Teach2Learn

Teaching reading comprehension - teacher's skills and training needs analysis WP 2

INDEX

ABOUT THE TEACH2LEARN PROJECT

Project objectives are focused on equipping teachers, parents and students from minority, migrant or refugee background from Austria, Bulgaria, Spain, Portugal, Luxemburg and Turkey with innovative methodology, interactive resources and pedagogical instruments based on gamification for teaching and learning reading comprehension skills in the official language of the country, thus increasing the quality of learning and the access to affordable and high-quality education.

The project activities include development of assessment tools for teachers 'training needs, training program providing skills for teaching reading comprehension skills to students grade 2th to 4th, and development of interactive platforms with practical and user-friendly resources involving teachers, parents and students. It will also develop and upload a database of videos demonstrating practical use of the project resources. Wide promotion of all the project products will be implemented.

The project will aid teachers to achieve high quality in the teaching process and support their students more effectively in order to overcome their learning disadvantages thus preventing the early school leaving. It will give further opportunities and will build resources that will strengthen expertise of the participating organizations and will be a step further into their experience in working in cooperation with other EU organizations to address common issues.

OBJECTIVES

The present report is part of the Work package II and gathers information provided by all partners of our project Teach2Learn on the skills and training needs of 2th to 4th grade teachers, teaching reading comprehension to students whose mother language is different from the official language of each of the partner countries.

The information gathered is summarized in the following report and will be used as a basis for the development of a methodological assessment tool with assessment scale reflecting the competences teachers need, the teachers self - assessment card, training program and the selection of texts and exercises organized in the Storyboard complementing the training program.

PEDAGOGICAL BASES

Overview of the Reading programs and Teaching methodologies in project partners countries:

I.   Methodologies for teaching emergent readers

The skill "reading" in a classroom is seen as an activity which is interactive and mostly directed by the teachers. Professionals use a variety of techniques to make reading activities meaningful. The personal process of every child is unique and therefore in different countries teachers look for the most appropriate methodology according to their own reality.

The research made as part of the **Teach2Learn project** shows clearly the differences in the approaches for developing students' reading skills in each partner country - Austria, Bulgaria, Spain, Portugal, Luxemburg and Turkey. There are also different policies used in regards to the reading comprehension barrier in the 2,3 and 4th grade of primary education of children from minority and migrant/refugee origin or whose mother language is different than the official language of the educational system.

According to the reports provided by each partner, we can find that schools in each partner country in general use one or few main methodologies and share a common understanding of the needs of 2 to 4th grade in regards to teaching basic literacy and basic education. We find the common approach in the words of the Ministry of Education in Portugal: "Basic Education aims to ensure a general education common to all students, providing the acquisition of the basic knowledge that allows them to continue their studies."

In Spain, three dynamic methodologies make up an enriched and innovative program that helps both the teaching group and the students to meet the teaching and learning objectives focused on the literacy habit. The methodology that is most used is **Project Based Learning (PBL)**, which allows students to acquire knowledge and key skills in the 21st century through the development of projects that respond to real-life problems. The second methodology is the **Participatory learning methodology** - the learner plays an active role by taking a proactive interest and the third is called **ABS** - an innovative methodology that attempts to modify reality and improve student learning.

According to the research done, **in Bulgaria** there is one main currently used literacy system - the sound analytic-synthetic method of literacy or also known as the **Methodology of Konstantin Ushinsky**. The method is directly oriented to the sound form. Ushinski proposes a unified analytical-synthetic activity in a kind of writing-reading correlation and an approach from the whole (i.e., the larger linguistic units) to the parts (i.e., the smaller linguistic units) and back to the whole.

As **Luxembourg** is an official trilingual country, half of the total population has a foreign origin. The school system is also trilingual and languages are introduced progressively in the curriculum. **The skills-based approach** is the prevailing teaching method in the Luxembourgish public schools and is applicable to all school subjects. It aims at developing the child's ability to mobilize knowledge and know-how in concrete and new situations, at school and in life. The method is progressive and allows students to become more competent in the languages they learn (French, Luxembourgish and German).

In Austria, reading is taught in elementary school within the subject "German, Reading, Writing (DLS)". The two most widely spread methodologies used in their schools are **the holistic-analytical method and the synthetic reading method**. The holistic-analytical reading teaching method assumes that a word is not just a sum of individual sounds and speech movements, but that word picture memorization forms the basis for fluent and correct reading. In the synthetic reading method the word is seen as a sum of letters, which must be grasped, converted into sounds and united to a word-sound-structure. Only then is the meaning of the word assigned.

In Turkey, Turkish Lesson Curriculum in Primary School is given within the framework of Turkish Qualifications. All methodologies used in the classroom aim to enable students to realize and adopt aesthetic and artistic values through works of Turkish and world culture and art.

In Portugal, Portuguese classes are regulated by Ministerial decree and divided into Essential Learning - tools that organise the Methodologies for teaching emergent readers. Although they use several methodologies in general in schools, within their school system we can find classes like **Portuguese for Non-native speakers** and School specific classes, that can be, for example, Introduction to Classical Culture and language. The most

widely spread methodology for these specific classes that is used in their country is Informal education - used to ease the transition for migrants' children and teenagers who do not yet speak any Portuguese language using games as a tool to teach children or adults basic literacy.

II. Teaching methods that are used in partner countries:

Traditional or widely spread and the theoretical framework behind it	Innovative methods and the theoretical framework behind it
The holistic-analytical method - assumes that a word is not just a sum of individual sounds and speech movements, but that word picture memorization forms the basis for fluent and correct reading. (Austria)	**Syllable method -** the students do not learn individual letters at first, but simply syllables, such as ma - me - mi - mo - mu. Later, these syllables are combined to form words, word groups and sentences. (Austria)
The synthetic reading method - the word is seen as a sum of letters, which must be grasped, converted into sounds and united to a word-sound-structure. Only then is the meaning of the word assigned. (Austria)	**João de Deus Methodology (Cartilha Maternal Method):** This methodology was founded by João de Deus, poet but also pedagogue who seeks to focus the learning ability to speak through reading. The idea is that the teachers use oral language and graphics to help break down words, while maintaining their graphic and sonorous nature. (Portugal)
Informal education - used to ease the transition to Portuguese using games as a tool to teach the children or adults basic literacy. (Portugal)	**Waldorf Education:** There the basis of the education is a mix between traditional teaching methods but also methods that seek to integrate and involve the physical, spiritual, intellectual, and artistic development of the students. Thus, this methodology wants to stimulate the feeling and imagination of the school children and develop their unique characteristics. (Portugal)

Methodology of Konstantin Ushinsky. All schools in Bulgaria officially use the Ushinski system. Complementing this system with innovative methods is a must, since the current system is outdated and not systematically updated. (Bulgaria)	**Project based learning -** teaching method in which students learn by actively engaging in real-world and personally meaningful projects. It allows students to acquire knowledge and key competencies through the development of projects that respond to real-life problems. (Bulgaria, Spain & Turkey)
Frontal method or frontal teaching - the most widely spread in Bulgaria - based on simultaneous work with all students in the class at the same time. In other words, it represents interaction between the teacher and the entire classroom. (Bulgaria)	**Interactive learning -** instructing the students in a way they are actively involved with their learning process. Taking initiative and entrepreneurship: It refers to an individual's ability to transform his thoughts into action. It includes creativity, innovation and risk taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects to achieve goals. It also provides a basis for the more specific knowledge and skills needed by those who engage in or contribute to social and commercial activities. (Bulgaria and Turkey)
Selective reading, dramatization of text, Reading by roles, discussion, self-reading - drama helps students to develop skills embedded in the reading process, such as contextualizing what they read in a text to their own experience, feelings, attitudes, ideas,values, and life situations (Booth, 1985). (Bulgaria)	**Flipped classroom -** a type of blended learning where students are introduced to content at home and practice working through it at school. (Bulgaria)
Differentiated work / Differentiated instruction - adapting content, process, or product according to a student's readiness, interest, and learning profile. (Bulgaria)	**Question answer teaching -** also known as "Socratic Method of teaching", this strategy is a form of cooperative argumentative dialogue between teachers and students, based on asking and answering questions to stimulate

	critical thinking and to draw out ideas and underlying presumptions. (Bulgaria)
Skills-based approach - aims at developing the child's ability to mobilize knowledge and know-how in concrete and new situations, at school and in life. (Luxembourg)	**Service Based Learning -** an innovative methodology that seeks to modify reality and improve student learning. It is inserted in the set of activities carried out by a student, and connects with the innovative proposals that are given in schools: competency-based education, project or problem-based learning, cooperative and collaborative learning, learning to undertake, multiple intelligences, positive coexistence, gamification, etc. (Spain)
Gamification Learning - consists of generating dynamics and game mechanics in environments that do not necessarily have to be playful, to enhance children's attention, motivation, concentration and effort. (Spain & Turkey)	**Challenge-Based Learning -** an experiential learning that facilitates direct and active participation. It involves an educational product (exhibitions, portfolios, podcasts, experiments, representations/ dramatizations, school newspaper or radio, cultural days) and aims to give a practical meaning to the contents.. Overcoming the different phases of a challenge implies: establishing strategies; making decisions in a cooperative and collaborative manner, seeking solutions, developing autonomy, adopting different roles and developing creativity.
Montessori Learning - allows children to explore freely and discover the world through their curiosity and their own experiences. They are the ones who choose what to work on and what materials to use. It is also advisable to mix children of different ages in the classroom, but even so, the rhythms of each student are respected. (Spain)	

Cooperative Learning - children must develop positive interdependence, that is, they must be individually concerned that everyone in the group achieves success, and individual responsibility, where the involvement of individual students is promoted so that the group functions better. Finally, group processing is usually carried out in which both individual and group actions are evaluated.	

III. Special programs for teaching reading comprehension to students whose home language is other than at school in partner's countries:

Our research discovered that within our projects' consortium there are a couple of different approaches. In Austria, Portugal, Spain and Turkey, special programs are designed for usage in schools supplementary to the main curricula. In those countries, classes are being designed to help pupils develop their reading comprehension following an agenda designed for children whose mother tongue is different than the one at school. Unlike these countries, Bulgaria has a different policy and students in the Bulgarian educational system are trained according to standardized programs and there were no special programs discovered. Most countries have interesting NGO projects that aim to inspire children to read, which also adds to the general improvement of reading comprehension.

An interesting idea is found in Luxembourg, where the project *Sacs d'histoires* (story sacks) was launched in 2009 in order to increase awareness for languages, the school-family partnership and the promotion of reading. In this project, children take home "story sacks" prepared in school that include a book for children with a translation in the mother tongue of the child and a CD with the story of the book read in the languages that are mostly spoken in class and some words of explanation for the parents so that children and their families can read and listening to the stories together.

IV. **Efficiency of the special reading comprehension programs for students whose home language is other than at school:**

The research has shown that the implementation of such programs proves to have a significant impact on the development of reading comprehension in our projects specific students group. Conclusions such as "high rate of effectiveness", faster learning process, ability to understand better and without interruptions with classmates, improvement of attention and attendance in class are really encouraging. An abstract from an official report made in Portugal provides a good overview:

"...it is necessary to look for ways to generate improvement processes that transform the school into something in which learning is not only a goal but also an effective practice in order to ensure desirable educational levels for all. Therefore, it is essential to create specific and specialized training to support teachers and students leading to school success and the development of literacy."

V. **Willingness of teachers to search for additional support from parents, other students, colleagues, community, etc in partners countries:**
According to the reports provided by the partners of the project it is common to look for additional support in all partner countries. The most needed additional support is peer to peer or from one teacher to another to try to safely understand more specifics about the children they work with like cultural differences, family environment and potential support that teachers can count on. Some countries like Luxembourg and Austria have initiatives / projects that are focused on inspiring parents or professionals to read to/with their children in the language of the school the child attends.

Teacher's professional profiles

Summary of the descriptions of the professional profiles of teachers in each partner country.

I. **Description of the qualifications and competences required for primary school language teachers in partner countries:**

In each partner country there are professional qualification requirements for primary school language teachers - a four-year bachelor's university degree in pedagogy and mandatory additional relevant professional qualification, like masters degree and/or specialization. In some countries, there are additional requirements that need to be fulfilled before a person attempts to apply for this educational qualification. For example, the first requirement for becoming a teacher in the public school in Luxembourg is the mastery of the three official languages: French, German and Luxembourgish or an aptitude test in Austria, which tests different abilities of the prospective teachers like rhythmic- musical aptitude, determination of physical-motor aptitude, as well as a computer skills and personal motivation.

In regards to the competences that are required, partners share the following personal and professional ones as common:

- Detailed knowledge and practical skills as per the specific reality in each country
- Linguistic and idiomatic competencies
- Learning to Learn competency
- Social competences
- Communication competence
- Planning and Organizing competence
- Digital competence

II. **Summary of the qualifications and/or competences required for school staff providing language support for children whose home language is other than at school in partner countries:**

Professional qualification "teacher" in partner countries is acquired through training in higher education institutions and most of the competences are already defined above. However, attending additional specialization or

post-graduation programs are required in Portugal, Austria and Luxembourg for school staff providing language support for children whose home language is other than at school to gain the necessary competences required. In Bulgaria and Turkey that type of specific training can be obtained by attending additional training or projects. Parts of this additional education include topics as linguistic diversity management, promotion of multi-linguistic identities, interculturality, mediation, differentiated instruction; multiliteracies. Therefore the competences that are desired for school staff are the ones that promote inclusion in the classroom like multiculturalism and multilingualism, internalizing the different values and attitudes etc.

III. **Other national standards or performance criteria that are relevant for the teachers in partner countries:**

In Bulgaria and Turkey there are strict national standards and professional development of teachers and other pedagogical specialists defined. Standards are defined by the Ministry of education in Portugal as well but are being adapted and changed often.

The current legislations in Spain, Austria and Luxembourg do not specify further standards or performance criteria on this matter after the successful examinations taken to become a teacher.

TRAINING NEEDS

I. **Discovery of national studies or publications analyzing teachers' skill gaps and training needs for effectively teaching reading comprehension in partner countries:**

In all partner countries we can find studies and research done by different government or non-government organizations. Whether it is the Ministry of education and science as in Bulgaria or the specific CICLIP Barometer on children's reading and reading comprehension in Spain, all partner countries try to be active in finding solutions and supporting the teachers on teaching this topic.

The discoveries of those studies unite over the conclusions that all teachers share that they lack specific training and the necessary means to carry out linguistic competence with people who present a language barrier. Latest results like the one in Austria: "there is a need for further training in reading promotion among teachers in Austria (Bachinger et al., 2021)" can be found in each partner country. In a study done in 2011 in Portugal the results state that: "We believe that it is necessary to redefine and revalue the role of the teacher as one who not only interacts, transmits knowledge, and encourages student participation, but who enables an integral reading activity and allows the development of the student's autonomy with critical, reflective, and interpretive capacity in any type of text and in any context."

The results of these findings conclude that:

- teachers need a specific training on how to teach reading comprehension to students whose mother tongue is not the same as in school
- additional training on the motivation of teachers to learn new teaching methodologies should be included
- having the attitude of "a role model" - a teacher that is inspired to read himself is a great motivation to his students and can teach good reading habits to his students.

II. **National studies or publications in partner countries for analyzing teachers' skill gaps and training needs in relation to gamification and/or digital skills needed for teaching reading comprehension:**

Several publications related to gamification can be found in partner countries in recent years and conclusions. They are not directly related to gamification

and digital skills for teaching reading comprehension, but show interesting results on the topic overall. In Austria, Turkey and Bulgaria it is discovered that the resources available for digital learning vary greatly in the different schools which limits the unification of teaching standards. One of the results from Bulgaria states: "Almost 63% of teachers have never collaborated within their school to co-develop digital learning content and resources, and 86% have never worked with teachers from other schools to do so. Some 84% of teachers had never publicly shared digital lessons and resources they had developed online." This only shows that the great resource of gamification of the learning processes is not used enough and that there is an urgent need for comprehensive digitization in schools. More attention should be emphasized on the overall digital literacy of teachers, so that they can be willing to put their creativity and expertise in a more innovative ways.

As a controversy, in Luxembourgish schools there are different well used gamification examples. One of them is the The iPad App iTEO - a learning and teaching tool that records and edits language. It facilitates children's collaborative, exploratory and open-ended language learning and allows them to draw on their diverse language repertoires.

III. **Each of the project partners has interviewed at least 3 primary teachers who teach reading comprehension skills. Here are the summarized results of all interviews in regards to the top 5 difficulties teachers face in their teaching practice:**

   A. All teachers share a great common problem: that often their students do not understand the lexical meaning of the words. This leads to misunderstanding in the meaning of what they read, as they sometimes lack the simplest words in their vocabulary.

   B. In the family environment there is no encouragement to read as often the parents do not read themselves and do not possess any books.

   C. No good command in students native language is observed in some countries. This applies to migrant and minority children who don't have the opportunity to study their native language in detail, yet they have to study a new one at school. In addition, if they happen to have a good command of their native language, it is often linguistically and syntactically far from the language of the country they live in. In

addition, families speak in their own native language and not in the official language of the country they live in. In this way, the situation is even more complicated, because it is even more difficult for the child to acquire a sound knowledge and vocabulary of the official language of the country.

D. In a lot of cases, the family environment of students includes parents with low educational level and often this leads to low motivation in students to literate themselves, but it also means that the parents don't read to their children and in this way children can't enrich their vocabulary.

E. Lack of teaching experience and/or additional training available with a methodology on how to work with these specific children. Also need of material and digital resources as well as training on gamification and digital technologies.

IV. **Based on partners experience and the interviews with the teachers they have taken, we have made a list with the 5 most significant teachers training needs according to the six reading comprehension competences:**

Our consortium realizes that the training needs of teachers may vary as they depend on the experience of the teachers and their current reality. However, we managed to conclude and unite over the following mandatory additional teachers training that needs be undertaken, when teaching reading comprehension to students whose mother tongue is different from the one at school:

Training that provides practical tools, information and knowledge of linguistic resources for helping students overcome the difficulties in mastering the reading technique.

Training on how to gamify the "learning to read" process.

Training on the cultural and background knowledge of the learning process, habits of students from diverse linguistic backgrounds and how to approach them. Based on that understanding, teachers shall be trained with practical tools on how to help children improve their reading comprehension skill.

Training on how to create a positive and motivated view in the children and their parents in regards to learning how to read in the official language of the country .

Social skills training, that includes appropriate approaches to these children (especially if they have from traumatic past or present) and their parents, so that teachers are able to create a good and motivated environment for the children to be inspired to improve their reading comprehension skills.

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