

Summary

Pictures have a language. They send us messages that we receive in different manners depending on our cultural heritage, our education, our momentary state of mind. Pictures please, appeal, give rise to concern, alarm and shock but also help and support us to survive day by day in a quick changing world.

Pictures reflect our past and influence our future. They live in our memory and form our dreams. They are like a daily piece of bread: human beings cannot live without them.

Voices in Pictures (VIP) is a project designed to learn to listen to pictures and derive benefit from their message.

VIP will answer the profound desire and necessity of Europeans to communicate in L2 and will support learners of all ages, cultural backgrounds and interests with appealing activities in their great effort to acquire a language. VIP will also help them increase their knowledge of European culture. What is more, the topics depicted in this plurilinguistic project will provide a genuine chance to reach learners of any education level, even illiterate. Language learning will inevitably be linked to cultural aspects which are shared by Europeans as well as highlighting those that make each nationality distinct. Talking, conversing, describing and debating about diverse topics adult learners associate to will make language acquisition more motivating and thus, the process of language acquisition more successful.

Communicating orally is certainly the most pressing need when considering that in the Eurobarometer published in June 2012, only 38% of the Europeans surveyed could maintain a conversation in English and the figures decrease in other L2s.

Motivation

Motivation: Considering the EU policy widening the use of different languages throughout Europe, the partners have been reflecting on ways of motivating learners to get or to improve skills in foreign languages. The results published in the Eurobarometer (June, 2012), shows that new approaches are needed to motivate adult learners. Increased motivation will lead to a more effective learning process and, thus, better results. Due to the fact that over 50% of the surveyed learners wanted to learn a L2 to speak in various contexts, we have selected an eclectic innovative approach to develop speaking skills: to let pictures speak!

We strongly believe that carefully selected pictures (e.g. photos, paintings, comics, publicity, from newspapers, information signs, etc.) will be an effective input that will eventually provide learners with not only linguistic skills but also with a cultural-contextual knowledge so intimately linked to language acquisition.

The partners are convinced that New Technologies have created new needs and a new type of learner. Consequently, new learning strategies should be embraced. With the ever-growing technological society, most of the information we perceive is visualized. VIP has considered this by making a fusion between visual input and language acquisition. Voicing expressions, feelings or using pictures as a parting point towards learning how to handle e.g. everyday situations such as going shopping, going to the dentist or greeting a neighbour is possible with the use of pictures. Pictures

enable learners of all education levels to voice and interpret what they see from their specific socio-cultural perspective. Differences in interpretation of the pictured topics are expected and seen as positive intercultural exchanges.

VIP also aims to provide effective teaching tools for L2 tutors who are not familiar with the use of images for teaching. These tools will be used with learners of all levels and yet with the same need to learn a second language (including immigrants).

The project aims to include cooperative learning strategies. Adult learning usually implies the young and the old, the gifted and the slow-going, women and men as well as immensely different socio-cultural backgrounds. Pictures are interpreted by individuals who rely on all the above mentioned factors and this in itself is enriching.

Need: Considering that the European Union's goal is that all citizens should be able to speak three languages and taking into account the expectations of the labour market, we consider that it is our duty to promote the learning of European languages.

Mastering languages will give learners the possibility to work and move in the European Union by overcoming the barrier of the language. In a world of economic crisis, knowing languages can make a significant difference towards employment. It is the key to successful integration. Language is an instrument of social integration.

As some partners provide special courses for senior citizens in different fields (Health, languages,...), the needs of older learners will also be taken into account. The demographical ageing of the European population as well as the fact that there are still a large number of older migrants who never really learnt the language of the country where they worked and still live, are a challenge for LLL.. Adult education courses create social networks which are crucial to support integration and reduce illiteracy in Europe.

VIP intends to support as far as possible interacting between older learners and citizens e.g. via email or blog to encourage and motivate them to share their life experiences and to practice the language they are learning.

Objectives:

1. Establish close cooperation with partners on a large range of topics, improve partner's training provision, give colleagues the opportunity to share experience, good practices, develop together innovative didactical approaches/alternative pedagogical concepts based on the use of images to learn languages taking into account the different types of learners in each institution
2. Propose strategies and tools to build up knowledge and skills
3. Formalise the VIP method
4. Involve learners in the project processing
5. Use VIP and cooperative learning to discover cultural and historical background of EU countries involved

6. Activate the use of visual perception, offer learners new ways to develop competences, invite them to discover their own creativity, share experiences and views
7. Disseminate examples, surveys with all VIP products on a website.
8. Giving special consideration for 3rd age learners, migrants and people with poor education.
9. Enlarge intercultural competences for fighting against xenophobia
10. Insist on intercultural communication in EU to understand different ways of thinking

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