



Digital Innovation
for Social Inclusion

Methodological Guidelines

***Recommendations on ICT use in teaching a Second Language
to illiterate or low-educated migrant students***

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein

General suggestions

The phenomenon of social exclusion due to poor literacy skills is quite alarming with respect to the European population, but it becomes even more dramatic if we consider the typology of migrants arriving at present in Europe. Most of them have very low literacy skills, thus limiting their possibility of integration and exercise of their citizenship rights, with evident risks to their security within receiving society. The question of migrant literacy is essential for practitioners at various levels and in different contexts. Language training of adult migrants is crucial because refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants face daily situations of linguistic disadvantages that limit their access to active citizenship and full recognition of civil rights.

EU language policy supports the development of actions aimed at favouring socio-cultural integration of foreign citizens. Program documents highlight the role that digital technologies can have in substantial improvements to citizenship principles and in helping the fight against **social exclusion that derives from scarce or no mastery of a written language**. In today's knowledge society, in fact, the lack of command of a written code and the different degrees of illiteracy are considered "social ills", not so much because they are gaining ground but because anything short of full proficiency in writing is a real social handicap in our hyper-textualised societies.

In this perspective, the training offered in migratory context through **multimedia resources** can offer itself as a valid support to **improve quality and effectiveness of literacy courses** for adult immigrants. Many such opportunities can be linked, firstly, to the possibility of personalizing the learning path, both in terms of selection of contents of interest, and of greater flexibility in the management of the course of study. The overcoming of space-time limits – the possibility of accessing the learning path at any time and from anywhere – typical of in-presence training, in fact, allows learners a more assiduous and regular frequency of the courses of L2, often characterized by a strong fluctuation of presences.

Furthermore, digital technologies offer a wide range of multimedia channels (visual, audio, video), not based exclusively on the written code, acting on the motivational level of learners, thus proposing itself as an effective support for language learning by subjects with poor education in L1.

From the methodological point of view, another significant aspect is highlighted in the use of digital technologies. Blended learning solution could fit better with students who are still not autonomous in the mastery of the written code, because they combine autonomous study in e - learning with learning in the classroom, led by the teacher, who has the opportunity to offer feedback and corrections.

With a blended learning approach it is also possible to compensate for some limitations that the digital technologies present in supporting those aspects concerning the effective development of skills of oral and written production.

The DISI Project offers suggestions to L2 teachers, hints concerning the use of digital technologies for the development of **abilities and communication skills** in adult immigrants who begin the learning process in L2 at a non-autonomous level of linguistic and communicative competence: lower than Level A1 of QCER, the minimum level indicated to manage the daily uses of the language.

In the framework of the DISI project **100 teachers have been interviewed** in **5 countries** to collect information and methodological suggestions about the use of ICT in classrooms with illiterate or low educated migrant students.

These guidelines should not be considered an exhaustive handbook, rather a collection of recommendations and guidelines provided by L2 teachers themselves who already use ICT in their lessons to teachers who do not yet use them but want to implement ICT in classroom activities with the above-defined beneficiaries.



Our two main points



Our **final beneficiaries** are illiterate or low educated migrants or refugees at pre-A1 level of L2



Our **target groups** are L2 teachers working with illiterate or low-educated migrants/refugees. Teachers were unanimous about the importance of using ICT in language teaching for migrants and/or refugees.

What types of ICT do we have in mind?

TOOL	RECOMMENDED FOR....	CRITICAL POINTS
PC	Exercises and content creation, frontal lectures, digital literacy, motivation	Requires some basic ICT abilities, not good if you don't have a good equipment in your classroom
VIDEO TUTORIALS	Good for motivation, interactive, involving groups at different levels	Not good for frontal lectures
MOBILE APPS	Easy to use (almost all students have a smartphone); suitable for homework and exercises outside the classroom; user friendly	There are different types of devices supporting different apps; not all devices support Apps; some Apps are not free and/or registration is necessary
MOOC	Good for self-learning	PC needed; basic ICT skills needed
SERIOUS GAMES	Good for motivation, interactive	Basic ICT skills needed
INTERACTIVE WHITEBOARD	Frontal lectures, students content creation	Only in classroom
SKYPE CHATS	Very good to improve L2 skills; easy to use	Not all students have Skype but there are many other (video-) message Apps (e.g. WhatsApp)
VIDEO and TELENOVELAS	Improve listening and overall comprehension skills	Not supported by all devices

The **most used**, according to our interviewed teachers are:

- **PC and Internet**
- **Videos**
- **Apps & Smartphones**

Facilities and ICT



The use of ICT in classrooms is obviously related to the availability of such technologies, as well as technical support. Using ICT in a classroom with a slow Internet connection (e.g.) threatens to lower motivation and attention very much and is extremely time-consuming.

When using ICT, it is necessary to explain clearly to students accustomed to traditional teaching (or no teaching at all!) and different cultural backgrounds how the specific technology will be used in order to prevent general demotivation.



If your training venue doesn't have a PC per person but you want to use ICT, you can use smartphone apps; nowadays everyone has a smartphone and managing the lesson could be easier. There are lots of existing apps available in many languages. You should only pay attention to the fact that students are usually reluctant to use their own Internet connection because they normally have little money and use their available connection to communicate with their relatives at home and managing their daily life. You need a Wi Fi connection! Pay also attention to different smartphone models because some support certain apps and some others don't! Moreover, select apps which are easily downloadable and free of charge.



Conviviality is another important topic to be taken into consideration if we want to avoid lack of motivation and attention; students should have the possibility to use the tool along with other students. Co-production increases learner engagement and retention.

In addition, most classes are composed of students with different skills and levels. It is recommended to develop peer tutoring strategy to not demotivate more advanced students.

Training courses duration



L2 training courses addressed to this target group should be long, no less than 600 hours. Some teachers suggest planning course paths to possibly exceed 2 years. As an example, providing 2 months of training every 6 months could allow migrants to implement their skills between two sessions.

Pedagogical approach



All our stakeholders think that the use of ICT in classroom changes the role of the teacher. In a ICT based learning context the teacher has the prevailing role of the designer and manager of learning environments understood as places where students can work together and support each other using a multiplicity of tools and resources information on their guided itinerary towards the training objectives and activities.

When using ICT, the teacher becomes a facilitator. The goal is to transform a teaching context into a learning context where the lesson is much more interactive and the role of the teacher is related to learning facilitation instead of teaching in a “classical” way.

The new skills and competences of teachers could be summarized as follows

- Knowledge of main ICT tools and means, as well as their use
- Knowledge of the way in which ICT can support motivation and learning
- Ability in using a cooperative learning approach and active teaching methodology while using ICT in classroom
- Facilitation and negotiation skills
- Empathy and care of relationship with students and among them

In particular, L2 teachers of illiterate or low-educated migrant students should

- Establish a horizontal relationship between the teacher and the learners, creating a welcoming environment;
- Teachers should become motivators and offer integration support: migrants need support in various areas in order to facilitate and motivate their learning, that is, to contribute to the full integration of migrants in the host country. Teaching to migrants is not only "teaching" but taking care of them in order to increase the motivation to study a new language.

It is crucial to introduce the use e-tools and motivate learners at the right time. Sometimes, using them too early might create a distance between the student and the teacher, and the ICT tool could become a wall between them. Digital and analog tools should be used at the same time, planning accurately the lesson in a balanced way.



ICT does not replace the teacher!

Teaching means working on a relationship: the more ICT you use, the more a teacher needs to relate to students.

Further useful suggestions:

- ✓ Always take into account the specific needs and diversity of the target audience and their ability in using ICT.
- ✓ It is necessary to have a great concern for the people, to support them so that they are prepared and motivated for the learning.
- ✓ Illiterate learners might also require additional and specific lessons and activities in order to bring them up to a level at which they can apply linguistic techniques and, especially, ICT -tools to help them progress further. Put simply, they need to learn to read and write at least on a basic scale. Otherwise, it would be impossible for them to navigate the learning material and take active part in study sessions.
- ✓ Taking into account the pedagogical and cultural spheres, the use of the Internet enables new means of interaction and collaboration between those involved in the learning process, and also facilitates access to information about the culture of other countries, enabling the development of students to deal with differences in a more dialogic way, depending on the teaching proposal.
- ✓ Technologies allow teachers to provide real language use situations through chats, authentic text readings, listening to radio programs, films and videos. In addition, interactions in chats, blogs and e-mails with didactic purposes emerge as a source in the construction of knowledge, allowing the student to become more autonomous co-author and to have decision power on their final product of the learning;
- ✓ While choosing the right ICT tool remember to make the learning relevant to the student; choose tools whose topics meet the interest and needs of your students. Teachers are supposed to know very well their students while using ICT, because they can be a good help as well as a big obstacle, if the contents and ICT type are boring or too difficult to use.



Although classic writing exercises are still necessary, we suggest facilitating the learners process, especially for illiterate or low educated students, through alternatives in producing written output:

- Typing
- Selecting predefined ready-made words and structures in a progressive and cyclic way

According to the focus groups' results, PC written texts should have the following features:

- ✓ printed in uppercase;
- ✓ "round" typeface;
- ✓ ARIAL linear font;
- ✓ body of the character not less than 14;
- ✓ line spacing not less than 2;
- ✓ use of spaces between words no less than 2;
- ✓ use of boldface only if it is functional to the activity;
- ✓ large space assigned to the visual code;
- ✓ delivery available in written and audio channels.

Planning the Lesson



- Oral competence is the crucial basis for acquiring written language. However, digital and written learning tools are limited by basic literacy obstacles and, therefore, hard if not impossible to use unless the subject is at least somewhat literate.

Skill levels required to achieve satisfactory (working) language control are outlined, for the most part, as such:

- Comprehension and **oral expression** (listening, speaking)
- Comprehension and **written expression** (reading, writing)
- **Explicit knowledge** of the language (**A1 and above**)

Therefore, we suggest when planning the lesson that teachers segment learners into several groups according to their level of command on the written language. Such an approach will help **assign e-tools and exercises** better, according to learner types

and functional levels. The below four groups have been suggested, with view of facing appropriate learning tasks and **tracking measurable progress**.

- Understanding **overall context** (skimming)
- Comprehending **details** (scanning)
- Giving (simple) **feedback**
- Participating **actively**

These levels – perceived or internally measured – should influence exercise assignment and use of tools, as well as group and individual tasks for those found currently in a different stage of their iL2 development. Examples of appropriate assignments for the above skill level groups (identical order as above):

- a picture or a video with a simple written question with pre-set answers to pick about general context;
- a listening exercise with an instruction;
- a picture or a video with certain items and a required response to be pressed/chosen – either through a button/word or directly amongst images;
- an object's name to be typed using a keyboard or voice-input means.

How much ICT is to be used in classrooms?



It's important to alternate the use of ICT with exercises in classroom and activities outdoors to improve linguistic skills. It's also possible to use smartphones to take pictures of the city/territory and use them in classroom for exercises and discussion. The use of ICT should be integrated in the current teaching activity. ICT cannot replace the teacher's job.

According to focus group's results, teachers recommend that more than 50% of the training courses should be spent outside. Practical experiences and personal involvement prove invaluable in linking socio-economic communication to real-world context: visits to NGOs, public services, museums, etc.

Can our beneficiaries study alone?

Each case is different, and a tutorial is always an important, especially in relation to students. As much as they can study alone, they much gain higher motivation when accompanied. We cannot forget that an integration process implies several phases, often difficult for those who arrive in a new country and face a new culture.

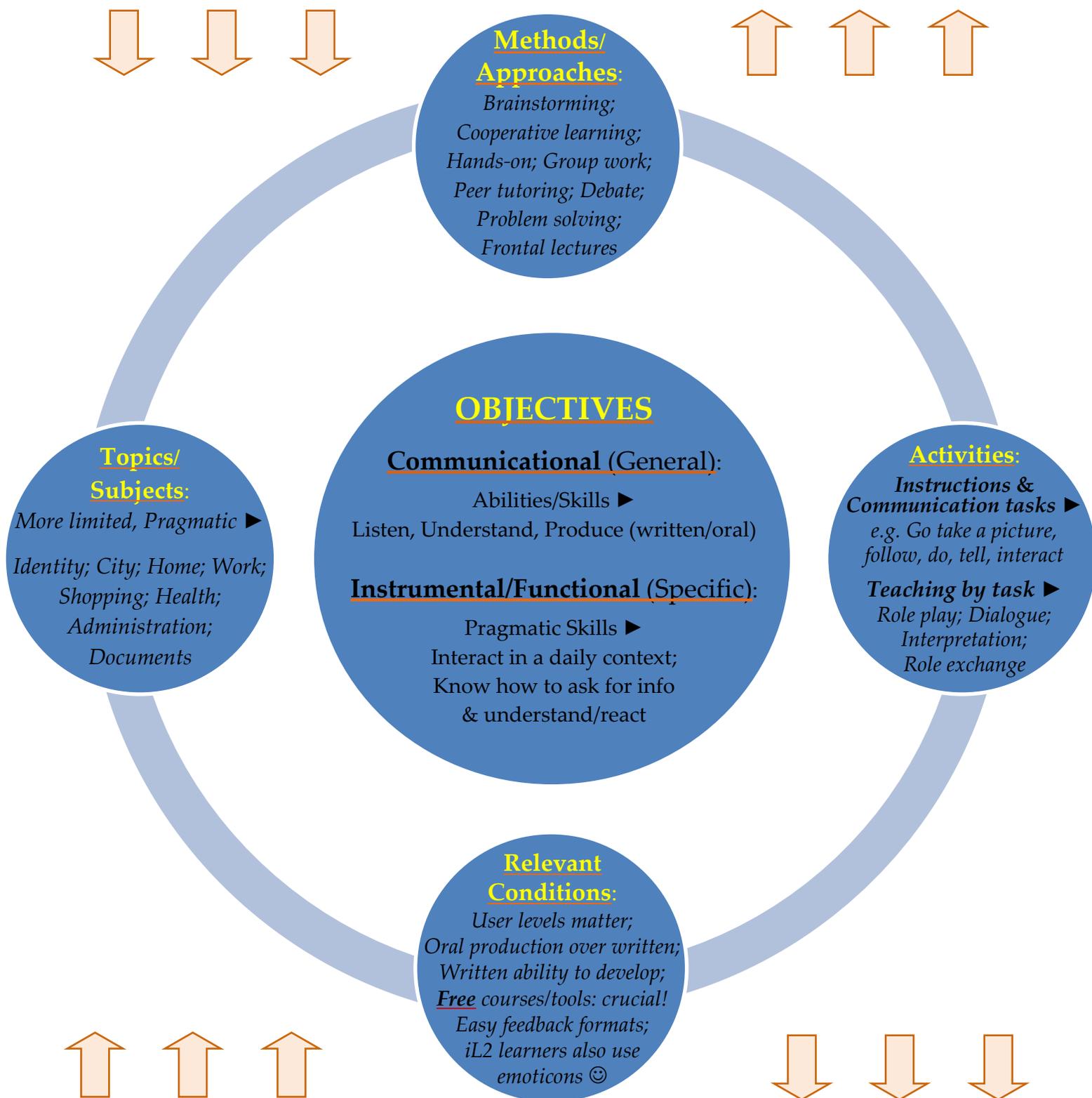
At the beginning, when they do not even know a word in the language of the hosting country, studying alone is not realistic.

Teaching a language means also shifting the trainer role to a **facilitator** one. In our context (ICT integration for higher added value and effectiveness), it also means guiding the use of tools according to a context, as well as adopting a **holistic approach**: supporting social, educational and economic integration. Essentially, the aim is to provide 'life-skills' support to the beneficiaries in their integration in the hosting country, and develop their autonomy and basic competences.

<i>Some critical points</i>	<i>Some positive aspects</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Lack of ICT tools providing assessment and evaluation addressed to illiterate and low educated migrants at pre A1 level✓ The tools must include some “formal” track records (e.g. evaluation during the progression), as the student should assess where he or she stands, go back to previous lessons, step by step, for revision✓ Availability of basic ICT tools and Wi-Fi free connection✓ Attendance to courses are not regular✓ Digital illiteracy is a cornerstone	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Increase of motivation among students✓ Possibility for teachers to involve students with different skills✓ Fast improvement of oral and written understanding and oral skills, involving verbal and non-verbal language

ICT-Tools • Media • Platforms

Video / Text / Images / Interactive exercises / “Choose the right action” / Serious Games
Potential shortcomings related to technology access, ownership, usage levels



Context • Implications

CMS (*group-suitable*) • simple Blogs • Homework • Cell phone mostly • Teach basic ICT apps • Gaming • Alternate Real & Virtual exercises (*in-class & out*) • User-friendly Grading & Testing (*tasks, final results, processes*): Flexible testing options • Self-Evaluation (*what I learned, how I behaved, what is my contribution*)