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Know-how Guidelines

How to engage older
learners in the process
of language learning
through Hidden Culture



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These guidelines are a part of Timeless Project “How to engage older learners in the process of language learning through Hidden Culture” completed by specialists working in adult education from Turkey, Slovenia, Spain, Bulgaria, Belgium and Latvia.

The partners were concerned about the lack of awareness of older adults' participation in lifelong learning, social and cultural initiatives in their societies, and the implications it has for adult educators. As a result, Timeless project partnership aims to enhance professional development of adult educators working with older adults through new training opportunities leading to the development of EFL learning materials based on cultural heritage in collaboration with adult learners.

"Know-How Guidelines" consist of a description of the course modules and central subjects all included in nineteen pages by Timeless project partnership as follows: University Of Usak, Slovenian Third Age University, DomSpain Consulting, EUROGEO, Nikanor and Zini Foundation.



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Introduction

The purpose of this Know-How Guide is for adult educators to engage older learners in the process of language learning while developing learning materials. Older learners are expected to learn about both intangible cultural heritage and the language system. Moreover, older learners will be creators of the contents regarding the intangible cultural heritage. The Know-How Guide suggests approaches, methods, and techniques to be used by older learners in their on-site research on 'Hidden Culture'.

'Hidden Culture' can be described as the intangible cultural heritage to which older learners jointly attribute social value. They will be encouraged to dig into their collective memories and decide which items of intangible cultural heritage are important to them and why they want to pass the knowledge about them onto future generations. Moreover, the Know-How Guide embraces methods adult educators can use to trigger their learners' primary motivation for learning and engage them in the learning process: learning-by-doing, cooperative and collaborative learning, blended or multimodal learning, etc.

Adult educators can use both the Course for Educators and the Know-How Guide to support the delivery of the course. The Course is divided into the following six modules (short summaries and links to them are provided below):

- Introduction - Learning foreign languages in culturally-inclusive environments;
- Development of Inclusive Learning Culture: Teaching Older Learners - Development of Inclusive Learning Culture;
- Collaborative Learning: How to understand and operationalize collaborative learning;



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- Methods of Cultural Interpretation;
- Digital tools and techniques applied to cultural interpretation;
- Strategies for development of teaching materials for foreign language learning.

The Know-How Guide will assist adult educators in delivering the Course, particularly as it concerns:

- Recruiting older learners;
- Selecting intangible cultural items jointly with older learners;
- Collecting knowledge and learning resources;
- Creating stories and narratives;
- Digitizing the learning experience: StoryMaps and Kahoot;
- Hints about evaluation.

More importantly, the Know-How Guide is devoted to connecting the 'Hidden Culture' items with the process of learning foreign languages. Namely, mastering a language is impossible without learning about the culture related to the language. There are numerous languages in Europe to explore and master and there is thus a rich cultural legacy in Europe to discover. Connecting languages and cultural legacy are what we are aiming at with both the Course for Educators and the Know-How Guide.



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Course modules in a nutshell

INTRODUCTION - Learning foreign languages in culturally-inclusive environments

In this introductory module, you will learn the difference between tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Moreover, you will learn why education is needed in our knowledge society at all stages of life, old age included. Meaningful learning stimulates the brain throughout life. In addition, you will learn about the benefits of different methods, particularly blended or multimodal learning. You will also learn about the benefits of combining language learning and learning about the culture. You will discover some key factors important for high-quality and digital education for adults and older adults.

Language learning cannot be understood without learning about the culture and vice versa. Being a part of the culture, intangible cultural heritage is everywhere. There are many items of cultural heritage in Europe, including languages that can be discovered, practised, and learned.

Over the last decades, adult education has been gaining recognition as being useful and important for both individuals and society. Though it is difficult to combine learning about cultural heritage and learning a language, the positive results of such learning are obvious. Learning about cultural heritage supports the deeper learners' comprehension of a given language and culture.

Find out more: <https://www.eutimeless.info/en/course/0>

Teaching Older Learners: Development of Inclusive Learning Culture

In this module, you will learn about old age related to the concept of older adult education (geragogy). Moreover, you will discover how holistic education



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impacts curiosity and stimulates personal growth (the development of individual cognitive, emotional, artistic, creative, and spiritual abilities). You will learn about inclusive education (creating and maintaining an engaging learning environment) where learners feel safe, remaining open to new ideas and perspectives while feeling respected by the educator and their peers.

Learning is not just about gaining knowledge, skills, or competencies for professional life or jobs. Learning changes the learners' attitude to life impacting their life and wellbeing. It stimulates (older) learners mentally and emotionally and enables them to be socially and physically engaged.

The traditional approaches to learning based on an imposed syllabus and learning methods may be useful in formal education, but not in non-formal education which has to be flexible and as close to adults' life as possible. Older people bring to the educational process their lifelong and life-wide experience, their cultural background, individual and social values, and much more. As a result, adult educators should apply a holistic approach to the learning of older learners. They should take into account their need to be autonomous, free, and flexible. Therefore, they should make the educational/learning environment more inclusive and education more tailor-made.

Find out more: <https://www.eutimeless.info/en/course/1>

Collaborative Learning: How to understand and operationalize collaborative learning

There is no social inclusion of older people without interaction and cooperation. Collaborative learning is a teaching strategy applied in small groups. From time to time it requires the teacher's intervention only to maximise learners' interaction and learning. Collaborative learning is about working with others to



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understand new concepts, structure learning resources, and set learning goals. Above all, it is about mutual help and the distribution of the assigned tasks. It focuses on relationships among the learners which are observed, analyzed, and reported by one of the members of the learning group. Collaborative learning may take place in academic environments but preferably it leads to the participation of learners in the life of the community. In collaborative learning learners are socially interdependent, intrinsic motivation for learning is triggered, social and individual skills are improved, but learners have to be successful at all stages of their learning. Learners learn in small heterogeneous groups. Teachers should explain what the learners are supposed to learn using simple language and his/her own examples. Each learner is responsible for their tasks.

Find out more: <https://www.eutimeless.info/en/course/2>

Methods of Cultural Interpretation

In this module, you will learn why the relationship between language and culture is essential and why language and culture should be considered as a whole.

Culture is evolving continuously. Language is an important cultural element reflected in ways of speaking and writing that differ among cultures and, likewise, within a given culture. Culture incorporated into language learning is useful not only for better learning and understanding a language, but it also improves understanding and appreciating a foreign culture, discarding stereotypes and prejudices. Moreover, it helps the learners to be more aware of the value of their own culture.

The inclusion of cultural knowledge, skills, values, behaviour into language learning builds the knowledge about the cultural system and the most important



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values existing in the countries where a language is spoken. It improves understanding of social patterns, routines, and behaviours in these countries.

Find out more: <https://www.eutimeless.info/en/course/3>

Digital tools and techniques applied to cultural interpretation

Digital skills have great importance in all areas of adult education in terms of educators' professional and pedagogical competencies as well as improving the skills of learners. These competencies can be used to empower learners to participate in active and personalised learning. Digital skills may pertain to aspects of organisational communication, reflective practises, co-creation, collaboration, or technical aspects like Cloud Computing. The latter makes the data, including tools and materials accessible for all parties whenever and wherever they are connected to the internet.

Cloud Computing provides many advantages to educators. It saves them time and money while they create innovative, interactive, and up-to-date learning environments which allow online communication, collaboration, and participation. However, educators should consider the following four questions before integrating digital technologies into their educational processes:

- Is the use of digital technology the main focus of the learning process, or is it just supplementing other learning methods?
- Does it allow the educator to monitor the learner's learning experience?
- Is it suitable and flexible enough to meet the educator's individual needs and strengthen the educator's professional competencies?
- Does it allow the educator to become a facilitator of learning?



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Find out more: <https://eutimeless.info/en/course/4>

Strategies for development of teaching materials for foreign language

For this project two models/methods/approaches to language learning have been selected: the Gradual Release of responsibility model and the Use of Graphic Novels as teaching materials.

The Gradual Release of responsibility model consists of three stages. In the first stage, adult educators give reading instructions to learners and model the comprehension strategies such as think-aloud, predicting, etc. During the second stage, adult educators help adult learners' understanding by means of collaborative learning. If needed, they may provide their own examples and use the method of demonstration. In the third stage, adult learners take responsibility and independently use what they have learned in the first two stages. By the end of the third stage, it is expected that learners will be able to comprehend and produce texts in any form including written texts, oral texts, digital texts, or even texts that are performed on stage.

The Use of Graphic Novels as teaching materials has been discussed in several studies on adult language learning. Graphic novels provide authentic dialogues helping learners of foreign languages to improve their understanding of the everyday conversation. They also enable adult learners to increase and strengthen their vocabulary since graphic novels include rich visuals. These visuals help language learners to guess/understand the meaning of the new words and structures.

Find out more: <https://www.eutimeless.info/en/course/5>



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Recruiting older learners

The staff of educational providers establish initial contact with potential learners, giving them information on the educational provider's profile and services.

Establishing or mediating personal contact is essential. Mediators can be professionals, freelancers, volunteers, or staff of the educational provider.

Recruiting older learners is possible through partner organisations or individuals working in other sectors of education such as pre-school, primary, secondary or tertiary education. Recruiting is also made possible through organisations and individuals that do not belong to the educational sector (e.g. health sector, social or employment services, community development, migrant associations, church communities, etc.). Networked partners may refer potential learners directly to the provider of the educational programme or they may give the provider an opportunity to present their programmes. The networked partners may offer an informal setting for the presentation of the educational programme - a setting that potential learners are familiar with. Getting the support of a partner whom the potential older learners trust may be helpful.

Establishing contact through organisations and individuals acknowledged by the potential learners' community will give you access to potential learners and access to local knowledge. If you have been in touch with the group you want to address before, the peer-to-peer approach might be effective: former participants are asked to promote the services among their peers.

Word-of-mouth recommendations are often the best way to attract participants.

Older people are mostly pushed to the edge of society like other socially marginalised groups. The example of the "Red Thread" course at Kvarnby Folk High School in Sweden might help understand the possible approach to recruiting older learners for the educational programme. The "Red Thread" is



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aimed at Roma women with a low level of qualification. Distrusting schools and public authorities are common within the Roma groups in Sweden. Two former participants, themselves with Roma origins, worked as ambassadors and helped Kvarnby Folk High School get in touch with the Roma women in their social environment. The ambassadors invited them to enrol in the offered course. Due to their origins, they were more easily accepted and listened to by the Roma community. For further information go to

<http://www.folac.se/images/OED/redthreadkvarnby.pdf>

Selecting intangible cultural items jointly with older learners

The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage defines intangible cultural heritage as the practises, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills that communities, groups, and individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. That also includes the instruments, objects, artefacts, and cultural spaces associated with communities.

Intangible cultural heritage is passed down from generation to generation and constantly recreated by communities and groups within their environment, relationship with nature, and history. It also provides them with a sense of identity and wholeness and promotes respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.

Intangible cultural heritage takes on many forms, for example, singing and/or expression using the voice, performing arts, social practises, rituals, and festive events; knowledge and practice about nature and the universe; traditional craftsmanship. Intangible cultural heritage can consist of more than one form.



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In order to select intangible cultural items together with older learners, it is necessary to invoke recollections of their past and present while comparing their lifestyles. The differences might help remember the intricacies of their childhood and growing up, for example, daily tasks that have become a tradition and are passed down to generations, or certain activities during celebrations in the family, or in the community, that are essential for the region at present and also phrases, expressions, lyrics that are only understood in a specific area. Various examples of intangible culture will help select forms of heritage and promote their identification.

Most probably, older learners will provide the most diverse suggestions. Some suggestions will be convergent or will be overlapping. Such suggestions can become an item of intangible cultural heritage if the community of learners attributes their social value. Or, to put it differently, if the community of learners recognizes its value for society and the preservation of its identity.

Collecting knowledge and learning resources

When collecting knowledge and learning resources, keep in mind that an important component of finding and using the resources to explore topics is evaluating the quality of those resources. In an information-rich world, learners must be able to determine if a resource is reliable and valid enough to use in their work.

It is important that the educator gives examples and suggests various resources the learners might use to study and illustrate the selected item of intangible cultural heritage. The sources, however, depend on the topic and the language abilities of the learners. Valuable sources could be scientific articles, but they are too difficult to be used in a language study group. Consequently, the valuable sources would be videos on Youtube, radio shows, articles in daily magazines,



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magazines, advertisements, websites, TedX lectures, city or national archives, private collections, etc. Sources are also interviews with witnesses, their memories, however frail. To illustrate this point, if your learners decided to study women's rights and the opposition between men and women in their times, the so-called womens' magazines from the past could be a valuable source for their research (the headings, the contents, the advertisements, the stereotypes).

The learners will probably write a story or create a Story Map in their native or preferably foreign language. If they opt for translation of the story, written in their native language, they can do it only after you as an educator has helped them to reduce the story to very simple and short sentences and structures. You as an educator might need to modify the text of the story or the story-map to serve your linguistic goals. You should not forget that writing a story/narrative and learning about the chosen item of intangible cultural heritage will be a basis for learning items of the language system (vocabulary, morphology, pronunciation as well as speech acts, social patterns, etc.).

Creating stories and narratives

Older learners will be collecting data and narratives regarding the selected item of intangible cultural heritage. Since this process needs to be structured, they should fill in the matrix.

Title:

Country/region/of origin:

Location (if applicable):

Timeline (if applicable): When it appeared and how long it has lasted?

Type of intangible cultural heritage: (i.e. festival, meeting place, dance, cuisine, habits, customs, manners, ideology, identity, family, local community etc.)



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Description and history: The social value attributed by the community of learners to the item of intangible cultural heritage. Why is it considered an item of cultural heritage?

Degree of importance: Local, national, international.

Links to sources: Books, articles, archive documents, pictures, videos.

Warning: Before using pictures, videos, articles check the copyrights!

Digitising the learning: StoryMaps and Kahoot

Some tools exist on the Internet that can be used to digitise the content for the use of adult learners. In these guidelines, we present two online tools that can be applied in study groups to help them acquire knowledge and have fun at the same time. Both of them may be used during and at the end of the learning process demonstrating the learners' learning.

ArcGIS StoryMaps

This is an online tool that is used to tell a story through texts, pictures, maps, etc. Visual items added throughout the whole text can explain more of the story details. They can be placed on the right, on the left, in the middle, or at the end where the text is finished. Video and audio files/links can be added/embedded to make the content more visual and easier to picture. Also, interactive maps of the areas that the cultural stories are about can be inserted.

The process of creating a story is quite easy. It needs a title, a picture on the cover, and a text. There are many templates and "box" options (for texts, pictures, videos, maps, audio files, etc.) from which the author can choose to make the story interesting and visually attractive. When the story is finished, it can be published on the website with the name of the author and with the



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picture on the cover. Free individual accounts for ArcGIS Storymaps are available: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/>

Kahoot

This is an online platform for creating games about learning content. On the website <https://kahoot.com/> you can create questions with two to four answers to choose from. Only one of them has to be correct. When the game is created, it can be projected on the screen. When you press play, a number appears on the screen with the link to the website. Each player has to go on their phone to that website (<https://kahoot.it/>) and enter the number of the game. After they have entered the number of the game, they have to choose a name that will be projected on the screen (nickname). When all players are in, you can start the game.

The participants have to choose the answer on their phone screens. The complete answers appear only on the projected screen, whereas the players see only the form and the colour of the answers. The participants get points for giving the correct answer, for being the fastest to answer, and also for choosing more than three correct answers in a row. At the end appears a podium with three winning players that got the most points, the first one being in the spotlight.

Hints about evaluation

There are a number of evaluation tests that most educators are familiar with and use readily: multiple choice, true-false, essay, short answers, filling gaps, etc. These and other tests can be incorporated into self evaluation/self assessment.



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Any educational programme, its elements, and dimensions can be evaluated, but bear in mind that evaluation is always done with the user in mind. Namely, evaluation is different when done for the participants in education, the educator, the co-financing institutions or, to put it differently, it must be useful for somebody and should have clear purposes. Items are to be evaluated according to specified intentions of which the developers of the tests should be clearly aware.

Meaningful assessment models must measure the input contributed by learners and teachers, the educational programme with methods, facilities, and finally the output of the changes in the participants' behaviour. Briefly, they measure the impact of education.

Evaluation can occur at any moment of education. At the beginning (initial evaluation) or at the end (terminal evaluation). It can be summative, offering an overview of the education performed.

So, evaluation measures the effectiveness of the elements and dimensions of education performed. Moreover, the evaluation indicates whether the targeted educational goals and objectives were attained. It helps to redesign the educational programme, its contents, and goals as well as methods used, etc.

Kirkpatrick's evaluation model

Kirkpatrick's evaluation model has four levels of assessment. Due to its simplicity, this model seems most appropriate for evaluating educational programmes. Evaluation is performed on four levels.

1. The lowest level of assessment is participants' response to the educational experience or the participant's satisfaction with the education performed. It has little to do with acquiring new knowledge and skills. It just measures the level of



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satisfaction which depends on the participant's latent expectations, attitudes, participant's mood, and many other factors.

Unfortunately, this lowest level of assessment is most often used. Likert-scale tests, to name just one type of such tests, show the intensity of learners' feelings containing equal numbers of positive and negative positions.

The format of a typical five-level Likert item, for example, could be:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

2. The second level has to do with measuring the increase in knowledge, skills, and improvement of participants' attitudes. This level test usually measures the learners' existing performance. The test is repeated at the end of education. The difference in performance measures the impact of education. Such tests are frequent in language education, selecting everyday topics and situations that can be tackled with quite simple or more complex language as a result of education. To illustrate this point, learners can describe an intangible cultural item with simple words using short sentences without the discourse markers, or they can do it in a more complex and structured way at the end of education. In the Timeless project, participants could define intangible cultural heritage at the beginning of education and at the end.

Initial definition and description of intangible cultural heritage

This place is an item of intangible cultural heritage. Poets, writers, artists, politicians used to meet here. They exchanged opinions on many matters.



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Final definition /description of intangible cultural heritage

While tangible cultural heritage is defined top down for its beauty or symbolic value, the intangible cultural heritage items are defined by a given community attributing them some social value. Intangible cultural heritage has to do with processes rather than products to which processes lead.

This particular place is an item of intangible cultural heritage. It has been defined as such, not for its beauty, but for what was going on there. Not only poets, writers, and other artists did keep gathering there discussing social matters and exchanging their opinions, but also some famous politicians, etc.

3. Change in behaviour with participants transposing what they have learned into their real life. Routine everyday social or work situations may be enriched and handled better due to newly acquired knowledge. Change in behaviour can be tested by questions like:

What have you learned that helps you survive better in your family...?

In what way your attitude towards your grown up children has changed eventually due to our educational programme?

4. Results. This is the goal of the conducted education. Due to education, a new educational programme can be designed, new social practices organized, a project can be developed, attitude towards a topic can change, stereotypes can be alleviated, new interests may be raised, a book can be written. To illustrate this point, students of architecture at Slovenian U3A conducted ethnographic-descriptive research, wrote and designed *My personal Town Tours*, a guide containing their preferred trails through the city of Ljubljana. They did research into public and meaningful places for older people and communicated their research results to the general and professional audiences.



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Following a film education programme, participants started being interested in visual literacy. They organised round tables, wrote scripts, directed, produced, and edited films, presented their films in festivals, exhibitions, etc. On the other hand, students of journalism made a bi-lingual booklet called *Bread in the past and present* containing interviews with different professionals and consumers of bread. Students of arts wrote a monograph on an unknown Slovenian painter, etc. Students of history contributed to erecting a monument to Austrian soldiers in a small village in Slovenia.