perfection = Fluency first, accuracy later.

Language learners never start from zero; they start from effort.

II. Enjoyable = Creating an environment where learners feel relaxed, engaged, and eager to participate, including through storytelling and respectful humour.

Humour, which is not only about telling jokes, should support learning, not distract from it. Who would not smile at this joke discussed in my intermediate class of Belgian bankers –

A very drunk man comes out of the bar and sees another very drunk man. He looks up at the sky and says, "Is that the sun or the moon?" The other drunk man answers, "I don't know. I'm also a stranger here."

Our discussion branched out to dangerous drink driving (with words like breathalyser) and political incorrectness in the use of "stranger" to refer to residents of immigrant backgrounds.

These students' English language skills skyrocketed when the subjects of our discussion were beer and football. They told me there are more than 150 types of beer in their country, and they adore their football team - the Red Devils (French - Les Diables Rouges, Dutch - Rode Duivels).

III. Owning Mistakes = No one wants to make mistakes, yet no one escapes from committing them. Mistakes should be embraced and made as part of the learning process and fun (i.e. Teacher laugh with students; never at them).

“Making and correcting mistakes is an improvement, which is better than faking perfection” (Berthier, 2022).

Based on the work of Berthier (2022), Council of Europe (2020), Ellis (2003), Gilmore (2007), and Richards (2006), responsive and inclusive English language teaching are - and should be - characterised by:

A) Task-based learning (Real-life tasks, e.g. ordering food, job interviews, participating in meetings).

B) Authentic materials (videos, conversations, blogs).

C) Everyday reading and listening skills (Emails and podcasts, work-related materials, news from reputable sources)

D) Clear, effective communication (Purpose is to get the message across and not impress)

E) Words they actually need (Topic-based vocabulary, such as for work, travel, or medical appointment).

F) Applied grammar, not abstract (Accuracy that supports communication)

G) Critical Thinking and Discussion (Expressing opinions and ideas, agreeing and disagreeing politely)

H) Motivation and Engagement (Set clear, short-term goals, e.g. giving a presentation)

I) Differentiation with empathy (mixed learners in the same class/session who have different ethnicities and occupations)

J) Assessment - “Can-do” criteria (Practical and meaningful)

Generally, responsive and inclusive English-language teaching is already practised, benefiting multicultural learners, but teaching professionals and organisations still face the following challenges:

a) Different levels of proficiency - Hard to balance pace and comprehension.

b) Limited participation from less confident speakers – Uneven classroom engagement.

c) Cross-linguistic interference - Persistent errors influenced by first language.

d) Cultural differences in learning styles - Passive vs. active participation expectations, and high and low-context cultures.

e) Identity and confidence issues – Learners’ frustration or reduced self-confidence due to communication difficulties, which are often influenced by linguistic nuances, cultural differences, and stereotypes.

f) Designing materials and assessments – Must be inclusive, balancing fairness and progress.

CONCLUSION

Experience, observation, and research on pedagogical approaches consistently show that responsive and inclusive teaching practices, such as task-based learning, authentic materials, practical literacy skills, applied grammar, and meaningful assessment, enable learners to

develop language skills that are directly relevant to real-life communication in employment, travel, and community contexts.

However, despite widespread implementation of these approaches, significant challenges remain. These include managing mixed proficiency levels, encouraging participation from less confident learners, addressing first-language interference, and responding to cultural differences in learning styles. Issues of identity and confidence also play an important role, as learners may struggle with self-esteem when facing communication barriers shaped by linguistic and cultural factors.

The best adult English language classrooms, either face-to-face or online, are built on empathy, flexibility, fun, inclusivity, patience, and respect.

Adult English language learning and teaching in multilingual contexts have evolved positively; however, there is still potential for further improvements.

REFERENCES

Berthier, R (2022). English Language Lovers – Teaching, Learning, and Conversing in English. Wroclaw, Poland: Amazon Fulfillment.

Council of Europe (2020). CEFR Companion Volume.

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages> Seen on 29/05/2026.

Ellis, R. (2003). Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching. Oxford, UK; New York: Oxford University Press.

European Commission, European Union (2026). Migration and asylum. https://commission.europa.eu/topics/migration-and-asylum_en Seen on 29/05/2026.

Gilmore, A. (2007). Authentic materials and authenticity in foreign language learning. Nottingham University, UK & Kansai Gaidai University, Japan. alexgilmore@mac.com Seen on 20/05/2026.

International Labor Organization (2024). International migrants are vital force in the global labour market.

<https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/international-migrants-are-vital-force-global-labour-market> Seen on 20/05/2026.

Mort, A. (2025). 60.7% of Luxembourg's Workforce was Born Abroad.

<https://luxtoday.lu/en/labor-market/607-of-luxembourgs-workforce-was-born-abroad> Seen 30/05/2026.

Richards, J. C. (2006). Communicative Language Teaching Today.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242720833_Communicative_Language_Teaching_Today Seen on 20/05/2026.

KEYNOTE ARTICLE 3

Language for Employment From Task-Based Needs Analysis to Curriculum Development: Integrating Employability Literacy into Greek Language Courses for Adult Refugees and Migrants

Georgia Mouzakiti

BA in Greek Philology, MA in Teaching Greek as
Second/Foreign Language National and Kapodistrian University
of Athens, Greece

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a task-based needs analysis of the communicative needs of adult refugees seeking employment in Greece, conducted in Athens in 2018, and the resulting syllabus design for teaching Greek as a Second Language (L2). Against the backdrop of a dramatic increase in the number of people learning Greek as a consequence of the Syrian war and broader Middle Eastern socio-political upheaval, this study identifies a significant gap in targeted L2 teaching materials for refugees in employment-related contexts. Drawing on qualitative data gathered through semi-structured interviews with employment counsellors, interpreters/mediators, public servants, teachers, and refugees themselves, combined with non-participant field observation in employment services (DYPA) and authentic discourse samples, the research maps the communicative tasks refugees must perform when navigating the Greek labour market. The analysis identifies five core communicative situations — employment counselling sessions, job interviews with employers, telephone communication, job-seeking practices, and interactions within the **public** employment service —

each comprising a rich inventory of target tasks ranging from self-presentation and skills description to form-filling, appointment-making, and reading job advertisements. Building on Long's (1985, 2015) task-based approach to needs analysis and syllabus design, and anchored in the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001; 2018), the paper proposes a differentiated, topic-centred task-based syllabus for levels A1 through B1 that places communicative agency and learner autonomy at its core.

Keywords: needs analysis, task-based language teaching, Greek as a second language, refugees, employability literacy, syllabus design

1. INTRODUCTION

The recent war in Syria and the broader socio-political instability across the Middle East and Afghanistan have forced hundreds of thousands of people to seek protection in countries where their mother tongue is not spoken. According to OECD data (2016), since 2015 more than half a million people crossed the Mediterranean and entered the broader European area. Among the countries directly affected, Greece has found itself on the front line of this population movement and, at the same time, struggling with one of the highest unemployment rates in the European Union — reaching 20 percent for the general population and approximately 50 percent in the Athens metropolitan area during the period of the study (Eurostat, 2018). Under these conditions, access to the labour market for refugees and migrants has become exceptionally difficult.

There is broad consensus that knowledge of the host community's language is a decisive factor for integration, as it constitutes the minimum prerequisite for political, social, and economic participation (Extramiana, 2012). Language learning for integration is increasingly a

matter of public policy in countries that receive migrants and refugees. In Greece, this historical moment has produced an unprecedented increase in the number of adults who need to learn Greek as a second language (L2), often under very difficult conditions: many remain in reception facilities while awaiting a decision on their asylum application. The heterogeneity of this learner population — in terms of age, educational background, literacy levels, and professional experience — represents one of the greatest challenges for teachers and curriculum designers alike.

Although several language education programmes for migrants have been implemented in Greece in the past, none was grounded in a systematic, empirically-based needs analysis. The only documented exception at the time of writing was the P.R.E.S.S. project (Provision of Refugee Education and Support Scheme), which explicitly prioritised primary research into the communicative, linguistic, and educational needs of refugees in Greece. The absence of targeted instructional material therefore provided the motivation for the present study, whose aim was to identify and analyse the communicative needs of refugees and migrants during job-seeking activities, with the ultimate goal of designing a focused, task-based syllabus within the thematic domain of 'the world of work.'

Three research questions guided the investigation:

- (1) What are the communicative needs of refugees and migrants when seeking employment in Greece?
- (2) What specific communicative tasks must they perform?
- (3) What difficulties do they encounter when performing these tasks?

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Needs Analysis in Language Education

The concept of needs analysis occupies a central place in the field of language curriculum design. Since its systematic emergence in language teaching through the work of the Council of Europe in the 1970s (Richterich, 1973; Wilkins, 1973), needs analysis has been recognised as an indispensable starting point for designing language programmes that genuinely respond to learners' requirements (Munby, 1978; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Brindley, 1989; West, 1994; Long, 2005). The Council of Europe's work — which led to the development of the Threshold Level (Van Ek, 1975) and subsequently the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) — placed communicative needs at the centre of language teaching, shifting the focus from the language system to the language user by the classification of needs into target needs — what learners need to do in the target situation — and learning needs — what they need to do in order to learn. Target needs are further subdivided into necessities (the demands of the target situation), lacks (the gap between current and expected proficiency), and wants (learners' own perceptions of their needs). The present study focuses primarily on target needs: the communicative situations and tasks that refugees encounter when seeking employment in Greece.

(NOTE: A foundational distinction relevant to this study is Hutchinson and Waters' (1987)

The identification of information sources is also a critical methodological decision in needs analysis, since, as Chambers (1980: 26) notes, *'whoever identifies needs largely determines what kinds of needs are identified.'* This study therefore deliberately incorporated multiple, triangulated sources — employment counsellors, interpreters/mediators,

public servants, teachers, and refugees themselves — in order to counteract any ideological bias in the direction of needs identification (Auerbach, 1995) and to increase the validity of the findings (Long, 2005; West, 1994).

2.2 Task-Based Needs Analysis and Syllabus Design

Among the various approaches to needs analysis, this study adopts the task-based framework proposed by Long (1985, 2005, 2015). Within this framework, the unit of analysis is the target task — that is, *'the hundred and one things people do in everyday life: [...] everything people do for themselves, for others, or for pay'* (Long, 1985: 89). By defining tasks in terms of observable actions rather than linguistic forms, the task-based approach provides a more transparent and replicable unit of analysis, one that is compatible with research findings on second language acquisition (SLA) and that allows domain experts to serve as informants about the tasks learners will need to perform.

Task-based syllabus design, as distinct from synthetic (grammar-based, lexical, or functional) syllabus types, takes communicative tasks as its organising principle rather than discrete linguistic items. This means that the starting point is not *'what language do learners need to know?'* but *'what do learners need to do with language?'* As Long (2015) and Lambert (2010) argue, tasks provide goals that unify all other units of analysis — vocabulary, grammar, functions, discourse — and allow learners to use their existing linguistic repertoire rather than waiting to accumulate enough language before communicating. This approach is particularly well-suited to heterogeneous learner populations with different educational backgrounds and literacy profiles, as it does not impose a single programme on all learners.

The proposed syllabus also draws on the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) and its updated Companion Volume (Council of Europe, 2018), which provide a descriptive framework for communicative competence and a rich set of can-do descriptors organised by activity type (reception, production, interaction, mediation) and proficiency level. As recommended in the Companion Volume, descriptors were selected and contextualised on the basis of the identified target tasks, providing a transparent and principled basis for goal-setting across levels A1 to B1. Following the model proposed by Iakovou and Rousoulioti (2015) for Greek as L2, the syllabus combines a task-based and topic-centred organisation, with the topic 'employment' serving as the primary organising principle for all content choices.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

Given that the goal of the study was to describe target tasks in terms of observable actions and interactions, a qualitative methodology was adopted as the most appropriate approach for gathering and documenting information about refugees' linguistic practices during job-seeking. The study was conducted in the Athens metropolitan area and was designed in stages: preliminary fieldwork first identified the key spaces and actors involved in refugee employment-seeking, after which the specific data collection instruments and sampling strategies were determined. Purposive and snowball sampling strategies were employed, depending on the accessibility of each participant group.

3.2 Participants

Five distinct groups of informants participated in the study, reflecting the multiple perspectives needed for a comprehensive needs analysis:

Employment counsellors (n=8) working in Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), a municipal service (City of Athens Job Centre), and two branches of the Greek Public Employment Service (DYPA). These participants were selected as domain experts — professionals who can describe the target tasks, communicative situations, and difficulties that refugees encounter.

Interpreters/cultural mediators (n=5) of Afghan, Iranian, and Egyptian origin with between seven and thirty years of residence in Greece. This group provided a dual perspective: their professional role brings them into direct contact with refugees' communicative needs, and their own long experience as L2 users gives them insider knowledge of both the source and host cultures.

Public servants at the DYPA unemployment registration desks (n=2). These informants described the administrative communicative events that refugees must navigate when registering as job-seekers.

Teachers of Greek as a second language (n=4) working in NGOs that also provide employment counselling services. Their contributions focused on learner profiles and the adequacy of existing teaching materials for the domain.

Refugees and migrants (n=11), including seven recognised refugees (four women, three men aged 19–44) from Afghanistan, Iran, and Syria, interviewed about their personal experiences of job-seeking in Greece.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Three complementary methods were employed to ensure triangulation:

4 Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participant groups, ranging from 25 to 70 minutes in duration.

Preliminary unstructured, exploratory interviews guided the development of the final question guides for each group (Dörnyei, 2007). Interviews were audio-recorded where permission was granted and supplemented by field notes.

Non-participant field observation was carried out at two DYPA branches — in Aigaleo and Omonia — over multiple sessions, totalling approximately ten hours. The observer sat alongside staff at the reception and unemployment registration desks, recording language interactions and documenting the physical and documentary environment. In one case, the researcher accompanied a cultural mediator on a full-day visit spanning tax registration (ΑΦΜ), social insurance registration (ΑΜΚΑ), and unemployment card issuance (DYPA), providing a unique opportunity to observe the full bureaucratic trajectory a newly arrived refugee must navigate.

Authentic discourse samples were collected through audio-recording of oral interactions at the DYPA reception desk (n=49 interactions, of which 24 were fully transcribed) and at the unemployment registration desk in Omonia (n=22 interactions with refugees/migrants). Written and material artefacts — official forms, signage, notices, brochures, and informational materials — were also photographed and analysed as part of the documentary context.

3.4 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis followed a thematic approach adapted to the task-based framework (Long, 2005). In the first stage, communicative situations and events were identified from across the data sources. In the second stage, target tasks within each situation were catalogued on the basis of descriptions by informants and direct observation. In the

third stage, thematic analysis of interview transcripts and field notes was conducted using target tasks as the organising themes, with particular attention to difficulties encountered by refugees and the implications for syllabus design.

4. RESULTS

The analysis identified five primary communicative situations in which refugees and migrants engage when seeking employment in Greece: (1) employment counselling sessions at NGOs and public services; (2) job interviews with employers; (3) telephone communication for appointment-making; (4) general job-seeking practices, including searching job advertisements and interacting with employers; and (5) interactions within the DYPA public employment service. Table 1 below presents the full inventory of target tasks organised by communicative activity type, following the CEFR Companion Volume (Council of Europe, 2018) classification into interaction, reception, and production activities.

Table 1: Target tasks and their classification according to the CEFR Companion Volume (2018)

Interaction	Reception	Production
<i>Spoken & written</i>	<i>Spoken Written</i>	<i>Spoken Written</i>

Interaction	Reception	Production
• Understanding interlocutor • Receiving instructions, advice & directives • Exchanging information	• Listening as member of audience • Participating in seminars • Reading for orientation: official documents, signs, notices	• Extended monologue: describing experience • Self-presentation

• Negotiating employment terms • Receiving services: DYPA reception • Registering as job-seeker (DYPA) • Making telephone appointment with employer • Job interview with employer • Providing case history to counsellor • Email to express interest in a position • Filling in job application (paper/electronic) • Filling in statutory declaration • Subscribing to job ad newsletter	• Reading for information: job ads, position descriptions, guides	• Writing a CV • Writing a covering letter
---	---	---

4.1 Employment Counselling Sessions

Employment counselling emerged as a communicative situation of particular complexity and importance for refugees' integration into the labour market. The situation differs markedly depending on whether it occurs at an NGO — where interpretation is typically available, meaning L2 use is not always required — or at a public institution (the DYPA or municipal services), where Greek is the sole medium of communication.

Within the counselling session, five target tasks were identified: (a) providing case history (educational background, professional experience, language proficiency); (b) describing educational and professional experience; (c) receiving career guidance; (d) receiving advice and proposals on job openings; and (e) reading printed guidance materials. These tasks require the learner to perform all three macro-functions of language simultaneously — interpersonal, transactional, and evaluative — as the session involves exchanging information, co-constructing a plan, and assessing and negotiating specific job proposals.

A key difficulty that emerged across multiple informant groups concerns the description of skills. Employment counsellors working with women refugees with low literacy levels reported that many participants were unfamiliar with the concept of 'skills' as a cognitive schema and were therefore unable to articulate their competencies when asked directly. Counsellors instead resorted to asking about daily routines, hobbies, and leisure activities in order to help participants identify and verbalise their abilities — a finding with direct implications for the design of pedagogical tasks.

Another difficulty relates to the cultural and pragmatic dimensions of the counselling interaction. Several employment counsellors highlighted the issue of time management and appointment-keeping as an area of cultural mismatch, observing that refugees sometimes arrived early, late, or on a different day without notifying the counsellor. This points to the need to include socio-cultural and socio-pragmatic competence goals alongside purely linguistic ones in the syllabus.

4.2 Job Interview with Employer

The job interview was identified by all employment counsellors as a high-stakes communicative event, given that its outcome directly determines whether a refugee secures employment. Preparation for job interviews constitutes a major component of the counselling sessions themselves: counsellors reported engaging in role play with clients and providing printed guides with probable questions and model answers.

Three target tasks were identified within this situation: self-presentation, negotiating employment terms and rights, and engaging in the overall interview interaction. Self- presentation was assessed as particularly important by counsellors, who noted that even an imperfect but willing attempt to communicate in Greek made a strongly positive impression on employers:

“Self-presentation, how you will speak to your employer, how you will win their trust... The language, or even an attempt to speak the language, is highly valued by employers, even if they don't speak Greek very well — if they show willingness, this will automatically give them an advantage over others who go and don't speak at all.”(Employment Counsellor 3)

A major difficulty identified across all informant groups is unfamiliarity with the job interview as a communicative genre. For many participants — particularly women from Afghanistan and Iran — the job interview represents an entirely new communicative experience. As one interpreter (Interpreter 1, from Egypt) explained, in many source countries the interaction with an employer is much more direct and informal: *'You go straight to the employer and say I want a job and I know how to do it — and that's it.'* The mismatch between this expectation and the structured, often multi-stage Western job interview format creates significant communicative difficulty.

Additionally, the data revealed identity negotiation and potential threat-to-face as significant dimensions of the job interview for this population. Counsellors noted that refugees are advised to present certain information strategically — for example, not to mention that they are living in a refugee reception centre, as this may trigger employer prejudice. Gender was also identified as a specific vulnerability: interpreters reported that women wearing a hijab may be questioned about their dress code, and that women may be asked about their spouse or children in ways that expose painful personal situations. As one interpreter observed: *“For women there is the issue that in an interview they will ask some personal things, like about the family, the husband, the children... Can you take it off? The woman considers that an insult.”* (Interpreter 3, Egyptian, 30 years in Greece)

These findings align with Long's (2005) observation that the job interview should not be assumed to be a familiar or culturally accepted communicative event across all cultures, and they underscore the need for pedagogical tasks that build both linguistic and intercultural competence, as well as emotional resilience.

4.3 Telephone Communication and Appointment-Making

Telephone communication was identified as a distinct and particularly challenging communicative situation, given the absence of visual and gestural cues that support comprehension in face-to-face interaction. The primary target task in this domain is making an appointment with an employer by telephone — a task that requires control of specific discourse sequences (opening, stating purpose, proposing and negotiating a time, closing) and a level of fluency and phonological clarity that differs from written or face-to-face interaction.

Both employment counsellors and interpreters emphasised that telephone interaction represents one of the most anxiety-provoking situations for refugees. In many cases, interpreters or counsellors make the initial telephone contact on behalf of refugees, which removes a learning opportunity but reflects the high stakes involved. Pedagogical tasks simulating telephone calls were therefore recommended across all informant groups.

4.4 Interactions within the DYPA

The DYPA (Manpower Employment Organisation) emerged as a central institution in refugees' employment trajectories. Before seeking any employment counselling at the DYPA, refugees must first obtain a tax registration number (AΦM) and a social security number (AMKA) — a process that involves visits to the tax office and welfare services respectively. Only then can they register as unemployed at a DYPA branch and obtain a job-seeker's card, which in turn grants access to employment counselling and training programmes.

Direct observation of the interactions at the DYPA reception and unemployment registration desks revealed a highly routinised communicative situation governed by strict institutional procedures. The language used by staff is typically formal and dense with administrative terminology. Refugees without Greek frequently struggle to understand instructions and to provide the required information on forms. A characteristic finding was that among the 49 interactions recorded at the reception desk of one DYPA branch over two days, only one involved a refugee family — reflecting how rarely this population independently accesses DYPA services without mediation.

The observation session in which the researcher accompanied a cultural mediator and an Afghan asylum-seeker family on a full-day

administrative circuit through the tax office, the welfare registration centre (KEP), and the DYPA branch provided vivid ethnographic data on the complexity of this trajectory. Three hours of sustained navigating of bureaucratic spaces, interacting with multiple staff members, managing queues and waiting rooms, and handling a succession of official documents — all in Greek — illustrated the scale of the communicative challenge involved even when mediation is available, and all the more so without it.

4.5 Job-Seeking Practices: Reading and Responding to Advertisements

A cluster of receptive and productive tasks related to locating and applying for positions was also identified. These include reading job advertisements and position descriptions — found in newspapers, online platforms, and NGO noticeboards — as well as producing a curriculum vitae (CV), a covering letter, and electronic job applications. The ability to read signage and notices at DYPA branches and other public spaces was also identified as a prerequisite for independent navigation of employment-related contexts.

Counsellors noted that the skills required for CVs and covering letters — self-marketing, use of formal register, appropriate level of detail — are unfamiliar to many refugees, particularly those with limited exposure to white-collar job-seeking practices in their countries of origin. The CV in particular was described as a high-priority target task that justifies dedicated instructional attention, given its gatekeeping function in the job application process.

4.6 Assessment of Existing Teaching Materials

In addition to the target situation needs analysis, teachers were asked to evaluate the adequacy of existing Greek-as-L2 teaching materials for the

employment domain. All four teachers agreed that available textbooks do not adequately address the topic of employment for this specific learner population. The materials that do exist tend to be designed for general-purpose language learning rather than for the specific, urgent, and pragmatically complex situations that refugees encounter. This finding reinforces the rationale for the present project and aligns with the broader observation that a systematic, research-based needs analysis is a prerequisite for effective material design.

5. THE PROPOSED SYLLABUS

On the basis of the needs analysis findings, a topic-centred, task-based syllabus was designed for the thematic domain of '*seeking employment*,' addressed to teachers of Greek as L2 working with adult refugees. The syllabus follows the seven-step design process recommended by Long (1985, 2015) and adapted to the Greek L2 context by Iakovou (2015):

(1) Selection of topic; (2) identification of the research field and communicative situations; (3) description of target tasks; (4) analysis of target tasks using CEFR descriptors; (5) mapping of target tasks to general task types and categorisation by communicative activity type; (6) derivation of indicative pedagogical tasks; (7) sequencing and organisation into a coherent syllabus structure.

The syllabus is organised into seven thematic modules, each corresponding to a major communicative situation or set of related tasks identified in the needs analysis:

1. Module 1: Employment Counselling Session
2. Module 2: Employability Texts and Practices
3. Module 3: Searching Job Advertisements

4. Module 4: At the DYPA
5. Module 5: Official Documents and Written Forms
6. Module 6: The Job Interview
7. Module 7: Making Appointments by Telephone

For each module, the syllabus specifies: the communicative situation and target tasks; the communicative activity types involved (using CEFR categories); contextualised CEFR descriptors formulated in terms of observable learner behaviour (*'the learner should be able to...'*); and indicative pedagogical tasks for levels A1, A2, and B1, following the pre-task / task cycle structure proposed by Willis (1996). Descriptors were adapted and, where necessary, newly created to reflect the specific demands of the employment domain for this learner population, in line with the methodological recommendations of the CEFR Companion Volume (Council of Europe, 2018).

A key design principle is the preservation of real-world task conditions in pedagogical tasks. As Long (2015) argues, maintaining the conditions under which target tasks are performed in real life — the interlocutors, the physical and social setting, the time pressure, the communicative purpose — maximises the likelihood that skills developed in the classroom will transfer to the real world. Thus, pedagogical tasks in this syllabus are designed to simulate authentic employment-seeking interactions: role plays of counselling sessions and job interviews, telephone simulations, form-filling exercises based on authentic DYPA documents, and reading activities using actual job advertisements.

The syllabus also incorporates broader educational goals related to learner autonomy and employability literacy. Given the findings on refugees' unfamiliarity with the cognitive schema of 'skills' and with

Western job interview conventions, a number of tasks explicitly target the development of self-awareness, the ability to verbalise competencies, and the socio-cultural knowledge needed to navigate Greek workplace norms. The need for socio-pragmatic and intercultural competence — for example, understanding norms around punctuality, appropriate self-disclosure in formal contexts, and managing identity-threatening questions in job interviews — runs as a thread throughout the syllabus.

6. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study make a contribution at multiple levels. At the empirical level, they provide a systematic, qualitatively grounded mapping of the communicative situations and target tasks that Greek-as-L2 learners with refugee status encounter in employment contexts in Greece. The richness and specificity of the data — derived from five distinct informant groups and supplemented by extended field observation and authentic discourse samples — give the findings a degree of ecological validity that is rarely achieved in needs analyses relying solely on questionnaires or document analysis.

At the theoretical level, the study demonstrates the viability of Long's (1985, 2015) task-based needs analysis framework in a non-Anglophone, non-academic context. The use of target tasks as the unit of analysis proved particularly well-suited to this research context, as it provided a common currency between needs analysis research and syllabus design and allowed domain experts — who are not linguists — to describe the relevant situations in concrete, observable terms.

At the practical level, the proposed syllabus addresses a documented gap in available materials for this learner population. The differentiation by proficiency level (A1–B1) and the explicit incorporation of socio-cultural and socio-pragmatic goals respond directly to the documented

needs and difficulties of the target population. The modular structure allows flexibility for teachers working in different organisational contexts (NGOs, municipal services, DYPA programmes), who may select and sequence modules according to their learners' most pressing needs.

A number of limitations should be acknowledged. The study was conducted exclusively in the Athens metropolitan area, and the findings may not be fully generalisable to other regions of Greece or to different national contexts. The inability to access female interpreters limited the data on gender-specific communicative challenges. The use of Greek or English as the language of the refugee interviews, rather than participants' mother tongues, may have constrained the depth of their contributions. Finally, the materials proposed in the syllabus are indicative and require piloting and iterative revision in actual classroom settings.

Future research could extend this work through a pilot implementation of the syllabus with attention to learner outcomes and teacher feedback, and could explore the specific communicative needs of refugee women in more depth, given the gender-specific challenges documented here. A comparison of needs across different employment sectors — for example, between unskilled manual labour and positions requiring formal qualifications — would also yield valuable insights for differentiated curriculum development.

7. CONCLUSION

This paper has presented a task-based needs analysis of the communicative needs of adult refugees seeking employment in Greece, and the resulting task-based, topic-centred syllabus for teaching Greek as L2. The study identified five core

communicative situations — employment counselling, job interviews, telephone communication, job-seeking practices, and DYPA interactions — and mapped a rich inventory of target tasks within each, noting the specific linguistic and socio-cultural difficulties that refugees encounter. Drawing on Long's (1985, 2015) framework and the CEFR, a seven-module syllabus was proposed that places communicative agency, learner autonomy, and real-world task performance at its centre.

It is important, however, to acknowledge the inherently exploratory and interpretive nature of the present work. As Brown (1995: 78) observes, any attempt to identify needs is a product of the perceptions of those who conduct the analysis, and the translation of those perceptions into aims and then learning objectives inevitably transforms the original reading of the needs themselves. The findings of this study — both the target tasks identified and the difficulties observed — should therefore be understood as indicative rather than exhaustive, calling for more systematically quantified follow-up research. Refugees are not a homogeneous learner population, and targeted needs analyses for specific subgroups, defined by language background, literacy profile, and prior work experience, are needed before task-based syllabuses can be reliably calibrated for different learners.

At a moment when Greece continues to receive and integrate displaced populations from across the Middle East and beyond, the development of targeted, research-based language education materials is not merely an academic exercise but a matter of social urgency. Language, as Extramiana (2012: 5) has argued, is a 'double key for integration': it enables participation in transactions in the target language and, crucially, access to work — and through work, to fuller social membership. Equipping refugees with the specific linguistic tools they need to navigate the Greek labour market is a small but meaningful step toward realising this potential.

REFERENCES

Auerbach, E. (1995). The politics of the ESL classroom: Issues of power in pedagogical choices. In J. Tollefson (Ed.), *Power and inequality in language education* (pp. 9–33). Cambridge University Press.

Brindley, G. (1989). The role of needs analysis in adult ESL programme design. In R. K. Johnson (Ed.), *The second language curriculum* (pp. 63–78). Cambridge University Press.

Brown, J. D. (1995). *The elements of language curriculum: A systematic approach to program development*. Heinle & Heinle.

Chambers, F. (1980). A re-evaluation of needs analysis. *ESP Journal*, 1(1), 25–33.

Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. Cambridge University Press.

Council of Europe. (2018). *Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment. Companion volume with new descriptors*. Council of Europe Publishing.

- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative and mixed methodologies. Oxford University Press.
- Dudley-Evans, T., & St. John, M. J. (1998). Developments in English for specific purposes. Cambridge University Press.
- Eurostat. (2018). Unemployment statistics. European Commission.
- Extramiana, C. (2012). Language education for migrants and refugees. Council of Europe.
- Hutchinson, T., & Waters, A. (1987). English for specific purposes: A learning-centred approach. Cambridge University Press.
- Iakovou, M. (2015). Designing curricula for Greek as a second/foreign language. [Internal working document]. National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.
- Iakovou, M., & Rousoulioti, T. (2015). Topic-centred and task-based syllabus design for Greek as L2. [Conference paper]. Thessaloniki.
- Lambert, C. (2010). A task-based needs analysis: Putting principles into practice. *Language Teaching Research*, 14(1), 99–112.
- Long, M. H. (1985). A role for instruction in second language acquisition: Task-based language teaching. In K. Hyltenstam & M. Pienemann (Eds.), *Modelling and assessing second language acquisition* (pp. 77–99). Multilingual Matters.
- Long, M. H. (2005). *Second language needs analysis*. Cambridge University Press.
- Long, M. H. (2015). *Second language acquisition and task-based language teaching*. Wiley- Blackwell.
- Long, M. H., & Crookes, G. (1992). Three approaches to task-based syllabus design. *TESOL Quarterly*, 26(1), 27–56.
- Munby, J. (1978). *Communicative syllabus design*. Cambridge University Press.
- Nation, I. S. P., & Macalister, J. (2010). *Language curriculum design*. Routledge.
- Nunan, D. (1988). *Syllabus design*. Oxford University Press.
- OECD. (2016). *International migration outlook 2016*. OECD Publishing.

- OECD. (2018). International migration outlook 2018. OECD Publishing.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). Qualitative research and evaluation methods (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Richterich, R. (1973). A model for the definition of adult language needs. In J. Trim, R. Richterich, J. van Ek, & D. Wilkins (Eds.), Systems development in adult language learning (pp. 31–62). Council of Europe.
- Van Ek, J. (1975). The threshold level. Council of Europe.
- Watson-Gegeo, K. A. (1988). Ethnography in ESL: Defining the essentials. *TESOL Quarterly*, 22(4), 575–592.
- West, R. (1994). Needs analysis in language teaching. *Language Teaching*, 27(1), 1–19.
- Wilkins, D. A. (1973). The linguistic and situational content of the common core in a unit/credit system. In J. Trim et al. (Eds.), Systems development in adult language learning (pp. 63–90). Council of Europe.
- Willis, J. (1996). A framework for task-based learning. Longman.

KEYNOTE ARTICLE 4

From Feedback to Fluency: Why Speaking Activities Often Fail and What Teachers Can Do About It

Barnaby Griffiths

Introduction

As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly capable of correcting grammar, suggesting vocabulary and identifying language errors, language teachers may wish to ask a different question:

What aspects of communication remain uniquely human?

This question feels particularly relevant when we consider speaking activities. In many language classrooms, learners spend considerable time discussing questions, exchanging opinions, completing simulations and participating in pair work. Yet both teachers and learners often report a familiar frustration: despite completing the activities, learners' spoken communication improves only slowly.

Part of the answer may lie in the way speaking activities are typically designed and followed up. In many classrooms, success is measured by participation rather than performance. Learners complete the task, but little attention is paid to how effectively they communicated or how they might improve the impact of their message.

This article explores some common reasons why speaking activities fail to produce meaningful progress and offers practical suggestions teachers can implement immediately.

Problem 1: Learners Focus on Activities Rather Than Outcomes

Many speaking tasks focus on completing an activity. For example:

“Discuss these questions with your partner.”

“Talk about your weekend.”

“Debate the advantages and disadvantages of social media.”

The task is clear, but the communicative outcome is often vague.

Learners know what they have to do, but not what they are trying to achieve as communicators.

Compare this with a different focus or aim:

“Learners will be able to convince their classmates that their holiday destination is the best choice.”

Suddenly the focus shifts from speaking to communicating.

The learner now has a purpose. They must think not only about language but also about persuasion, clarity and listener response.

Therefore, before any speaking task, teachers can define the communicative outcome and ensure their learners are aware of this.

This helps transform simple activities into genuine communication tasks. Both teacher and learners will focus on how to truly achieve this aim, and by the end of the class the learners should be better able to convince their audience of their choices.

Problem 2: Learners Are Not Given Time to Rehearse

In many classrooms, learners are expected to perform immediately. A topic is introduced and students are asked to speak.

However, in real-world situations, the most effective communication is rarely spontaneous. Business presentations, job interviews, conference talks and important meetings are usually prepared and rehearsed.

Yet rehearsal remains surprisingly rare in language classrooms.

When learners are given time to plan, organise and rehearse what they want to say, several things happen:

- confidence increases.
- language becomes more accurate.
- delivery improves.
- learners notice gaps in their communication.

Recently, I asked a group of learners to explain a professional process they knew well. After the first attempt, they worked in pairs to improve clarity, organisation and delivery before performing the task again. Although only a few minutes separated the two performances, listeners reported that the second versions were noticeably easier to follow and more convincing. The learners themselves also reported feeling more confident.

One simple technique is therefore to ask learners to perform a short speaking task twice, or even three or four times.

The previous performances act as a rehearsal.

The final performance often reveals progress that would otherwise remain invisible.

Problem 3: Feedback Focuses Only on Language

After a speaking activity, feedback frequently centres on grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation.

These elements are important, but they are only part of successful communication.

Consider two learners.

One makes several grammatical mistakes but clearly explains an idea and successfully persuades a listener.

The other produces almost error-free language but leaves the listener confused about the main message.

From a communicative perspective, I would argue that the first learner has been more successful.

In real life, communication is judged largely by its effect on the listener.

This suggests that speaking feedback should include another dimension.

Communicative Impact Feedback

In my work with Language and Communication Coaching, I use an approach I call *Communicative Impact Feedback*.

The concept emerges from my broader Language and Communication Coaching (LCC) approach, which places communicative outcomes and listener response alongside linguistic development.

Rather than asking only:

"What mistakes did I hear?"

teachers can also ask:

“What impression did the speaker create?”

”What did the listener understand?”

“What was memorable?”

“What made the message convincing?”

“What made it difficult to follow?”

These questions encourage learners to think about communication from the listener's perspective.

A simple procedure is to divide feedback into two stages.

First, in a pair or small group speaking task, ask classmates to give each other positive feedback on the effect the speaker created. For example, they might comment on what was clear, what was convincing, what was memorable or what helped them follow the message.

Then the teacher can focus on elements of communication that could be improved, including pausing, emphatic delivery, tone, clarity, organization and overall control of the message. Useful questions might include:

“Did the message have impact?”

“Did the speaker sound in control?”

“Did the speaker look in control?”

“Was the argument clear?”

“Was the speaker convincing?”

“What would make the message easier to follow?”

After discussing and modelling these aspects of communication, the teacher can move on to language-focused feedback. There will often be overlap between the two stages because language choices also affect clarity, emphasis and impact.

This sequence helps learners connect language choices with communicative outcomes rather than viewing communication simply as a collection of grammar and vocabulary items.

Learners begin to see that successful speaking involves more than producing correct language. It also involves creating understanding, trust, interest and engagement.

Interestingly, this is an area where human teachers continue to have a significant advantage.

Artificial intelligence can increasingly identify language errors and suggest corrections. However, communication is ultimately a human experience. The effect a message has on a listener depends on context, intention, emotion and interpretation.

These remain fundamentally human concerns.

Problem 4: Learners Focus on Producing Language Rather Than Delivering a Message

Many learners approach speaking tasks as language exercises. Their attention is focused primarily on avoiding mistakes. As a result, they may become hesitant, cautious and overly concerned with accuracy. Effective communicators think differently. They focus first on meaning and impact. This does not mean accuracy is unimportant. Rather, accuracy serves communication rather than becoming the goal itself.

Teachers can encourage this shift by occasionally asking learners to evaluate their performance using questions such as:

“Did I make my point clearly?”

“Did my listener understand me?”

“Did I achieve my objective?”

“What could I do differently next time?”

These reflections help learners develop greater awareness of communication as a skill.

Practical Classroom Techniques

The following techniques can be implemented immediately.

1. Define a Communicative Aim

Before the task begins, identify a clear and specific communicative aim.

A communicative aim is the practical outcome learners should be able to achieve with language by the end of the task.

So instead of *“Talk about films”*, use *“Rank the top three films of last year and give reasons for your choices.”*

Instead of *“Discuss travel,”* use *“Plan a three-day city break with a partner, agreeing on the destination, budget and main activities.”*

Instead of *“Talk about work,”* use *“Describe a workplace problem and agree on two possible solutions.”*

2. Include Rehearsal

Allow learners to perform short speaking tasks twice, or even three or four times. Each attempt becomes preparation for the next.

3. Use Communicative Impact Feedback

Before and after speaking tasks, discuss and model:

- clarity
- persuasiveness

- engagement
- overall impact.

before moving on to language-focused feedback.

4. Encourage Reflection

After speaking activities, ask learners what they would change if they had another opportunity to perform the task. This develops self-awareness and learner autonomy.

CONCLUSION

Speaking activities remain one of the most valuable tools available to language teachers. However, simply getting learners to speak does not automatically lead to developing communicative competence.

Progress becomes more visible when speaking tasks focus on outcomes rather than activities, when learners have opportunities to rehearse, and when feedback addresses communicative impact as well as language accuracy. In an era when AI can increasingly identify and correct language errors, teachers may wish to place greater emphasis on an area where human judgement remains essential: helping learners understand not only what they say, but also the effect their message has on other people.

In many ways, this shift requires teachers to see themselves not only as language experts but also as facilitators of communication, or as communication coaches. By helping learners understand the impact of their message, teachers can make spoken progress more visible, more meaningful and more motivating.

Ultimately, successful communication is not measured by correctness alone. It is measured by what happens in the mind of the listener.

KEYNOTE ARTICLE 5

Family and Friends Reunite to Honour Brita and John Haycraft: Haycraft Memorial Day at International House London

Maurice Cassidy, Dominique Vouillemin, George Pickering and Caroline Turner (Poem)

Maurice Cassidy (Director IH London Executive Centre 2000 – 2018)

In the very wide world of international language teaching, many will have been touched directly or indirectly by ideas, books or inspiring individuals emanating from International House (IH). This London-based organisation, now with a global affiliation of some 130 schools, recently celebrated the lives of its two founders, John and Brita Haycraft.

The event, held at IH London on 22nd May, brought together many who had been part of the early days of IH, in locations at 40 Shaftesbury Avenue and 106 Piccadilly. These buildings which shaped so many lives and loves – as the speeches that afternoon revealed – also nurtured a wealth of paradigm-changing training methods and publications. All this was ultimately because of the vision of one man and his multilingual Swedish wife who wanted to encourage friendship within and across borders using English.

We heard stories, some new, some familiar, of how John had inspired us. He learnt that Ken Wilson was using a guitar to teach students songs in the classroom, and so with his encouragement the English Teaching Theatre was born, soon to travel the world. This unshakeable belief in the ability of IH teachers to effect change was the hallmark of the Haycrafts. It manifested itself on a small scale in the classroom, or was

often writ larger in terms of managing a new school (in somewhere like Cairo next week, when you'd been thinking about taking a few days off to recover from the intensity of your four-week course!) It even had mammoth reach such as when ex-IH trainer Barry Tomalin and others worked with the BBC to reach 500 million new students, Follow Me! – a course on Chinese TV in the 1980s.

Brita continued the vision after John's death in 1996, encouraging the growth of the organisation as a whole and individuals within it. Her pronunciation workshops delivered tried and tested approaches to new generations of students seeking to communicate in English with the clear tones she used herself. She died in December 2024, aged 93. As Caroline Turner, Director of Operations at IH London put it so well in verse on the day:

*For Brita knew what mattered most
Was not the perfection that people boast,
But helping people find the nerve
To speak with passion, care, and verve.*

The assembled writers, teachers, trainers, directors, trustees, family and friends all raised a glass to the couple who had given them so much over so many years and beyond. In recognition of the enormous contributions made by the Haycrafts to English language teaching, IH London has named their Covent Garden flagship building Haycraft House in their honour.

Dominique Vouillemin, teacher trainer and Intercultural specialist, International House, London

On a Friday in May, a lively, multigenerational gathering celebrated the lives and legacy of John and Brita Haycraft, founders of the International House global network and lifelong pioneers in language teaching and teacher training.

We met that day, on Brita's birth date, at 16 Stukeley Street, the Holborn building named, from that Friday forth, Haycraft House, purchased when International House relocated from historic 106 Piccadilly in 2007.

The warmth and joy of reunion were palpable. John and Brita's partnership began after meeting at Oxford and travelling together in a relatively recently liberated Europe, founding the Casa Internacional in Cordoba in 1953, before International House opened in Covent Garden in 1957.

Their passion for people, language, travel, art, music, poetry, drama, self-expression, food and, importantly, family attracted generations of like-minded staff and students. Those who came to work at International House, whether short or longer term included musicians, psychologists, comedians, lawyers, journalists, those in retail, actors, ex- army personnel and many summer teachers including students, often from overseas or on internships. 'Meet-cute' stories of couples who found their life partners through working at International House, whether at home or abroad were deeply heartfelt and touching.

The afternoon event was marked by moving words from Haycraft family members and from those who knew the Haycrafts and the school in its early days up to more recent memories and anecdotes. We were reminded of John's fearlessness in sending teachers anywhere in the

world and his unshakable belief that the teacher in question could do the job - no question - and that the job was worth doing.

John was unfazed, positive and proactive and encouraged each of us to go beyond any perceived fears or barriers. He was an early performance coach, a believer in world peace and a true internationalist. His flaming sword was the English language which allowed humanity to share its diversity, complexity and above all its shared needs, values, vulnerabilities and basic yearning for peace and community.

Brita was John's soulmate and inspiration, while delivering and developing her own clear vision for language and communication. She was a lifelong learner, a skilled linguist, always curious about new ideas and approaches, always offering a radical welcome, into her classes, into her home and into her heart. Never did she tire of life, bringing flowers and cakes for all and wearing bright uplifting fabrics and craft jewellery from her travels or from friends and students. She gave the best hugs.

All this and more were celebrated on that hot afternoon in May. Friends and colleagues reunited and generations were brought together. John and Brita laid the blueprint for International House today. The remarkable current team continue, amid huge economic, cultural and political challenges, to uphold the values of respect, inclusion, kindness, value-creation and unconditional positive regard that to Brita and John were non-negotiable.

George Pickering, English language teacher, teacher trainer and organiser of a number of annual training conferences

Here is his speech at the Haycraft remembrance afternoon.

I want to start by saying that both John Haycraft and Brita Haycraft were wonderful people, and others speaking today will no doubt mention their personal characteristics in their recollections of them. I particularly want to talk about their achievements, and how those achievements continue to touch the lives of so many people today.

Thomas Paine is quoted as having said: *“A person who has contributed to two revolutions has lived to some purpose.”* That can certainly be said of John and Brita.

The first revolution they enacted was, of course, the teacher training course that became the CELTA, which transformed the way English language teachers are trained and developed throughout the world.

I personally had the chance recently to speak at the IH World Conference, where I said — perhaps confusingly to some people in the audience — that I was a child of John and Brita. What I meant by that was that my own life as a teacher was transformed by doing the CELTA at IH Piccadilly a long, long time ago. I had previously spent a year doing a PGCE, learning a lot about psychology and Piaget, but very little about practical pedagogy. And I was amazed to discover on the CELTA how quickly teaching techniques could be learned when you — to quote John in his autobiography, *“teach on the morrow what you have learned yourself the previous day.”*

The second lasting legacy — perhaps monument is a better word — is the IH family and IH community, represented by IH London and the wider IH World Organisation.

This was, and remains, an incredible achievement, and it provides a blueprint for how organisations can thrive whilst remaining completely wedded to the very best principles of teaching and staff management.

The final thing I want to say is that it could be argued that John and Brita also helped lead a third revolution — a movement that still continues today — one that places student and staff motivation at the very heart of what we all do.

In the introduction to John's book, *Adventures of a Language Traveller*, Anthony Sampson states that John learned early in life, through his background, that almost anything can be done without money. Sampson goes on to say that this was not simply a negative fact. Rather, it reflected a very positive sense of mission: a desire to improve the world and enrich people's cultural lives, in which money was only ever a necessary means, never the chief aim.

And, to quote Sampson directly, this enabled John, *"to inspire and motivate his staff with much deeper loyalties and satisfactions than the ordinary commercial language schools."*

Sampson also argued that successful language teaching has always depended upon motivating students, and the language teaching sector that we operate in today continues to rely upon understanding and harnessing the motivations of both these groups — staff and students alike.

He went on to say:

"The basic lesson behind this exhilarating and life-enhancing story is not ultimately a geopolitical one. It is the more simple one of how to humanise and vitalise an educational process."

I think everyone in IH knows that humanising and vitalising education should remain impulses that continue to drive us on in a world of uncertainty, chaos — and AI.

So, to sum up John and Brita's legacy:

Their revolutionary teacher training course continues to transform the lives of countless people today.

The work of IH London and the wider IH World Organisation continues to inspire many around the globe.

And finally, the spirit of John and Brita continues to live on in all of us who believe that our work has a wider purpose.

John dedicated *Adventures of a Language Traveller* to Brita, and at the beginning of the book he quotes the words of W. B. Yeats:

“Wisdom is a butterfly, not a gloomy bird.”

Neither John nor Brita was a gloomy bird. They were butterflies whose example and achievements continue to brighten the world for so many of us.

Poem by Caroline Turner

Director of Operations, International House, London

Brita knew that every sound,
Could unlock something quite
profound,
A subtle schwa, a stress placed
right,
Could turn frustration into light.

I know that Brita would be proud,
Of every teacher in this crowd,
Who took the time and had the
inclination,
To teach rising and falling
intonation.

Brita understood that on some
occasions,
Poor use of pron. caused
complications,
A simple phoneme changes
beach,
To something that I won't repeat!

But in classrooms full of different
tones,
Different accents, from different
homes,
She listened not for perfect
speech,
But for the confidence beneath.

A patient pause, a smile, a guide,
Standing gently by their side,
Helping students slowly see

The voice they had could now be
free.

For pronunciation is not just
sound,
Or where the stress in words is
found,
It gives belonging, and boldness
too,
And finding faith in being you.

For Brita knew what mattered
most
Was not the perfection that
people boast,
But helping people find the nerve
To speak with passion, care, and
verve.

And with this gift our students
saw,
That Brita gave something so
much more,
A confidence that can't be
beaten,
Thanks to drilling, back-chaining,
and repeating.

And somewhere in these walls
today,
and among the stories shared
this way,
In every voice that dares to start,
There lives a little of Brita's heart.

KEYNOTE ARTICLE 6

Learning Maltese for Work and Professional Integration in Malta

Jacqueline Żammit

jacqueline.zammit@um.edu.mt

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/my-orcid?orcid=0000-0002-3961-5286>

Abstract

Adult language education plays a central role in enabling migrants to participate in society and access employment, as language proficiency often functions as a prerequisite for further training, professional integration and social inclusion. This study explores the acquisition of Maltese by adult migrants in Malta, a context marked by high labour demand and a multilingual sociolinguistic environment. This study draws on qualitative data from 28 adult migrant learners enrolled in Maltese language courses and 4 language teachers, exploring how adult learners develop Maltese language competence within a setting where Maltese and English coexist alongside learners' diverse linguistic repertoires. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews and practitioner reflections, allowing for an in-depth exploration of classroom practices, learner strategies and institutional conditions that shape adult Maltese language learning concerning professional integration. Particular attention is paid to pedagogical practices that link language learning to workplace communication and everyday professional interactions. The findings suggest that multilingual and translanguaging-based approaches can enhance learner

engagement, confidence, and participation. At the same time, persistent challenges emerge, including limited exposure to Maltese in work environments dominated by English, uneven expectations regarding language use in employment, and a lack of targeted resources for adult migrant learners. By focusing on Maltese, a minority language within a multilingual labour market, the study contributes to broader debates on how adult language education can support migrants' professional integration. It highlights the need for context-sensitive, multilingual pedagogies that recognise learners' existing linguistic resources while responding to labour market demands and integration goals.

Keywords

Adult migrant language education; Maltese language acquisition; Professional integration; Multilingual labour markets; Workplace language learning

1. Introduction

Adult language education is widely recognised as a central component of migrant integration, particularly in contexts where language competence influences access to employment, social participation, and institutional engagement (Adamuti-Trache, 2013). Across Europe, increasing migration has intensified discussions about the role of language learning in facilitating inclusion within multilingual societies and labour markets. In this context, language education extends beyond linguistic acquisition alone and becomes closely connected to questions of identity, participation, mobility, and professional integration.

Research consistently demonstrates that language proficiency can significantly influence migrants' opportunities for employment, workplace

communication, and long-term socioeconomic participation (Rehner et al., 2025). Adult migrants frequently encounter linguistic expectations that shape access to professional environments, vocational training, and everyday interactions within host societies. At the same time, contemporary migration contexts increasingly involve multilingual realities in which several languages coexist and interact within workplaces, educational institutions, and public life (Xu, 2025). Consequently, adult language education cannot be understood solely through monolingual frameworks, particularly in societies characterised by linguistic diversity and fluid language practices.

Malta represents a particularly significant case within this broader discussion. As a bilingual nation with Maltese and English as official languages, Malta presents a complex sociolinguistic environment in which multilingual practices are embedded within both social and professional domains. While English functions extensively within tourism, business, higher education, and many workplace settings, Maltese remains socially and culturally important in everyday interactions and local integration processes (Gauci and Vella, 2022). Simultaneously, Malta has experienced substantial demographic changes due to increasing migration and foreign labour participation, resulting in increasingly multilingual workplaces and educational spaces.

Within this context, adult migrants learning Maltese often navigate a multilingual environment where English, Maltese, and additional linguistic repertoires coexist simultaneously. This creates both opportunities and challenges for language acquisition and professional integration. Previous research on Maltese language learning among adult migrants has highlighted difficulties related to limited exposure to Maltese outside the classroom, the dominance of English in many

professional environments, and the lack of specialised pedagogical resources tailored to adult migrant learners (Gauci and Vella, 2022). However, emerging scholarship also suggests that multilingual and translanguaging approaches may support engagement and participation by allowing learners to draw strategically on their full linguistic repertoires during the learning process (Moraru et al., 2025; Xu, 2025).

Recent discussions surrounding translanguaging and multilingual pedagogies have increasingly challenged traditional monolingual models of language education. Rather than viewing languages as isolated systems, translanguaging perspectives recognise multilingual learners' dynamic use of linguistic resources across contexts and interactions (Moraru et al., 2025). Such approaches may be particularly relevant within adult migrant education, where learners often possess complex linguistic backgrounds and use multiple languages strategically within workplaces and daily life. Research focusing specifically on Maltese language acquisition has similarly suggested that multilingualism itself may support the acquisition of Maltese as a minority language within bilingual Malta (Żammit, 2025).

Despite growing international research on migrant language education and multilingual pedagogies, limited research has examined how adult migrants acquire Maltese within the specific realities of Malta's multilingual labour market. In particular, there remains insufficient understanding of how classroom practices, workplace communication demands, and multilingual interaction shape the relationship between Maltese language learning and professional integration.

This study, therefore, explores how adult migrants develop Maltese language competence within courses designed for integration in Malta.

Drawing on qualitative data collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and practitioner reflections involving 28 adult migrant learners and four Maltese language teachers, the study investigates how multilingual classroom practices support language learning and workplace communication. Particular attention is given to the relationship between language learning, multilingual pedagogies, and professional integration within Malta's evolving sociolinguistic and labour market realities.

The study argues that multilingual and translanguaging-oriented approaches can enhance learner engagement, confidence, and participation while also highlighting persistent structural and institutional challenges surrounding language use in employment contexts. By focusing on Maltese as a minority language within a multilingual labour market, the study contributes to broader discussions on migrant language education, multilingualism, and workplace integration in contemporary adult education contexts.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Adult Language Education and Migrant Integration

Adult language education has long been recognised as a fundamental component of migrant integration, particularly in societies where linguistic competence is closely connected to access to employment, education, and social participation (Adamuti-Trache, 2013). Across migration contexts, language learning is frequently positioned not only as an educational process but also as a mechanism through which migrants gain access to professional opportunities, institutional systems, and broader participation within host societies. Consequently, adult

migrant language education occupies a central role within integration policies and labour market inclusion strategies across Europe and beyond.

Research consistently demonstrates that language proficiency can significantly influence migrants' access to employment and workplace mobility. Rehner et al. (2025) argue that both formal and informal language learning opportunities contribute directly to migrants' social integration and participation in labour markets. Adult migrants often acquire language competence not only within formal educational settings but also through workplace interactions, community participation, and everyday multilingual encounters. This highlights the importance of understanding language learning as socially situated and connected to authentic communicative practices rather than limited exclusively to classroom instruction.

At the same time, scholars increasingly recognise that adult migrant learners frequently navigate highly multilingual environments where several languages coexist simultaneously (Xu, 2025). In such contexts, language acquisition cannot be fully understood through traditional monolingual models that assume clear separation between languages. Instead, migrants strategically draw upon multiple linguistic resources to communicate, negotiate meaning, and participate within workplaces and educational settings. This shift has contributed to growing interest in multilingual and translanguaging approaches within adult language education research.

2.2 Multilingualism and Translanguaging in Adult Language Learning

Contemporary scholarship on multilingualism increasingly challenges earlier deficit-oriented perspectives that viewed multilingual learners' use of multiple languages as problematic or disruptive to language acquisition. Instead, multilingualism is now widely recognised as a resource that can facilitate communication, learning, and identity negotiation (Moraru et al., 2025). Within adult migrant education, multilingual practices frequently emerge naturally as learners utilise their existing linguistic repertoires to support comprehension, participation, and interaction.

Translanguaging has become a particularly influential concept within this field. Translanguaging perspectives conceptualise multilingual speakers' language practices as dynamic, fluid, and interconnected rather than separated into distinct linguistic systems (Xu, 2025). From this perspective, multilingual learners strategically mobilise their entire linguistic repertoires depending on communicative needs, social contexts, and learning goals. Such approaches are particularly relevant within adult migrant classrooms where learners often possess highly diverse linguistic backgrounds and varying levels of proficiency across multiple languages.

Moraru et al. (2025), in their systematic review of multilingual learners with migration backgrounds, found that translanguaging practices can support participation, engagement, and comprehension across educational settings. Translanguaging strategies may reduce learner anxiety, increase confidence, and facilitate collaborative learning by enabling learners to access familiar linguistic resources during

interaction. Similarly, Xu (2025) demonstrated that adult migrant learners frequently use translanguaging practices both inside and outside the classroom to negotiate meaning, manage communication, and navigate multilingual social environments.

These findings are particularly important in relation to adult learners, who often possess extensive linguistic and professional experiences before migration. Adult migrant learners do not enter classrooms as linguistically empty individuals; rather, they bring complex multilingual repertoires that can function as valuable learning resources.

Consequently, pedagogical approaches that recognise and incorporate multilingual practices may better reflect the sociolinguistic realities learners encounter within contemporary workplaces and communities.

2.3 Language Learning and Workplace Communication

The relationship between language learning and workplace communication represents another important area within migrant language education research. Employment frequently functions as both a motivation for language learning and a site of ongoing linguistic development. Workplace interactions expose migrants to authentic communicative practices, professional terminology, institutional expectations, and everyday social exchanges that contribute to language acquisition processes (Rehner et al., 2025).

However, research also demonstrates that workplace language realities are often more complex than formal integration policies assume. In multilingual labour markets, migrants may encounter varying and sometimes contradictory expectations regarding language use. Certain professional sectors may prioritise dominant international languages

such as English, while local languages remain socially important for informal interactions, customer relations, and broader social inclusion. This creates uneven linguistic demands that influence migrants' opportunities to practise and develop competence in local languages.

Studies focusing on workplace-oriented language learning emphasise the importance of authentic communication tasks, contextualised pedagogy, and practical interactional skills. Role-plays, workplace scenarios, and task-based communication activities are often identified as effective pedagogical approaches because they connect classroom learning directly to learners' professional experiences and anticipated communicative needs. Such approaches may enhance learner motivation and participation by demonstrating the immediate relevance of language learning to everyday life and employment contexts.

At the same time, scholars caution that workplace language acquisition cannot rely solely on exposure through employment. Opportunities for interaction may remain limited when workplaces operate primarily through dominant global languages or when migrants occupy positions involving restricted communication. Consequently, formal language education continues to play a significant role in supporting both professional integration and broader social participation.

2.4 Maltese as a Minority Language in a Multilingual Context

The Maltese context presents distinctive sociolinguistic characteristics that complicate conventional assumptions surrounding migrant language learning and integration. Malta is officially bilingual, with both Maltese and English functioning as official languages. English is widely used across education, tourism, business, and many professional sectors,

while Maltese retains strong symbolic, cultural, and social significance within everyday life and national identity.

This bilingual environment creates unique dynamics for adult migrants learning Maltese. Unlike contexts where a single dominant national language functions across most domains, migrants in Malta frequently encounter workplaces where English predominates while Maltese remains important for local interaction and community participation. Consequently, migrants may experience both pressure to learn Maltese and reduced opportunities to use it consistently within professional environments.

Research by Gauci and Vella (2022) identified several challenges faced by adult migrants learning Maltese within bilingual Malta. These included limited exposure to Maltese outside the classroom, difficulties practising the language in English-dominant workplaces, and limited access to specialised teaching materials designed specifically for adult migrant learners. Learners often reported that Maltese speakers shifted rapidly to English during interactions, reducing opportunities for sustained communication in Maltese.

At the same time, recent research has highlighted the potential role of multilingualism in supporting Maltese acquisition. Żammit (2025) argues that multilingual learners may draw strategically upon previous language learning experiences and linguistic knowledge when acquiring Maltese. Rather than functioning as barriers, multilingual repertoires may support learners' confidence, flexibility, and communicative strategies during the acquisition process. This perspective aligns closely with broader translanguaging scholarship that conceptualises multilingualism as a resource rather than a deficit.

2.4 Research Gap

Although research on multilingualism, translanguaging, and migrant language education continues to expand internationally, relatively limited research has examined adult Maltese language acquisition within the specific realities of Malta's multilingual labour market. Existing studies have primarily focused on integration programmes, bilingualism, or broader language policy issues, while less attention has been given to the relationship between multilingual classroom practices, workplace communication, and professional integration among adult migrant learners.

Furthermore, there remains limited qualitative research exploring how adult migrants and teachers themselves experience multilingual pedagogical practices within Maltese language classrooms. Additional research is therefore needed to examine how multilingual teaching approaches, workplace-oriented tasks, and learners' linguistic repertoires shape engagement, participation, and professional integration within Malta's evolving sociolinguistic context.

The present study seeks to address this gap by investigating how adult migrants develop Maltese competence within multilingual educational environments and how language learning relates to workplace communication and professional integration in contemporary Malta.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design to explore how adult migrants acquire Maltese within multilingual educational environments

and how language learning relates to workplace communication and professional integration in Malta. Qualitative research was considered particularly appropriate because the study aimed to investigate the participants' experiences, classroom interactions, perceptions, and meaning-making processes within authentic educational contexts rather than measure predefined variables quantitatively. Qualitative approaches allow researchers to obtain in-depth insights into social practices, linguistic interaction, and the participants' lived experiences within naturally occurring settings (Creswell and Poth, 2018).

The study was further informed by an interpretivist perspective, which assumes that social reality is constructed through interaction, experience, and interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Within this framework, language learning and professional integration are understood as socially situated processes shaped by multilingual practices, institutional contexts, and individual learner experiences. An interpretivist qualitative approach, therefore, enabled a deeper exploration of how learners and teachers themselves understood multilingual classroom interaction, workplace communication, and the role of Maltese language learning within everyday life.

Given the study's focus on multilingual practices, classroom dynamics, and participant perspectives, the research drew upon multiple qualitative methods, including classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and practitioner reflections. The use of multiple data sources supported methodological triangulation, enhancing the depth and credibility of the findings (Patton, 2015).

3.2 Research Context

The study was conducted within adult Maltese language courses designed to support migrant integration in Malta. These courses formed part of broader adult language education provision targeting adult migrants living and working within Malta's multilingual sociolinguistic environment. Malta provides a particularly significant research context due to the coexistence of Maltese and English as official languages alongside the increasing linguistic diversity associated with migration and international labour mobility.

Within many Maltese workplaces, English functions as a dominant language of communication, particularly in sectors such as tourism, hospitality, business, and international services. However, Maltese continues to hold strong social and cultural significance in everyday interactions and community participation. Consequently, adult migrant learners frequently navigate multilingual realities where both Maltese and English play important but different communicative roles. These sociolinguistic conditions shaped both the classroom practices observed during the study and the participants' experiences of language learning and workplace communication.

3.3 Participants

The study involved 28 adult migrant learners enrolled in Maltese language courses and four Maltese language teachers involved in adult migrant education. The participants were selected through purposive sampling, a commonly used qualitative sampling strategy that enables researchers to identify participants who possess direct experience relevant to the research questions (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016).

The adult learners came from diverse linguistic, cultural, and professional backgrounds, reflecting the multilingual and multicultural composition of Malta's migrant population. The participants included learners with varying levels of prior educational experience, professional backgrounds, and language repertoires. Many participants were already employed in sectors such as hospitality, caregiving, customer service, construction, and retail, while others were seeking employment or attempting to improve their professional opportunities through Maltese language acquisition.

The four participating teachers possessed experience teaching Maltese to adult migrant learners within multilingual classroom settings. Their perspectives provided important insights into pedagogical practices, multilingual teaching strategies, institutional challenges, and the relationship between language learning and workplace communication.

To ensure ethical integrity, all participants participated voluntarily and were informed about the aims of the study before data collection. Pseudonyms were used throughout the research process to protect participant anonymity and confidentiality.

3.4 Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through three primary qualitative methods: classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and practitioner reflections. Combining these methods enabled a more comprehensive understanding of classroom interaction, learner experiences, and pedagogical practices.

3.5 Classroom Observations

Classroom observations were conducted to examine naturally occurring multilingual interaction, teaching strategies, learner participation, and communicative practices within Maltese language classrooms.

Observation is particularly valuable within qualitative educational research because it allows researchers to explore behaviour, interaction, and social processes within authentic contexts (Cohen et al., 2018).

The observations focused specifically on:

- multilingual interaction within classrooms,
- translanguaging practices,
- learner participation,
- workplace-oriented communication activities,
- teacher scaffolding strategies,
- and learner engagement during communicative tasks.

Particular attention was paid to how Maltese, English, and other linguistic resources were used strategically during classroom interaction. Detailed field notes were recorded throughout the observation process to document communicative practices, classroom dynamics, and emerging themes.

3.5 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with both learners and teachers to explore the participants' experiences, perceptions, and reflections regarding Maltese language learning and professional integration. Semi-structured interviews provide flexibility while still

allowing researchers to address central research themes systematically (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015).

The interviews explored:

- learners' motivations for learning Maltese,
- perceptions of multilingual classroom practices,
- workplace language experiences,
- opportunities and challenges related to practising Maltese,
- and teachers' perspectives on pedagogical strategies and institutional conditions.

The use of open-ended questions encouraged the participants to discuss their experiences in depth while allowing unanticipated themes to emerge naturally during the interview process.

3.6 Practitioner Reflections

Practitioner reflections formed an additional source of qualitative data. Reflective practice is widely recognised within educational research as a valuable means of examining pedagogical experiences, professional decision-making, and classroom realities (Schön, 1992). The practitioner reflections documented observations concerning multilingual classroom interaction, learner engagement, teaching challenges, and the relationship between classroom practices and workplace communication needs.

These reflections contributed further contextual understanding of how multilingual pedagogies were implemented within adult Maltese language education and how teachers responded to learners' diverse linguistic repertoires and professional needs.

4. Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a widely used qualitative analytical approach that enables researchers to identify, interpret, and organise recurring patterns and themes across datasets (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This method was considered particularly suitable because the study sought to examine recurring experiences, perceptions, and classroom practices related to multilingualism, workplace communication, and professional integration.

The analysis followed several stages. First, the researcher engaged in repeated reading of interview transcripts, observation notes, and practitioner reflections to develop familiarity with the data. Initial codes were then generated inductively from the dataset, focusing on recurring ideas, experiences, and interactional practices.

The codes were subsequently organised into broader thematic categories linked to the research questions. Themes emerging from the analysis included:

- multilingual classroom interaction,
- translanguaging practices,
- workplace-oriented language learning,
- learner confidence and participation,
- English-dominant workplace realities,
- and institutional challenges in adult migrant language education.

Throughout the analytical process, attention was given to identifying connections between the participants' experiences, classroom practices, and the broader multilingual realities of Malta's labour market. The triangulation of classroom observations, interviews, and practitioner

reflections further strengthened the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings by allowing themes to be examined across multiple sources of data (Patton, 2015).

4.1 Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

To enhance the trustworthiness of the study, the research employed methodological triangulation through the use of multiple qualitative methods and participant groups. Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasise that credibility in qualitative research can be strengthened through prolonged engagement with the data, triangulation, and reflexive interpretation.

Ethical considerations remained central throughout the research process. The participants were informed about the purpose of the study, participation remained voluntary, and confidentiality was maintained throughout data collection and reporting. All identifying information was anonymised to protect the participants' identities, particularly given the potential sensitivities surrounding migration, employment, and language learning experiences.

4.2 Findings and Analysis

The analysis revealed that Maltese language learning among adult migrants was closely connected to workplace communication, social participation, and multilingual interaction within Malta's labour market. Across classroom observations, interviews, and practitioner reflections, several recurring themes emerged, including the importance of multilingual pedagogies, the relationship between Maltese and professional integration, learners' strategic use of translanguaging

practices, and the persistent challenges associated with English-dominant workplaces.

The findings suggest that while many migrants recognised the practical and symbolic importance of learning Maltese, opportunities to use the language outside the classroom remained uneven and highly dependent on workplace environments. At the same time, multilingual classroom approaches appeared to enhance learner confidence, engagement, and participation.

4.3 Multilingual Classrooms as Spaces of Linguistic Negotiation

One of the most prominent findings concerned the highly multilingual nature of classroom interaction. Classroom observations demonstrated that learners frequently drew on multiple linguistic resources simultaneously during communicative tasks, peer collaboration, and teacher interaction. Maltese and English regularly coexisted alongside learners' home languages, creating fluid translanguaging practices throughout lessons.

Rather than functioning as separate and compartmentalised linguistic systems, languages were often used dynamically and strategically to support comprehension and communication. Learners regularly shifted between Maltese and English to clarify meanings, negotiate vocabulary, and scaffold interaction with classmates. Teachers similarly adopted flexible multilingual approaches, frequently using English strategically to support learners' understanding of Maltese grammar, vocabulary, and communicative functions.

These multilingual practices appeared to reduce learner anxiety and encourage participation, particularly among learners with lower levels of Maltese proficiency. Several learners expressed that the possibility of using English or other familiar linguistic resources enabled them to participate more confidently during classroom interaction.

One teacher explained, “Using several languages in class helps learners gain confidence. If they are afraid of making mistakes all the time, they stop participating completely. But when they can move between languages, they communicate more freely.”

This finding reflects broader translanguaging research suggesting that multilingual pedagogies may support learner engagement by recognising learners’ full linguistic repertoires as educational resources rather than obstacles (Xu, 2025).

Classroom observations further showed that multilingual interaction often functioned collaboratively. Learners assisted one another by translating key vocabulary, explaining expressions, or connecting Maltese structures to other known languages. Such interaction created a more participatory and less hierarchical classroom atmosphere, particularly during role-play and workplace communication activities.

4.4 Maltese Language Learning and Professional Integration

A second major theme concerned the relationship between Maltese language acquisition and professional integration. The participants consistently associated Maltese learning with improved workplace communication, customer interaction, and social participation within professional environments.

Many learners described Maltese as particularly valuable for customer-facing professions where interaction with Maltese-speaking clients formed part of everyday work routines. While English was often sufficient for basic workplace communication, many participants explained that understanding and speaking Maltese contributed to stronger interpersonal relationships, improved customer trust, and greater confidence in professional interactions.

One learner working in customer service explained, “Learning Maltese helps me understand customers better. Sometimes people start in English but then switch to Maltese naturally. Before, I felt excluded from the conversation.”

Similarly, an Italian participant employed as a sales assistant in a boutique highlighted how understanding Maltese improved her ability to support customers professionally, “At the beginning I only used English at the boutique. Then slowly I started understanding Maltese conversations between customers. One day, two friends were discussing the material of a dress inside the changing room in Maltese, and because I understood them, I could explain better which fabric was softer and which dress suited what they wanted. I realised then that Maltese was helping me do my work better.”

This quotation illustrates how Maltese competence extended beyond formal language requirements and became connected to relational communication, customer care, and workplace effectiveness.

Understanding Maltese allowed learners not only to complete professional tasks but also to participate more fully in spontaneous and informal interactions that shaped workplace relationships.

Other participants similarly associated Maltese learning with greater social inclusion within workplaces. Several learners explained that understanding Maltese reduced feelings of isolation during informal interactions among colleagues, particularly in sectors where local workers frequently alternated between Maltese and English.

One participant employed in hospitality stated, “At work we mostly speak English, but knowing Maltese helps with everyday interactions. Even small things like jokes or simple conversations during breaks make you feel more part of the group.”

These findings suggest that Maltese competence functioned not only as a practical communication tool but also as a mechanism of belonging and symbolic participation within professional communities.

4.5 Workplace-Oriented Pedagogical Practices

The analysis further revealed that workplace-oriented pedagogical activities played an important role in learner engagement and perceived relevance of language learning. Classroom observations demonstrated that teachers frequently incorporated authentic communication tasks linked directly to workplace realities, including customer interactions, telephone conversations, role-plays, interviews, and service encounters.

These activities appeared particularly effective in increasing learner participation because they connected classroom learning to immediate communicative needs. The learners frequently demonstrated higher levels of engagement during activities involving realistic workplace scenarios compared to more traditional grammar-focused exercises.

One teacher explained, “Role-plays about work situations make Maltese meaningful. Learners immediately understand why they need certain vocabulary or expressions because they can imagine themselves using them at work.”

Observed classroom activities included simulated workplace dialogues involving hotels, retail shops, restaurants, healthcare settings, and customer service environments. During these tasks, learners frequently experimented with different communicative strategies, combining Maltese and English where necessary to maintain interactional flow.

The findings suggest that contextualised and workplace-oriented language learning enhanced motivation by positioning Maltese as immediately relevant to learners’ professional realities rather than solely as an abstract educational requirement.

4.6 Challenges of English-Dominant Workplaces

Despite recognising the value of learning Maltese, several participants consistently identified significant challenges related to limited opportunities for practising the language outside the classroom. One of the strongest recurring themes concerned the dominance of English within many Maltese workplaces.

The participants frequently reported that colleagues and customers switched rapidly to English once they noticed learners were not fluent in Maltese. While the learners often appreciated these accommodations initially, they also expressed frustration that this reduced opportunities for sustained interaction in Maltese.

A learner explained, “People switch to English quickly, so practising Maltese is difficult. Sometimes I want to continue in Maltese, but the conversation changes immediately.”

Several participants described a tension between the recognised importance of Maltese and the practical linguistic realities of workplaces where English functioned as the dominant language of communication. This often created uncertainty regarding the actual necessity of Maltese for professional advancement.

The teachers similarly identified this contradiction as one of the central difficulties affecting learner progress. One teacher commented, “Learners are motivated to learn Maltese, but then they go to work, and everyone speaks English. So, they have very little exposure outside the classroom.”

This limited exposure frequently slowed learners’ confidence in spoken Maltese and reduced opportunities for authentic communicative practice. Some participants employed in highly international workplaces reported particularly limited opportunities to engage with Maltese-speaking colleagues or customers.

4.7 Institutional and Resource Challenges

The findings also revealed broader institutional challenges affecting adult migrant Maltese language education. The teachers consistently identified a lack of specialised teaching resources specifically designed for adult migrant learners and workplace-oriented communication.

Several teachers explained that existing materials often focused heavily on general grammar and vocabulary while offering limited content

directly connected to multilingual workplace realities or professional communication needs.

A teacher stated, *“There are still very few targeted materials for adult migrants learning Maltese for work purposes. Teachers often have to create their own activities and adapt resources constantly.”*

Classroom observations confirmed that teachers frequently developed improvised materials, role-plays, and communicative tasks to address learners’ professional contexts more effectively. This required significant teacher flexibility and adaptation, particularly given the diverse linguistic backgrounds and employment sectors represented within classrooms.

At the same time, many learners demonstrated highly varied professional and linguistic needs. Many participants required Maltese primarily for customer interaction, while others associated it more strongly with long-term integration and everyday participation in Maltese society. These differing motivations further complicated curriculum design and classroom practice.

4.8 Learner Confidence, Participation, and Identity

Despite the challenges identified, the findings strongly suggested that multilingual and communicative teaching approaches contributed positively to learner confidence and participation. Across interviews and classroom observations, learners frequently described increased willingness to communicate and greater confidence using Maltese in everyday situations.

Importantly, several participants did not conceptualise language learning solely in terms of grammatical accuracy. Instead, many associated

successful language learning with the ability to participate socially, understand workplace interactions, and navigate multilingual communication more confidently.

For many participants, learning Maltese also carried symbolic significance connected to belonging and integration. Speaking or understanding Maltese was often described as a gesture of respect toward local culture and an important step toward feeling socially included within Malta.

The analysis, therefore, suggests that Maltese language learning among adult migrants cannot be understood exclusively as a technical process of language acquisition. Rather, it represents a broader social and professional negotiation shaped by multilingual realities, workplace structures, identity, and opportunities for participation within Malta's evolving labour market.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study reinforce and extend existing research concerning adult migrant language education, multilingual pedagogies, and workplace integration within multilingual societies. The analysis demonstrated that Maltese language learning among adult migrants was shaped not only by formal classroom instruction but also by broader multilingual realities connected to employment, social participation, and workplace communication. In doing so, the findings align with previous scholarship emphasising that language acquisition among adult migrants is closely connected to opportunities for participation within professional and social environments (Adamuti-Trache, 2013; Rehner et al., 2025).

At the same time, the findings also reveal important tensions specific to Malta's bilingual and multilingual context. While the participants consistently recognised the value of learning Maltese for professional integration and social inclusion, they simultaneously experienced reduced opportunities to practise the language within workplaces dominated by English. This contradiction complicates traditional assumptions surrounding migrant integration and language learning, particularly in multilingual labour markets where local and global languages coexist simultaneously.

5.1 Multilingualism and Translanguaging as Educational Resources

One of the most significant findings concerned the central role of multilingual and translanguaging practices within adult Maltese language classrooms. Classroom interaction demonstrated that learners and teachers regularly moved flexibly between Maltese, English, and other linguistic resources to facilitate communication, participation, and comprehension. These findings strongly support recent translanguaging scholarship that conceptualises multilingual learners' linguistic repertoires as dynamic educational resources rather than obstacles to acquisition (Moraru et al., 2025; Xu, 2025).

The findings particularly align with Xu's (2025) argument that adult migrant learners strategically utilise multiple languages across educational and social settings to negotiate meaning and maintain participation. Similarly, the multilingual collaboration observed in this study reflects Moraru et al.'s (2025) conclusion that translanguaging practices can support learner engagement, confidence, and interaction within multilingual educational contexts.

Importantly, the findings challenge more traditional monolingual approaches to language teaching that often discourage the use of additional languages within the classroom. Rather than impeding Maltese acquisition, multilingual interaction appeared to reduce learner anxiety and encourage participation, particularly among learners with lower proficiency levels. Learners frequently relied on familiar linguistic resources to scaffold understanding and sustain communication during classroom tasks. This suggests that multilingual pedagogies may be particularly appropriate within adult migrant education contexts characterised by highly diverse linguistic backgrounds.

At the same time, the findings also extend existing research by illustrating how translanguaging practices operate specifically within the context of a minority language such as Maltese. While much translanguaging research focuses on major global languages, this study demonstrates that multilingual pedagogies may also support the acquisition of smaller or minority languages situated within multilingual societies. In this respect, the findings further reinforce Žammit's (2025) argument that multilingualism itself may facilitate the acquisition of Maltese within bilingual Malta.

5.2 Language Learning and Professional Integration

The study also supports broader scholarship emphasising the relationship between language learning and professional integration among adult migrants (Adamuti-Trache, 2013; Rehner et al., 2025). Many participants consistently associated Maltese learning with improved workplace communication, stronger customer interaction, and greater inclusion within professional environments.

However, the findings reveal that the role of Maltese within workplace integration extends beyond purely functional communication. Several participants described Maltese competence as contributing to informal interaction, workplace relationships, and feelings of belonging. The Italian boutique employee's experience is particularly significant in this regard. Her ability to understand customers discussing the material of dresses in Maltese allowed her not only to assist them more effectively but also to participate more fully in relational and customer-oriented communication. This suggests that local language competence may contribute to forms of professional inclusion that extend beyond technical workplace performance alone.

Such findings complement Rehner et al.'s (2025) argument that language learning opportunities contribute directly to broader social integration processes. However, the present study adds further nuance by illustrating how multilingual workplace realities shape the actual opportunities migrants have to use local languages in practice. While previous research frequently conceptualises language learning as a prerequisite for integration, the findings here suggest a more reciprocal and complex relationship in which workplace interaction itself both supports and limits language acquisition opportunities.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that migrants may not necessarily require full fluency in Maltese to benefit professionally from learning the language. Even partial comprehension or basic communicative competence appeared to improve confidence, customer interaction, and social participation within workplaces. This challenges overly rigid assumptions surrounding linguistic proficiency and integration by demonstrating that multilingual communication often functions through

flexible and partial linguistic practices rather than complete mastery of a single language.

5.3 English Dominance and Limited Exposure to Maltese

One of the strongest recurring themes concerned the dominance of English within many Maltese workplaces and its implications for Maltese acquisition. The participants frequently described situations where colleagues and customers rapidly switched to English once they identified learners as non-native speakers of Maltese. This finding strongly reflects the challenges identified by Gauci and Vella (2022) and Żammit (2025), who similarly found that adult migrant learners in Malta often struggle with limited opportunities to practise Maltese outside formal educational settings.

The findings therefore support previous concerns that Malta's bilingual environment creates contradictory linguistic conditions for migrants. On the one hand, Maltese remains socially significant and symbolically associated with local integration and belonging. On the other hand, English frequently functions as the dominant language of practical workplace communication, particularly within international and service-oriented sectors.

This situation differs somewhat from migration contexts where integration is more strongly tied to a single dominant national language. In Malta, migrants may successfully participate professionally through English while simultaneously experiencing partial exclusion from local social interaction conducted in Maltese. Consequently, the study demonstrates that professional integration within multilingual societies cannot be understood solely through monolingual integration models.

At the same time, the findings also reveal that learners themselves continued to value Maltese despite the dominance of English. Many participants associated Maltese not only with communication but also with symbolic inclusion, cultural participation, and interpersonal connection. This suggests that minority or local languages may retain strong integrative significance even when they are not always required for professional survival.

5.4 Workplace-Oriented Pedagogy and Authentic Communication

The findings further support scholarship advocating contextualised and workplace-oriented language education approaches. The classroom observations demonstrated that role-plays, workplace simulations, and authentic communication tasks increased learner engagement and participation. Learners appeared particularly motivated when classroom activities reflected realistic professional situations connected directly to their employment sectors.

These findings align with broader adult language education research emphasising the importance of meaningful and context-sensitive pedagogy within migrant language learning (Rehner et al., 2025). The study similarly supports communicative and task-based approaches that prioritise authentic interaction over isolated grammatical instruction.

However, the findings also suggest that workplace-oriented pedagogy within multilingual labour markets requires greater flexibility than traditional communicative models may assume. Classroom interaction frequently involved translanguaging, partial competence, and multilingual negotiation strategies rather than idealised monolingual

communication. Consequently, effective workplace language education in multilingual societies may require pedagogical models that acknowledge the fluid and hybrid realities of contemporary workplace communication.

5.5 Institutional Challenges and Resource Limitations

The findings concerning institutional and material limitations also reflect previous research on adult migrant language education in Malta. Teachers consistently identified the lack of specialised resources designed specifically for adult migrant learners and workplace communication. This supports Gauci and Vella's (2022) observation that adult Maltese language education still lacks sufficient targeted materials and specialised pedagogical support structures.

At the same time, the findings reveal the significant degree of pedagogical adaptation undertaken by teachers within multilingual classrooms. Teachers frequently improvised materials, created workplace scenarios, and adjusted classroom interaction to accommodate diverse learner backgrounds and communicative needs. This demonstrates both the creativity and the institutional pressures experienced by practitioners within adult migrant language education.

The findings, therefore, highlight the need for more structured policy support, curriculum development, and resource investment specifically targeting multilingual adult migrant education within Malta. Given the increasing linguistic diversity of Malta's labour market, language education policies may need to move beyond monolingual assumptions and recognise multilingual communication as a central feature of contemporary integration processes.

5.6 Reconsidering Integration in Multilingual Labour Markets.

The findings suggest that professional integration within multilingual labour markets is far more linguistically fluid and complex than traditional integration frameworks often imply. Rather than moving linearly from linguistic deficiency toward complete mastery of a single national language, migrants in Malta navigate multilingual communicative environments where different languages hold different social, professional, and symbolic functions simultaneously.

The findings, therefore, contribute to broader debates surrounding migrant integration, multilingualism, and language education by demonstrating that multilingual competence itself may constitute an important integrative resource. In Malta's bilingual context, migrants do not simply replace one language with another but instead negotiate multiple linguistic repertoires across workplaces, classrooms, and everyday interactions.

Consequently, the study argues that adult migrant language education within multilingual societies should adopt more flexible and context-sensitive pedagogical approaches that recognise multilingual realities rather than privileging strictly monolingual models of acquisition and integration.

6. Study Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights into adult Maltese language learning and professional integration within Malta's multilingual labour market, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted using a relatively small qualitative sample consisting of 28

adult migrant learners and four teachers. Although qualitative research prioritises depth rather than statistical generalisation, the findings may not fully represent the experiences of all adult migrant learners across different educational institutions, employment sectors, or linguistic communities within Malta.

Second, the study focused primarily on participants enrolled in Maltese language courses designed for integration purposes. Consequently, the findings may not reflect the experiences of migrants who acquire Maltese informally outside institutional educational settings or those who do not participate in formal language learning programmes. Similarly, the study concentrated largely on learners already engaged in employment or seeking professional integration, potentially overlooking experiences related to other forms of social participation.

Another limitation concerns the multilingual complexity of the research context itself. The participants possessed highly diverse linguistic, educational, and professional backgrounds, meaning that experiences of language learning and workplace communication varied considerably across individuals and sectors. Although this diversity provided rich qualitative data, it also limits the extent to which uniform conclusions can be drawn regarding all multilingual migrant experiences in Malta.

Additionally, the study relied primarily on classroom observations, interviews, and practitioner reflections rather than longitudinal tracking of language development over time. As a result, the research captures the participants' experiences and perceptions at a particular stage of their language learning journeys rather than examining long-term professional and linguistic outcomes.

As with many qualitative studies, the researcher's interpretation inevitably formed part of the analytical process. Although methodological triangulation and reflexive analysis were employed to enhance credibility and trustworthiness, the interpretation of classroom interaction and participant experiences remains shaped by the interpretivist nature of qualitative inquiry.

6.1 Further Research

The findings of this study highlight several important areas for further research concerning multilingualism, adult migrant language education, and professional integration in Malta and similar multilingual societies.

First, future studies could adopt longitudinal approaches to examine how adult migrants' Maltese language competence develops over extended periods of residence and employment. Such research could provide a deeper understanding of how workplace interaction, social participation, and multilingual exposure influence long-term language acquisition and integration trajectories.

Second, additional research focusing on specific employment sectors would be valuable. The present study demonstrated that workplace language practices vary considerably depending on professional contexts. Comparative research across sectors such as hospitality, healthcare, retail, education, and construction could further illuminate how multilingual communication shapes migrants' opportunities to acquire and use Maltese in professional environments.

Third, future research could investigate employers' and Maltese-speaking colleagues' perspectives regarding workplace language practices and multilingual communication. While this study focused

primarily on learners and teachers, understanding institutional and employer expectations surrounding language use would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of multilingual labour market integration.

Further investigation into digital technologies and online learning resources for adult Maltese language acquisition would also be beneficial, particularly given the increasing role of technology within adult education and workplace communication. Research on AI-supported language learning, multilingual digital pedagogies, and workplace-oriented online resources may significantly contribute to the future development of Maltese language education for migrants.

Moreover, comparative studies involving other small bilingual or multilingual states could offer valuable international perspectives on minority language acquisition, workplace multilingualism, and migrant integration. Malta represents a distinctive context where a minority national language coexists alongside English as a global lingua franca. Comparative research could therefore contribute to broader international debates surrounding multilingualism and migration in contemporary labour markets.

Future studies may further explore the relationship between multilingualism, identity, and belonging among adult migrants learning Maltese. The present study suggested that Maltese learning carries symbolic and relational significance beyond functional communication alone, and this dimension warrants deeper sociolinguistic and ethnographic exploration.

7. Conclusion

This study explored how adult migrants acquire Maltese within multilingual educational environments and how language learning relates to professional integration in Malta's multilingual labour market. Drawing on classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and practitioner reflections, the findings demonstrated that Maltese language learning among adult migrants is shaped by complex multilingual realities involving Maltese, English, and learners' diverse linguistic repertoires.

The study found that multilingual and translanguaging-oriented pedagogical practices appeared to support learner confidence, engagement, and participation within adult Maltese language classrooms. Rather than hindering acquisition, multilingual interaction frequently enabled learners to negotiate meaning, scaffold communication, and participate more actively in classroom activities. These findings support contemporary multilingual and translanguaging scholarship that conceptualises learners' linguistic repertoires as valuable educational resources rather than obstacles to language learning.

At the same time, the findings revealed significant tensions within Malta's bilingual labour market. Although the participants consistently recognised the social and professional value of learning Maltese, opportunities to practise the language outside the classroom were often limited by the dominance of English within many workplaces. This created a complex linguistic environment in which Maltese remained symbolically important for integration and belonging while English

frequently functioned as the dominant language of professional communication.

Importantly, the study demonstrated that Maltese language learning among adult migrants extends beyond purely instrumental communication needs. The participants frequently associated Maltese competence with customer interaction, workplace relationships, confidence, inclusion, and social participation. Even a partial understanding of Maltese appeared to strengthen learners' sense of belonging and professional engagement within Maltese society.

The findings, therefore, suggest that adult migrant language education within multilingual societies such as Malta requires flexible and context-sensitive pedagogical approaches that recognise multilingual realities rather than privileging strictly monolingual models of acquisition and integration. Workplace-oriented communicative activities, multilingual classroom interaction, and translanguaging practices emerged as particularly important in supporting participation and engagement among adult learners.

By focusing specifically on Maltese as a minority language within a multilingual labour market, this study contributes to broader international discussions surrounding migrant language education, multilingualism, and workplace integration. The research highlights the importance of recognising multilingual competence as an integrative resource while underscoring the need for stronger institutional support, specialised materials, and context-sensitive language education policies that respond to the linguistic complexities of contemporary migration and employment realities.

References

- Adamuti-Trache, M. (2013). Language acquisition among adult immigrants in Canada: The effect of premigration language capital. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 63(2), 103–126.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0741713612442804>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
<https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research Methods in Education* (8th Edition). Routledge.
- Creswell, J.W., & Poth, C.N. (2018). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design Choosing among Five Approaches* (4th Edition). SAGE Publications, Inc., Thousand Oaks.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2018). *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (5th Edition). SAGE Publications.
- Gauci, P., & Vella, B. (2022). The challenges of learning Maltese in bilingual Malta: a study with adult learners following the I Belong language integration programme. *Malta Review of Educational Research*, 16(2), 173-193.
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2015). *Interviews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* (3rd Edition), SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE Publications Inc.

- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th Edition). Jossey-Bass, A Wiley Brand.
- Moraru, M., Bakker, A., Akkerman, S., Zenger, L., Smit, J., & Blom, E. (2025). Translanguaging within and across learning settings: A systematic review focused on multilingual children with a migration background engaged in content learning. *Review of Education*, 13, e70069. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.70069>
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (4th Edition). Sage.
- Rehner, K., Ippolito, J., Lasan, I., Forget, G., Gouveia, C., Jones, S., & Liu, Y. (2025). Adult Migrants' Formal and Informal Language Learning Opportunities: Availability, Choice, and Social Integration. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 81(1), 25–47.
- Schön, D.A. (1992). *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (1st Edition). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315237473>
- Xu, W. (2025). Translanguaging practices and language ideologies in adult migrants' Chinese learning classrooms and beyond. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 46(10), 3797–3813.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2024.2365321>
- Żammit, J. (2025). Does multilingualism hold the golden key to acquiring the Maltese language? *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 22(4), 2636–2661. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2025.2475395>

TEACHING TIPS

by Nick Michelioudakis

1. RHYMING WORKS!

[Psychology for Educators]

'Birds of a feather flock together'. How true do you think the saying is? It kind of makes intuitive sense, right? How about *'Opposites attract'*? Well, however accurate it might be, it just doesn't sound the same...

Starting from the intriguing observation that a number of proverbs rhyme, researchers wondered whether this fact actually added to their persuasive power. So, in a clever study, they presented different subjects with two different versions of the same proverb – one rhymed, the other did not. For instance, some people were given the phrase *'Caution and measure will win you treasure'* while others read a slightly different one: *'Caution and measure will win you riches'*. Subjects were asked to



indicate how far these sayings reflected reality. As the researchers had suspected, the rhyming proverbs were deemed to be more accurate [McGlone & Tofighbakhsh 2000].

So, can this insight be of any help to us, educators? Well, advertisers do use this technique (*'A Mars a day, helps you work rest and play!'*) and I for one am prepared to take heed. These guys sure know what they are doing. So, this is the idea: think of the key messages you would like to convey to your students and turn them into rhymes. 😊

Yes, yes I know what you are thinking: *'Are you seriously asking us to come up with rhymes on top of all the other work we have to do?'* OK, but

keep in mind that once you have them, you can use them forever. And here is another idea: why not get your students to come up with a few, as a project? Tell you what – I'll go first: '*Improvement doesn't require vision; the key to learning is revision!*' There. I am sure your students can do better... 😊

[Read: Goldstein, Martin & Cialdini 'Yes! 50 Secrets from the Science of Persuasion' – pp. 152-153]

[Read: McGlone, M. S., & Tofigbakhsh, J. (2000). *Birds of a feather flock conjointly (?)*: Rhyme as reason in aphorisms. *Psychological Science*, 11(5).]

2 SOME LESSONS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN OTHERS

[Psychology for Educators]

How about giving students random marks? That got your attention, right?

😊 Now, I will be coming to marks later. But let me start with babies.

In one study, 19-month-old babies watched two puppets. Each of the puppets performed a show. Then each puppet was given a cookie. The researchers then measured how long the babies gazed at the scene. This is a measure for how surprising babies find something; the more surprising it is, the longer the gaze. In this case, the average eye gaze of the babies' lasted for 13.5 seconds. Then the babies watched something else; the two puppets again performed a show, but this time one of the puppets got both cookies. The babies stared in amazement for an additional 6 seconds. (Sloane et al., 2012) In another study, 21-month-old babies watched two children playing with toys. At some point, an adult waked in and told the children they would



have to tidy up. In one condition (A), both infants helped and both got a sticker as a reward. In another condition (B), one of the infants did all the work, while the other did nothing. However, both the infants got a sticker as a reward at the end. Such was the surprise of the babies watching, that this time they gazed for 28 seconds longer than they had in condition A (Sommerville et al, 2013).

These and other studies show that from the moment we are born, we have i) an instinctive sense of fairness; and ii) an instinctive belief that we live in a '*just world*' – which is why children are surprised when they witness unfairness. However, we all know that life is far from fair. And this is why this phenomenon is known as the '*Just World Fallacy*'.

So, let us turn to marks now. Here is a story [Dobelli 2017 – pp. 172-173]. Rolf Dobelli had a teacher at high school, who gave out marks at random. He would simply pick marks out of a hat and these were the marks that students got in their reports! Naturally, the students were appalled and they protested. But the teacher would not budge. The students even appealed to the Headmaster, but he sided with the teacher. What was the teacher's rationale? '*Life isn't fair. The sooner you learn that, the better.*' Dobelli concludes: '*We could have wrung his neck. In retrospect, however, this was one of the most important lessons I learned in my seven years in high school.*'

[Read: S. Martin & J. Marks 'Messengers' – p. 46]

[Read: R. Dobelli 'The Art of the Good Life' – pp. 172-173]

[Read: Sloane, S., Baillargeon, R., & Premack, D. (2012). *Do infants have a sense of fairness?* Psychological Science, 23(2), 196–204.]

[Read: Sommerville, J. A., Schmidt, M. F. H., Yun, J.-E., & Burns, M. (2013). *The development of fairness expectations and prosocial behavior in the second year of life.* Infancy, 18(1), 40–66.]

