



Digitally-Enhanced Foreign Language Education
For Active European Citizenship and Democratic Culture
Project No. 2024-1-RO01-KA220-HED-000249951

Conceptual Framework



Co-funded by
the European Union

Contents

Acknowledgments	4
1. Introductory note about the role of language education in fostering democratic culture among students.....	6
2. EU frameworks, educational theories and practices arguing for integration of competences for democratic culture in the foreign language curricula	8
Introduction	8
Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture.....	9
Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.....	13
Intercultural Citizenship Education	18
3. Learning Outcomes of Foreign Language Programmes Incorporating Democratic Competences.....	22
Introduction	22
Strategies to Achieve Outcomes at Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced Levels	25
Conclusion.....	29
Learning outcomes of foreign language programmes incorporating democratic competences.....	30
4. Overview of foreign language teaching methodologies.....	34
Introduction	34
Task-based language learning (TBLL), or task-based language teaching (TBLT)	37
Content and language integrated learning (CLIL)	42
Computer-assisted language learning (CALL)	44
Experiential learning (EL)	45
Conclusion.....	46
5. Challenge-based learning – methodology, rationale and good practices.....	50
Introduction to challenge-based learning.....	50
Theoretical foundations of CBL	51
CBL in foreign language education	52
Implementing CBL in higher education curricula	53
Case studies and best practices	54
Challenges and future directions.....	55
Conclusion.....	56

6. Survey and focus group results.....	57
SURVEY RESULTS	57
Identification of Respondents.....	57
Justification – Motivation and Experience	58
Motivation for the ENLACED Project	62
Self-Assessment and Reflection on Democratic Competence.....	66
Conclusions.....	67
FOCUS GROUP RESULTS	68
Introduction.....	68
Participants.....	68
Key Themes and Findings	69
Conclusion.....	85
7. ENLACED Framework Proposal – English as a foreign language.....	86
Course Description	86
Course Objectives	86
Course Content and Structure	87
8. ENLACED Framework Proposal – RO, BG, UKR, and GR as foreign languages.....	88
Course Description	88
Course Objectives	88
Course Content and Structure	89

Acknowledgments

We extend our sincere thanks to the focus group participants from Bulgaria, Cyprus, Romania, and Ukraine. Comprising institutional representatives and external experts, the group contributed relevant perspectives grounded in current educational and technological practice. Their insights significantly informed Section 6 of this Conceptual Framework, particularly in relation to modern language pedagogy, intercultural citizenship education, and innovation in teaching practices. We are grateful for their thoughtful contributions and collaborative spirit.

Participants:

- Assoc. prof. Alexandra Silvaş Ph.D., Teacher Training Department, G.E. Palade University of Medicine, Pharmacy, Science, and Technology of Targu Mures, Romania;
- Senior Lecturer Nicoleta Marcu, Ph.D., Department of Sciences and Letters 1., G.E. Palade University of Medicine, Pharmacy, Science, and Technology of Targu Mures, Romania;
- Senior Lecturer Adrian Năznea, Ph.D., Department of Sciences and Letters 1., G.E. Palade University of Medicine, Pharmacy, Science, and Technology of Targu Mures, Romania;
- Gabriela Şandru, English teacher, trainer and mentor, Tudor Vladimirescu Middle School in Târgu Mureş, Romania;
- Ioana Onea, Lawyer and trainer in educational projects, Mures Bar Association, Romania;
- Ciprian Năprădean Ph.D., Director and editor-in-chief of Editura Edu in Târgu Mureş, Romania;
- Associate Professor Dr. Silvia Vasileva, University of National and World Economy, Sofia, Bulgaria, Department of Foreign Languages and Applied Linguistics;
- Senior Lecturer Mariyana Mircheva, University of National and World Economy, Sofia, Bulgaria, Department of Foreign Languages and Applied Linguistics;
- Senior Lecturer Radmila Kaisheva, University of National and World Economy, Sofia, Bulgaria, Department of Foreign Languages and Applied Linguistics;
- Associate Professor Dr. Rositsa Ishpekova University of National and World Economy, Sofia, Bulgaria, Department of Foreign Languages and Applied Linguistics;
- Associate Professor Dr. Rositsa Ishpekova, St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia, Bulgaria, Department of English and American Studies;
- Dr. Elena Simeonova, Association of Language Schools in Bulgaria;
- Dr. Kristian Zhelev, Alpha Class Ltd., teaching manager, Sofia, Bulgaria;
- Rymma Mylenkova, Visual artist active in community public art, Ukraine;
- Dr. Vorontsova Anna, Ph.D., Senior Lecturer, Sumy State University, Ukraine;

- Vladyslav Dibrova, Sumy Youth Organization “Lyceum”; CISC Center for Public Policy Studies; “Sumy” Public Foundation, Ukraine;
- Rudenko Maria, PhD student at the Department of Germanic Philology, Sumy State University, Ukraine;
- Arthur Korol, PhD student at the Department of Germanic Philology, Sumy State University, Ukraine;
- Maksym Shyshkin, Postgraduate student at the Department of Germanic Philology, Sumy State University, Ukraine;
- Prof. Rossitsa Terzieva-Artemis, Professor of Literature, Head, Department of Languages and Literature, University of Nicosia, Cyprus;
- Prof. Maria Economidou-Kogetsidis, Professor of English and Applied Linguistics, Department of Languages and Literature, University of Nicosia, Cyprus;
- Dr Christine Savvidou, Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics, Department of Languages and Literature, University of Nicosia, Cyprus;
- Dr Andry Sophocleous, English Teacher in State Secondary Schools in Cyprus;
- Ms Anna Karapanou, English Teacher in State Secondary Schools in Cyprus & PhD candidate in Applied Linguistics;
- Ms Amalia Mavrogeni, Operation Assistant, International Organization for Migration (IOM) Cyprus;
- Borislava Zaharieva-Tomova, Managing Director, Tetra Solutions Ltd., Sofia, Bulgaria;
- Asya Kocheva, Project Manager and Digital Designer, Tetra Solutions Ltd., Sofia, Bulgaria;
- Zlatka Kamova, Senior Teacher of English, St. Kliment Ohridski Secondary School, Burgas, Bulgaria;
- Olesya Boicheva, Teacher of English, Maksim Gorki Secondary School, Stara Zagora, Bulgaria;
- Iva Rangelova-Ilieva, Teacher of English, Vocational School for Mechanical and Electrical Engineering, Sevlievo, Bulgaria;
- Milena Stoycheva, Language Centre “Bright”, Yambol, Bulgaria.

1. Introductory note about the role of language education in fostering democratic culture among students

Language education plays a crucial role in the development of democratic culture among students. The ability to communicate effectively and understand the diverse ways people express their thoughts, beliefs, and values is at the core of fostering mutual respect, tolerance, and democratic participation. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the need for individuals who are not only proficient in foreign languages but also equipped with the skills and attitudes necessary for participating in a democratic society grows more important. Language education, therefore, must transcend its traditional focus on grammar, vocabulary, and basic communication skills and instead prepare students to engage critically and thoughtfully in the social, cultural, and political spheres of life.

In the context of democratic culture, language is both a tool and a reflection of societal values. It shapes the way individuals perceive and interact with the world around them, influences their sense of identity, and enables them to navigate complex social landscapes. A key aspect of democratic culture is the ability to engage in meaningful dialogue, to listen to others' perspectives, and to participate in decision-making processes that affect the collective well-being. Language education that integrates democratic competences provides students with the skills to engage in these processes in an informed, reflective, and respectful manner.

In the current geopolitical landscape, marked by social polarization, disinformation, and challenges to democratic norms across Europe and beyond, integrating democratic competences into foreign language education is more vital than ever. Education in general – and language education in particular – must proactively equip young people with the tools to respond constructively and ethically. In this context, the ENLACED Erasmus+ project is timely and necessary, emphasizing intercultural understanding, critical thinking, and active citizenship through language education.

Rooted in the partners' shared conviction that language education can drive societal transformation at both micro and macro levels, the ENLACED project seeks to modernize foreign language education at the tertiary level through a digitally enhanced, challenge-based learning approach focused on European citizenship and democracy. This Conceptual Framework lays the groundwork for a collective strategy to reshape foreign language teaching and learning within existing university programmes.

By integrating language tasks with democratic competences, the project promotes a comprehensive and experiential learning model that aligns with contemporary educational trends. This approach is expected to offer learners a holistic and meaningful language learning experience, with the potential to generate significant impact on end-users.

By helping students engage with complex global issues through informed dialogue and empathetic communication, this approach strengthens the foundations of democratic culture and promotes resilience against authoritarian tendencies. It empowers learners to participate in democratic life both within their own communities and as part of a broader European and global citizenry. This initiative marks a transformative step towards reimagining language education as a dynamic, interdisciplinary space for cultivating both linguistic proficiency and civic responsibility.

2. EU frameworks, educational theories and practices arguing for integration of competences for democratic culture in the foreign language curricula

Author:

Evgenia NIKULINA

Affiliation:

Tetra Solutions Ltd., Bulgaria

Introduction

In September 2023, at the 26th session of the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education, Year 2025 was declared as the European Year of Digital Citizenship Education. This initiative seeks to raise awareness of citizenship and democracy issues across the European community, encourage active participation in democratic culture, and promote peaceful coexistence in a culturally diverse and digitally enriched world (Council of Europe Portal, 2024). Within this context, the ENLACED project, which focuses on developing the skills, values, attitudes, and knowledge essential for democratic culture and intercultural dialogue, is both timely and highly significant.

Multilingual (or plurilingual)¹ competence, defined as “the ability to use different languages appropriately and effectively for communication” (Council Recommendation, 2019, p. 16), is recognized as a valuable tool for fostering intercultural and democratic competences (ibid, p. 15). This principle is further highlighted in the Council of Europe’s Recommendation on “The Importance of Plurilingual and Intercultural Education for Democratic Culture.” The Recommendation underscores the significance of plurilingual competence for the following purposes (Council of Europe, 2022, pp. 9–10):

- understanding, assessing and formulating arguments essential to democracy;
- appreciating diverse perspectives and opinions;
- contributing to societal integration and participation in democratic culture;
- enhancing the educational and social inclusion of migrant and marginalised learners.

In this Recommendation, the Council of Europe urges higher education institutions – among education providers at other levels – to prepare graduates with the linguistic and cultural skills necessary to engage in the democratic processes of Europe’s diverse societies,

¹ The terms “multilingual” and “plurilingual” are used interchangeably, having in mind that the Council of Europe uses the term “plurilingualism” for referring to multiple language competences of individuals, and European Union’s official documents use “multilingualism” to describe both individual competences and presence of two or more languages in a community or society (explanatory note in Council Recommendation, 2019, p. 15).

emphasizing the interconnection between plurilingual and intercultural education and education for democratic culture (ibid, p. 10 and p. 27).

The ENLACED project is based on the rationale that European universities can effectively contribute to this priority by integrating competences for democratic culture and intercultural dialogue (hereafter referred to as “democratic competences”) into tertiary-level foreign language curricula. This chapter explores the European reference frameworks and educational theories and practices that lay foundation for achieving the objectives of the ENLACED project.

Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture

Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) was published by the Council of Europe in April 2018 in response to the need to provide a systematic approach to teaching, learning and assessment of democratic competences within the education systems in Europe. The Framework comprises:

- **A model of competences** for democratic culture and intercultural dialogue: 20 competences divided into four areas – Values, Attitudes, Skills and Knowledge and critical understanding (RFCDC, Volume 1).
- **Descriptors** for each of the 20 competences included in the model: a set of 135 key descriptors which indicate one of the three levels of proficiency - basic, intermediate and advanced, and a more detailed list of 447 descriptors, including additional descriptors often located in between basic and intermediate, or intermediate and advanced levels (RFCDC, Volume 2).
- **Guidance on implementation** of the model: how the model can be used in various educational contexts (RFCDC, Volume 3).

The Framework is rooted in humanistic ideas reflected in the concept of *Bildung*, a cornerstone of Western European educational theory developed by thinkers such as Wilhelm von Humboldt, Johann Gottfried Herder, and Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig, and later expanded by Erich Weniger, Paul Ricoeur, and Wolfgang Klafki, among others. *Bildung* is understood as a lifelong learning process that empowers individuals to cultivate self-formation, recognize their own interests within society, and act as responsible citizens. Rather than emphasizing the acquisition of factual knowledge, it focuses on uncovering value and meaning. This theory posits that educators should place learners at the centre of their own learning processes, supporting them in developing independent thought, sound judgment, and the ability to engage in reflective and responsible actions within and in interaction with society (Sjöström and Eilks, 2020).

Aligned with the concept of *Bildung*, the Framework emphasizes that learners should be: aware of the challenges they face in society, capable of reflecting on the consequences of their decisions, and mindful of what they can do and what they should refrain from doing. The competences outlined in the Framework are essential for cultivating these abilities.

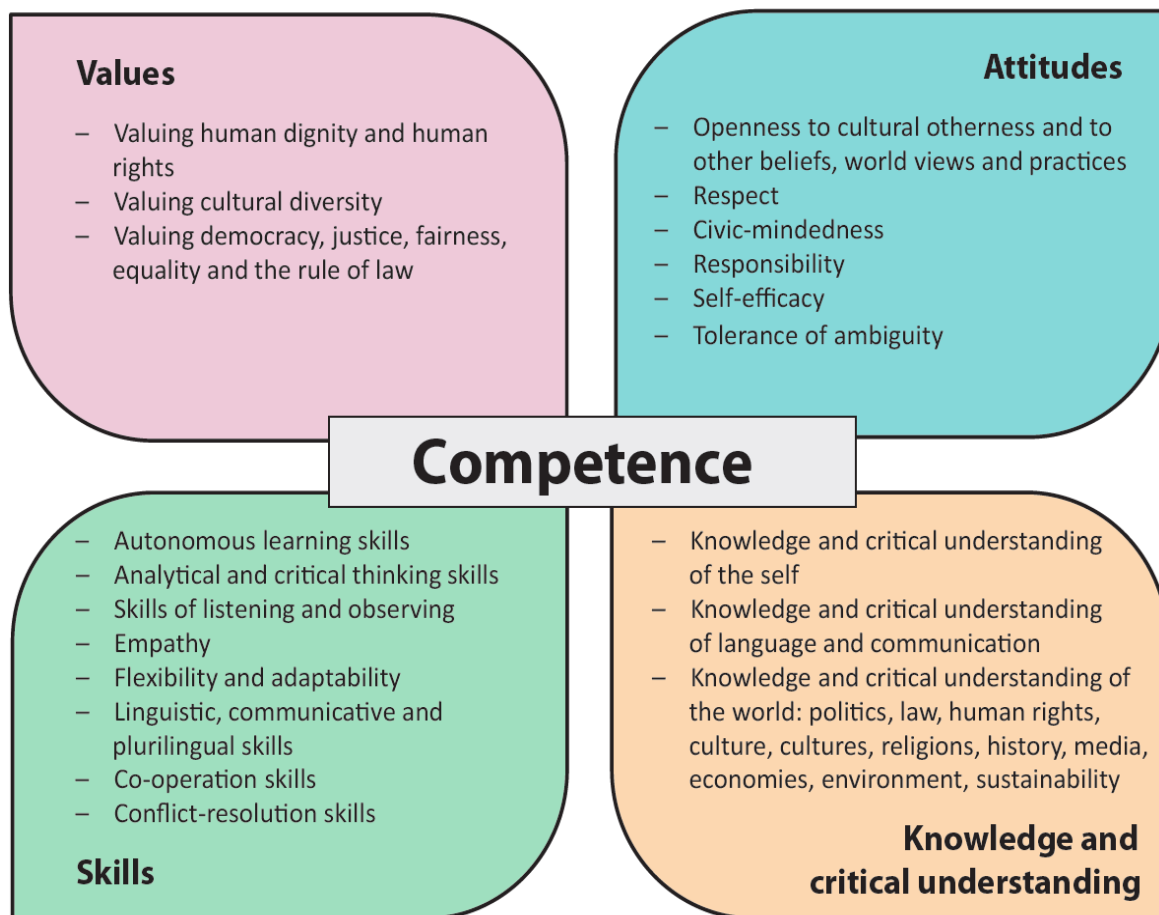
Competence for democratic culture are defined as “the ability to mobilise and deploy relevant psychological resources (namely values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and/or understanding) in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges and opportunities presented by democratic [and intercultural] situations” (RFCDC Volume 1, 2018, p. 34). Democratic and intercultural situations can arise in both physical and digital contexts. This includes democratic debates and intercultural encounters that occur not only in face-to-face interactions and traditional printed or broadcast media but also in online spaces such as social networks, blogs, and email communication. Consequently, the competences outlined in the Framework are relevant for democratic citizenship, human rights education, intercultural education, and digital citizenship education (ibid).

The authors of the Framework emphasize that intercultural competence is an integral component of democratic competences, given that we live in culturally diverse democratic societies. The Framework also posits that the acquisition of democratic competences is preconditioned by the acquisition of language competences, because language serves as a means of participation in democratic culture. Language enables individuals to express their opinions, engage in dialogue, understand diverse perspectives, and negotiate shared meanings, all of which are essential for active participation in democratic processes.

The acquisition of competences for democratic culture is a lifelong process, because people continuously experience social interactions in various context and reflect on them. This means that teaching and learning should take into consideration the context in which democratic competences are practiced, and assessment should include the means of recognition of all levels of competence. The Framework provides guidance for teaching, learning and assessment of democratic competences through the model of 20 competences and the descriptors of the competence proficiency levels.

The competence model presented in RFCDC includes the following values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The 20 competences included in the competence model



Source: Council of Europe. RFCDC Volume 1, 2018, p. 40

Values represent beliefs of an individual about the desirable goal that should be pursued. They serve as guiding principles for deciding how to act and provide criteria for evaluating and justifying actions, opinions and behaviour. Values of human dignity, human rights, cultural diversity, democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law underpin democratic competence, because they constitute the exact set of beliefs pertaining to the democratic political order (RFCDC Volume 1, 2018, pp. 41-42).

Attitudes are defined as a person's general mental disposition toward someone or something, such as an individual, group, institution, issue, event, or symbol. Attitudes are composed of four elements: an opinion about the object, an emotional response to it, a positive or negative evaluation of it, and an inclination to behave toward the object in a particular way (ibid, p. 43). The Framework includes such attitudes as: openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices, respect, civil-mindedness, responsibility, self-efficacy, and tolerance of ambiguity.

Skills are a person's abilities to carry out complex, well-organised actions, either cognitive or behavioural, in order to achieve a particular end or goal (ibid, p. 48). The following skills are included in the Framework: autonomous learning, analytical and critical thinking,

listening and observation skills, empathy, flexibility and adaptability, linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills, cooperation and conflict resolution skills.

Knowledge represents information that a person possesses, and critical understanding implies the comprehension, interpretation, active reflection, evaluation and appreciation of meanings derived from the information (ibid, p. 54). The Framework distinguishes three main sets of knowledge and critical understanding. These include knowledge and critical understanding of the self, language and communication, and the world.

To facilitate the assessment of proficiency level in each of these competences, as well as to identify learning needs and potential areas for further development, the Framework provides competence descriptors at basic, intermediate, and advanced levels. These descriptors are defined as “statements referring to concrete observable behaviour of a person with a certain level of competence” (RFCDC Volume 2, 2018, p. 13). They are framed in the language of learning outcomes, meaning that each descriptor starts with an action verb followed by the object of that verb, and outlines the behaviour that is both observable and assessable. As an example, the table below provides key descriptors for one of the competences (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Descriptors of the attitude “Openness to cultural otherness”

Descriptor	Level
Shows interest in learning about people’s beliefs, values, traditions and world views	Basic
Expresses interest in travelling to other countries	
Expresses curiosity about other beliefs and interpretations and other cultural orientations and affiliations	Intermediate
Expresses an appreciation of the opportunity to have experiences of other cultures	
Seeks and welcomes opportunities for encountering people with different values, customs and behaviours	Advanced
Seeks contact with other people in order to learn about their culture	

Source: Council of Europe. RFCDC Volume 2, 2018, p. 19

The competence model and the descriptors serve as a tool for curriculum design and development, in particular for defining the learning outcomes of an educational activity, and for assessing the level of proficiency in democratic competences attained through formal, non-formal or informal learning.

In practice, democratic competences are rarely employed in isolation. Instead, individuals usually mobilize a cluster of competences to respond effectively and behave

appropriately in a specific situation. In curriculum design and development, the concept of clustering serves as a foundation for connecting democratic competences to all subject areas through specific subsets relevant to each discipline. This approach enables the explicit integration of these competences into curriculum as a cut-across issue in all disciplines or courses included in it (RFCDC, Volume 3, 2018, p. 21).

When it comes to integrating democratic competences in a specific discipline or course, it is essential to (ibid, p. 21-54):

- **Define intended learning outcomes** that learners should acquire as a result of engaging in learning activities within a given course. For this purpose, the RFCDC descriptors should be adapted to align with the context in which they are applied, rather than be used verbatim.
- **Develop activities and tasks** that should be included in textbooks and instructional materials, through the implementation of which the learning outcomes could be attained and the targeted competences developed. Examples of such activities include simulations, debates, and projects, combining class work and community outreach.
- **Plan teaching-learning interactions**, methods and techniques, i.e. the way the learners live through the activities, and how a teacher scaffolds this process.
- **Develop assessment scenarios** in which learners can demonstrate – and teachers observe – competent behaviour in the process of resolving democratic, intercultural, real-life issues. It is important to note that when democratic competences are assessed, a learner's behaviour in a given situation should be referred to a set of descriptors, as these competences usually function in clusters.
- **Create a safe environment for discussion and debate**, and to establish protocols for solving possible conflicts or disagreements in an amicable way.

These guidelines could be used while planning the integration of the competences for democratic culture in foreign language curricula in the ENLACED project.

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) was first developed in 2001 to provide a transparent, coherent and comprehensive basis for the development of language syllabuses and curriculum guidelines, the design of teaching and learning materials, and the assessment of foreign language proficiency. It describes what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to acquire in order to be able to act effectively in the cultural context of the language. The Framework distinguishes between three levels of proficiency – basic user, independent user and proficient user – which allow for measuring learners' progress at each stage of learning and on a lifelong basis. In 2020, CEFR was revised and updates to include an extended list of descriptors for mediation, online interaction, plurilingual/pluricultural

competence, and sign language competences (CEFR webpage, 2024).

CEFR establishes a strong connection between language learning and the promotion of democratic citizenship. Both improving proficiency in one's native language and studying foreign languages contribute to the development of communicative language competence, which enhances interactions among people with different mother tongues across Europe. This competence, in turn, helps to "promote European mobility, mutual understanding, and cooperation, and overcome prejudice and discrimination" (CEFR, 2020, p. 11). CERF also encourages language teaching and learning methods that foster attitudes, knowledge, and skills enabling learners to think and act independently while also being responsible and cooperative with others. By doing so, it supports the advancement of democratic citizenship. This idea was put in the centre of CEFR development, stepping on the results of the Council of Europe's programme "Language Learning for European Citizenship", implemented in the period of 1989 – 1997.

CERF describes the language use and learning through several key dimensions (CEFR, 2020, p. 9-25):

- **General competences:** shared knowledge of the world, skills and know-how, existential competence, including individual characteristics, personality traits and attitudes, and the ability to learn and to discover otherness – be it another language, another culture, other people or new areas of knowledge. General competences are not specific to language but are used in various actions, including language activities.
- **Communicative language competences:** abilities enabling a person to communicate effectively using language. Communicative language competences include three components:
 - *Linguistic* (lexical, phonological, syntactical knowledge and skills and other dimensions of the language system);
 - *Sociolinguistic* (sociocultural conditions of language use, such as rules of politeness, norms governing relations between generations, sexes, classes and social groups, linguistic codification of fundamental rituals in the functioning of a community);
 - *Pragmatic* (functional use of linguistic resources, drawing on scenarios of interactional exchanges, mastery of discourse, irony and parody).
- **Language activities:** actions involving the use of communicative language competences within a specific domain to process texts and complete a task. These activities include oral or written reception, production, mediation and interaction.
- **Context:** the combination of events and situational factors, both internal and external, where communication occurs.
- **Domain:** the broad areas of social life where people operate. Language activities are contextualized in domains. CEFR identifies four main domains relevant to language learning and use:



- Educational (everything concerned with the learning/training context);
- Occupational (everything concerned with a person's activities and relations in the exercise of his or her occupation);
- Public (ordinary social interaction, such as exchanges with business and administrative bodies, public services, cultural activities, relations with media);
- Personal (family relationships and individual social practices).
- **Language processes:** the neurological and physiological processes involved in speaking, writing, hearing, or reading.
- **Task:** any deliberate action aimed at solving a problem, fulfilling a duty, or achieving a specific goal within a particular context.
- **Strategy:** a purposeful, organized approach an individual uses to accomplish a task or respond to a challenge.
- **Text:** any spoken or written sequence or discourse related to a specific domain, used as part of a language activity either as a tool, product, or goal.

These dimensions are interconnected in all forms of language use and learning. Communication and learning involve tasks that, while not exclusively language-based, require language use and draw on an individual's communication skills. When these tasks are complex and not automatic, individuals must employ strategies to communicate and learn effectively. Completing such tasks often involves processing spoken or written texts through listening, reading, speaking, writing, or interpreting/translating, which requires activating general and communicative language competences. CEFR argues for an action-oriented approach to language use and learning, focusing on how individuals use their skills and strategies, based on their understanding of a situation, to accomplish specific tasks within a given context.

In the action-oriented approach, a language learner is seen as progressing toward becoming a language user. However, learners of a second or foreign language retain their proficiency in their mother tongue and its associated culture. The new language and cultural skills do not exist in isolation but interact with the existing ones. Instead of acquiring two separate systems for communication, learners become plurilingual and develop intercultural competence. Their skills in each language influence one another, fostering intercultural awareness, practical abilities, and deeper understanding. This process enriches the learner's personality, enhances their capacity for future language learning, and increases openness to new cultural experiences. By doing so, it provides a foundation for active participation in democratic culture and meaningful engagement in intercultural dialogue.

Language education, therefore, should involve each of the above-mentioned dimensions. When developing a foreign language curriculum, CERF suggests that educators should describe (ibid, p. 44-100):

- **Domains** in which the learner will need/be equipped/be required to operate;
- **Situations** which the learner will need/be equipped/be required to handle;
- **Locations, institutions/organizations, persons, objects, events and actions** with which

the learner will be concerned;

- **Themes** (i.e. subjects of discourse), **sub-themes and specific notions** which learners will need/be equipped/be required to handle in the selected domains (e.g. the theme “free time and entertainment” could be categorized into such sub-themes as “hobbies”, “radio & TV”, “theatre, cinema, concerts”, “exhibitions, museums”, “sports”, “press”, etc. For the sub-theme “sports”, the following specific notions could be distinguished: “locations: stadium, field, ground”, “institutions/organizations: club, team”, “persons: player, trainer”, “objects: ball, cards”, “events: game, race”, and “actions: to watch, to play, to win, to lose”).
- **Communicative tasks** in the personal, public, occupational and/or educational domains that the learner will need/be equipped/be required to tackle. Tasks should reflect communicative needs of learners, and detailed specifications of tasks could be viewed as learning objectives. A comprehensive description of a task should include:
 - **Types of tasks:** Examples include simulations, roleplays, and classroom interactions.
 - **Goals:** These can range from group-based learning objectives to the varied, less predictable aims of participants.
 - **Input:** Includes instructions, materials, or resources provided by teachers or learners.
 - **Outcomes:** May involve tangible results like texts, summaries, tables, or presentations, as well as learning outcomes like enhanced skills, awareness, strategies, or experience in decision-making and negotiation.
 - **Activities:** These could be cognitive or emotional, physical or reflective, and done individually, in pairs, or in groups, involving receptive or productive processes.
 - **Roles:** Refers to participants’ roles in performing, planning, and managing tasks.
 - **Monitoring and evaluation:** Assesses how well the task meets criteria such as relevance, difficulty, constraints, and suitability, both in planning and execution.
- **External conditions and constraints** under which the learner will have to communicate (e.g. the number of interlocutors, time pressure);
- **Internal (mental) conditions and constraints** under which the learner will have to communicate (e.g. the relation of communicative and learning activities to the learner’s motivation and interests, the extent to which the learner is required to reflect on experiences, the extent to which the learner is required to adjust to the interlocutor’s mental context);
- **Learning activities** in which the learner will need/be equipped/be required to engage, as well as **strategies** that he/she should be able to apply to implement these activities:
 - **Oral and written productive language activities** (speaking, e.g. monologues, public speaking, and writing, e.g. reports, essays, creative writing) and respective strategies (e.g. planning, rehearsing, considering audience, compensating, monitoring success);



- **Aural and visual reception activities** (reading and listening to various types of texts and audio resources for different purposes, e.g. for gist, specific information, detailed understanding, etc.) and respective strategies (e.g. framing, identifying cues, inferring from them, hypothesizing, revisiting hypotheses);
- **Spoken interactive activities** (e.g. conversation, discussion, debate, interview, negotiation) and respective strategies (discourse and cooperative strategies, such as turn-taking/turn-giving, framing the issue, proposing and evaluating solutions, recapping and summarising the point, and mediating in a conflict);
- **Written interactive activities** (e.g. email correspondence, negotiating the text of a contract, agreement, etc. by exchanging drafts, making comments, etc., participating in online conferences) and respective strategies (similar to spoken interaction strategies);
- **Mediating activities** (interpretation and translation) and respective strategies (e.g. developing background knowledge, locating supports, preparing a glossary, considering interlocutors' needs, processing units of interpretation/translation, noting equivalencies, bridging gaps, checking congruency and consistency of both versions, consulting dictionaries, experts, etc.);
- **Skills and competences** required for the satisfactory accomplishment of the communicative tasks. The teacher may need to decide which skills can be presupposed and which need to be developed;
- **Texts** which the learner is expected to handle or produce. It is important to describe how spoken or written texts presented to learners are selected, adapted and composed, as well as how learners are scaffolded in the process of producing texts appropriate to their communicative purpose, the context of use (domains, situations, recipients, constraints, etc.) and the media employed.

The description of the abovementioned dimensions should be based on the aims and objectives of language learning and teaching, i.e. on the statements of what learners have to learn or acquire to satisfy their communication needs. Language learning objectives can be conceived in various ways within the framework (ibid, p. 135-138):

- **Development of general competences:** focusing on declarative knowledge (e.g. RFCDC's knowledge and critical understanding of the world related to the foreign country or the EU), skills and know-how (e.g. RFCDC's cooperation skills, active listening skills), attitudes (e.g. RFCDC's respect and openness to otherness), and the ability to learn (RFCDC's autonomous learning skills).
- **Development of communicative language competence:** targeting linguistic (e.g., vocabulary, syntax), pragmatic (e.g., effective language use), or sociolinguistic components, which are also constituent parts of RFCDC's skills.
- **Performance in specific language activities:** improving reception (listening/reading), production (speaking/writing), interaction, or mediation (translation/interpretation).

- **Functional operation in specific domains:** adapting plurilingual and pluricultural competence to a particular social field of activity (e.g. public domain of participating in democratic culture).
- **Enhancement of strategies:** focusing on strategies traditionally used by the learner by rendering them more sophisticated, more extensive and more conscious, by seeking to adapt them to tasks for which they had not originally been used. Task-based objectives provide practical and motivating learning goals, often serving as steps toward broader objectives.
- **Fulfilment of tasks:** formulating objectives in terms of tasks, e.g. telling learners that the activity they are going to undertake will help them deliver a speech at a public event.

These objectives contribute to holistic approach to language learning and teaching, fostering plurilingual and intercultural competences essential for effective communication and engagement across varied contexts. Within a language learning curriculum, it is possible to focus on several or all types of objectives, while making them specific to a wider goal of the course, like for example, encouraging learners' participation in democratic culture and intercultural dialogue.

Intercultural Citizenship Education

Intercultural Citizenship Education (ICE), a pedagogy developed by Michael Byram, brings together intercultural and democratic learning objectives. ICE promotes social and political engagement by people of different social groups and cultures (Byram, 2008). This distinguishes ICE from other models of intercultural education, as noted by Rauschert and Cardetti (2022).

ICE highlights similarities in the purpose of foreign language education and citizenship education. Both aim to foster an understanding of other people while promoting attitudes of cooperation and interaction. However, there are several differences as well. Foreign language education has an international focus, emphasizing critical thinking and proficiency in other languages, but it does not prioritize taking action in the world. In contrast, citizenship education centres on active engagement and action in the world as a core goal but does not emphasize communicative language competence or criticality. Intercultural citizenship education aims to integrate the purposes of both fields. It encourages learners to collaborate with others across countries and languages to address shared global challenges. Unlike world (or global) citizenship education, intercultural citizenship education places greater importance on foreign language competence and critical evaluation of ideas (Porto and Byram, 2015).

Byram argues that language education should play a leading role in the development of learners' intercultural communicative competence, i.e. it should combine language skills with the values, attitudes, skills and knowledge that help them become intercultural citizens (Byram, 2008). Byram and Wagner (2018) propose a language teaching approach that

emphasises intercultural citizenship by integrating instrumental and humanist educational goals. This approach extends beyond teaching communicative language competences to include intercultural competence and the responsibilities essential for shaping well-rounded citizens of the 21st century.

Rauschert and Cardetti (2022), referring to Byram (2008) and Byram et al. (2017), developed a teaching concept based on the Intercultural Citizenship Education pedagogy and the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture. Their teaching concept unites intercultural collaboration of learners through virtual exchanges (synchronous and asynchronous online collaboration) and civic action (dissemination of the intercultural collaboration outcomes to the local community). It can be presented in the following four stages:

- **Stage 1: “Familiarization: discover about ‘us’ and prepare for ‘them’”**. At this stage, the teaching concept is explained to learners. Teachers (intercultural collaboration facilitators) in each partner HEI conduct preparatory meetings with the learners, at which they present the structure and objectives of the task planned to be implemented through intercultural collaboration. Each learner prepares a short introduction of him-/herself to be shared with his/her group members (e.g. self-introduction slides).
- **Stage 2: “Interaction: present ‘us’ to ‘them’ and engage in communication”**. Learners introduce themselves to their peers (e.g. by co-creating a shared presentation with one slide per student and making posts in the selected virtual environment). Facilitators ask learners to comment on the posts, ask and answer questions, in order to foster team building. Asynchronous exchange of self-introductions finishes with a group online meeting.
- **Stage 3: “Collaboration: work together in ‘us’ and ‘them’ group”**. Under the guidance of facilitators, learners engage in joint work on the task. Learners may be divided into smaller teams, each including representatives of different cultures (or countries). Roles, responsibilities, group and team work ethics, and schedule of activities are agreed among all participants. Facilitators scaffold learners’ joint work. Learners use various digital tools as required by the nature of the task they are involved in. This stage results in an output – a digital representation of the collaborative work result.
- **Stage 4: “Reflection: focus on ‘us’ again and disseminate the project results”**. Learners present the results of the collaborative work to their local community, engage in self- and peer-evaluation, and reflect on the learning outcomes attained as a result of the collaborative work on the task. Teachers (facilitators) evaluate the attained learning outcomes.

This concept was piloted in the higher education context within a project, bringing together Mathematics students and TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) students from the USA and Germany, accordingly. The students reflected on local and global issues, referring to the dimension of values in RFCDC, that could be viewed from diverse perspectives.

This collaborative work resulted in a co-created multimodal, digital storybook containing short stories authored by students (ibid).

Intercultural Citizenship Education pedagogy lays foundation for reimagining foreign language teaching and learning across and transforming the traditional classroom. This approach promotes inclusivity and global awareness while respecting local contexts. Teaching intercultural citizenship through language education not only enhances learners' communicative language competences but also contributes to the attainment of competences for democratic culture.

Works cited:

- Byram, Michael. "From foreign language education to education for intercultural citizenship. Essays and reflections". Multilingual Matters, 2008, 272 p.
- Byram, Michael, Golubeva, Irina, Han, Hui, and Wagner, Manuela. "From principle to practice in education for intercultural citizenship". Multilingual Matters, 2017, 270 p.
- Byram, Michael and Wagner, Manuela. "Making a difference: Language teaching for intercultural and international dialogue". Foreign Language Annals, Wiley, ACTFL, 2018, pp. 1-12.
- Council of Europe. "European Year of Digital Citizenship Education 2025". Council of Europe Portal, 2024. URL: www.coe.int/en/web/education/european-year-of-digital-citizenship-education-2025. Accessed 12 December 2024.
- Council of Europe. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) webpage. URL: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/>. Accessed 19 December 2024.
- Council of Europe. "Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages (2019/C 189/03)". Official Journal of the European Union, C 189, Volume 62, 5 June 2019, pp. 15-22.
- Council of Europe. "The Importance of Plurilingual and Intercultural Education for Democratic Culture. Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)1 adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 2 February 2022 and explanatory memorandum". Council of Europe, 2022, 42 p.
- Council of Europe. "Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture. Volume 1, Context, concepts and model". Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 2018, 89 p.
- Council of Europe. "Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture. Volume 2, Descriptors of competences for democratic culture". Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 2018, 65 p.
- Council of Europe. "Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture. Volume 3, Guidance for implementation". Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 2018, 129 p.
- Council of Europe. "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment". Language Policy Unit, Strasbourg, 2020, 273 p.
- Council of Europe. "Language Learning for European Citizenship. Final Report of the Project Group (1989-96)". Compiled and edited by John Trim, Project Director. Council of

- Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 1997, 101 p.
- Porto, Melina and Byram, Michael. "Developing intercultural citizenship education in the language classroom and beyond". *Argentinian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 3 (AJAL), 2015, pp. 9-29.
http://www.memoria.fahce.unlp.edu.ar/art_revistas/pr.9745/pr.9745.pdf
- Rauschert, Petra and Cardetti, Fabiana. "Fostering Democratic Competences in Learners: An Interdisciplinary International Experience". *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research* 10(3), October, 2022, pp. 29-41.
- Sjöström, Jesper and Eilks, Ingo. "The Bildung Theory—From von Humboldt to Klafki and Beyond". Chapter 5 in B. Akpan and T. Kennedy (eds.), *Science Education in Theory and Practice*. Springer Texts in Education, 2020, pp. 55-67. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-43620-9_5

3. Learning Outcomes of Foreign Language Programmes Incorporating Democratic Competences

Authors:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Svitlana TARASHENKO

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Olha ZHULAVSKA

Affiliation:

Sumy State University, Bulgaria

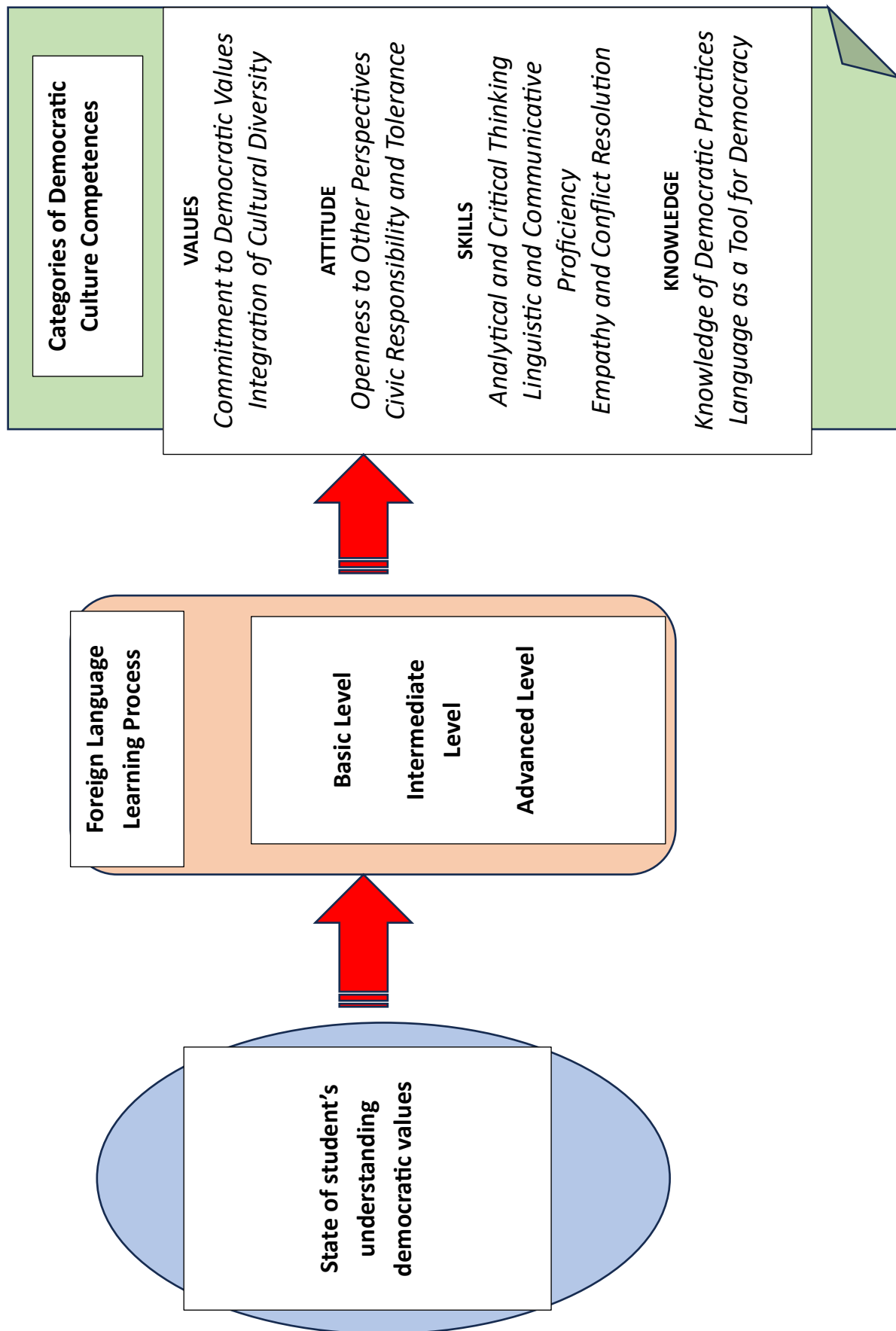
Introduction

Foreign language programs integrated with democratic competencies are pivotal in cultivating active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, and societal cohesion within cultural and linguistically diverse democracies. This conceptual framework draws upon three primary pillars: the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC), the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), and Michael Byram's Intercultural Citizenship Education (ICE) pedagogy. Together, these frameworks provide the theoretical and practical foundation for designing, delivering, and assessing learning outcomes in language education that prioritize democratic values and intercultural understanding.

By aligning learning outcomes with European frameworks such as the RFCDC, CEFR, and Intercultural Citizenship Education pedagogy, foreign language programs can go beyond linguistic proficiency to prepare learners for meaningful engagement in democratic and intercultural contexts. This conceptual framework explores how such integration supports European priorities and enhances learners' readiness to navigate global and local challenges.

Learning outcomes of foreign language programs incorporating democratic competencies are designed considering a model of competencies for democratic culture and intercultural dialogue, within which 20 competencies are divided into four areas – Values, Attitudes, Skills, Knowledge, and critical understanding (RFCDC, Volume 1). Each area contributes to the development of learners, enabling them to embrace diversity, respect democratic principles, and engage in constructive intercultural interactions. Moreover, these programs play an important role in addressing European and global priorities by promoting sustainable democratic practices and equipping learners with the tools to navigate complex, multilingual, and multicultural environments. The integration of democratic competencies into foreign language education ensures that students not only achieve linguistic proficiency but also develop the intercultural sensitivity and democratic awareness necessary for active participation in modern society.

Figure 3: Scheme for Acquiring Democratic Culture Competences



Values-Oriented Outcomes:

1. *Commitment to Democratic Values:* Students will demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to human dignity, equality, and justice by applying these values in collaborative discussions and decision-making.
2. *Integration of Cultural Diversity:* Students will actively promote and appreciate cultural diversity and democratic principles in classroom and community projects.

Attitudes-Oriented Outcomes

1. *Openness to Other Perspectives:* Students will demonstrate openness to cultural varieties and differing worldviews by engaging constructively in intercultural and democratic dialogues.
2. *Civic Responsibility and Tolerance:* Students will cultivate civic-mindedness, responsibility, and tolerance of ambiguity when interacting with diverse groups and addressing complex social issues.

Skills-Oriented Outcomes

1. *Analytical and Critical Thinking:* Students will apply analytical and critical thinking skills to evaluate societal and intercultural challenges, contributing reasoned arguments in democratic contexts.
2. *Linguistic and Communicative Proficiency:* Students will develop plurilingual and communicative skills to facilitate effective collaboration and negotiation across linguistic and cultural boundaries.
3. *Empathy and Conflict Resolution:* Students will practice empathy, cooperation, and conflict resolution skills in group settings, fostering mutual understanding and collaboration.

Knowledge-Oriented Outcomes

1. *Knowledge of Democratic Practices:* Students will acquire and demonstrate a critical understanding of democratic systems, human rights, and their role in fostering societal integration and participation.
2. *Language as a Tool for Democracy:* Students will effectively use language to express opinions, negotiate shared meanings, and actively participate in democratic processes.

Integrated Competences-Oriented Outcome

1. *Competence Clustering in Real-World Contexts:* Students will mobilize clusters of competencies - values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge - to address intercultural and democratic challenges through simulations, debates, and real-life projects, both in physical and digital environments.

Strategies to Achieve Outcomes at Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced Levels

The ways of achieving the learning outcomes are rooted in the concept of Building, which is a cornerstone of Western European educational theory and is understood as a lifelong learning process that empowers individuals to cultivate self-formation, recognize their interests within society, and act as responsible citizens (EU Reference Frameworks, Educational Theories and Practices). We applied the framework to assess proficiency level in each of these competencies and identify learning needs and potential areas for further development, providing competence descriptors at basic, intermediate, and advanced levels.

Values-Oriented Outcomes

Basic Level

1. *Commitment to Democratic Values:* Introduce basic concepts of human dignity, equality, and justice through simplified case studies or visual content; facilitate group activities where students discuss fairness and justice in everyday scenarios.

Assessment: Students identify and articulate examples of democratic values in familiar contexts.

2. *Integration of Cultural Diversity:* Provide exposure to cultural traditions and practices through videos, guest speakers, or simple reading materials; organize basic collaborative projects to explore cultural customs and their significance.

Assessment: Students recognize and respect cultural differences in classroom discussions.

Intermediate Level

1. *Commitment to Democratic Values:* Encourage group projects where students apply democratic principles to resolve conflicts or make decisions; facilitate debates on justice or equality in historical and contemporary contexts.

Assessment: Students explain the relevance of democratic values in diverse scenarios.

2. *Integration of Cultural Diversity:* Engage students in virtual exchanges or projects involving peers from different cultural backgrounds; include role-play activities simulating multicultural collaboration.

Assessment: Students demonstrate appreciation and respect for cultural diversity in teamwork and presentations.

Advanced Level

1. *Commitment to Democratic Values:* Facilitate leadership roles in community service projects addressing justice and equality; encourage reflective essays or presentations analysing real-world applications of democratic values.

Assessment: Students propose solutions to complex societal challenges based on democratic principles.

2. *Integration of Cultural Diversity:* Guide students in organizing cultural awareness campaigns or events within their communities; foster discussions on global issues requiring multicultural cooperation.

Assessment: Students exhibit leadership in promoting cultural diversity and democratic principles.

Attitudes-Oriented Outcomes

Basic Level

1. *Openness to Other Perspectives:* Introduce discussions or storytelling sessions highlighting diverse viewpoints; facilitate activities encouraging students to listen actively and respect others' opinions.

Assessment: Students express curiosity about different perspectives.

2. *Civic Responsibility and Tolerance:* Use cooperative games or simple tasks that require responsibility and respect; organize structured group activities to address minor social challenges.

Assessment: Students demonstrate basic responsibility and tolerance in teamwork.

Intermediate Level

1. *Openness to Other Perspectives:* Conduct structured debates or collaborative problem-solving activities involving diverse viewpoints; incorporate case studies that challenge students to evaluate multiple perspectives.

Assessment: Students analyse and articulate balanced views during discussions.

2. *Civic Responsibility and Tolerance:* facilitate projects addressing local or classroom challenges, emphasizing collective responsibility; engage students in simulations requiring them to navigate ambiguous scenarios.

Assessment: Students demonstrate tolerance and responsibility in group problem-solving.

Advanced Level

1. *Openness to Other Perspectives:* Facilitate projects requiring students to mediate or advocate for diverse perspectives; assign reflective tasks analysing the impact of transparency on intercultural dialogue.

Assessment: Students lead discussions or initiatives promoting inclusivity.

2. *Civic Responsibility and Tolerance:* Encourage leadership in community outreach projects addressing societal issues (social networks); facilitate advanced simulations of real-world democratic challenges.

Assessment: Students demonstrate accountability and leadership in complex contexts.

Skills-Oriented Outcomes

Basic Level

1. *Analytical and Critical Thinking:* Use guided analysis of simple texts or videos to identify key arguments; introduce puzzles or tasks requiring logical problem-solving.

Assessment: Students explain basic reasoning behind their answers.

2. *Linguistic and Communicative Proficiency:* Teach basic conversational phrases and collaborative communication strategies; organize small group discussions to practice simple exchanges.

Assessment: Students participate in basic dialogues effectively.

3. *Empathy and Conflict Resolution:* Use storytelling to build empathy by exploring different perspectives; conduct role-playing exercises addressing minor conflicts.

Assessment: Students demonstrate empathy when resolving simulated disputes.

Intermediate Level

1. *Analytical and Critical Thinking:* Assign tasks analysing current events or intercultural issues; facilitate debates or structured discussions requiring evidence-based arguments.

Assessment: Students present reasoned arguments during discussions.

2. *Linguistic and Communicative Proficiency:* Encourage intermediate-level conversations on cultural and societal topics; include writing tasks like composing letters or short essays for diverse audiences.

Assessment: Students effectively communicate in more complex linguistic contexts.

3. *Empathy and Conflict Resolution:* Facilitate group projects requiring negotiation and compromise; assign reflective tasks exploring the role of empathy in resolving disputes.

Assessment: Students resolve conflicts collaboratively and respectfully.

Advanced Level

1. *Analytical and Critical Thinking:* Assign in-depth research projects analysing intercultural or societal challenges; facilitate discussions on ethical dilemmas or controversial issues.

Assessment: Students propose innovative, well-reasoned solutions to complex problems.

2. *Linguistic and Communicative Proficiency:* Guide students in delivering persuasive presentations or leading discussions; assign tasks requiring advanced writing skills, such as drafting proposals or reports.

Assessment: Students demonstrate proficiency in sophisticated communicative contexts.

3. *Empathy and Conflict Resolution:* Facilitate mediation exercises addressing real-world disputes or challenges; encourage leadership in group projects involving diverse participants.

Assessment: Students exhibit empathy and leadership in complex conflict resolution.

Knowledge-Oriented Outcomes

Basic Level

1. *Knowledge of Democratic Practices:* Teach fundamental concepts of democracy through interactive games or visuals; provide examples of democratic systems and their impact.

Assessment: Students recall key democratic concepts in discussions.

2. *Language as a Tool for Democracy*: Introduce simple tasks demonstrating how language enables expression and participation; organize activities like voting or surveys requiring basic language use.

Assessment: Students explain how language facilitates democratic engagement.

Intermediate Level

3. *Knowledge of Democratic Practices*: Assign tasks analysing democratic systems and their societal effects; facilitate group discussions linking democratic principles to real-world issues.

Assessment: Students analyse and explain the role of democracy in various contexts.

4. *Language as a Tool for Democracy*: Encourage intermediate-level debates or discussions on societal topics; guide students in composing persuasive letters or short essays.

Assessment: Students demonstrate effective use of language in democratic contexts.

Advanced Level

1. *Knowledge of Democratic Practices*: Assign research projects exploring global democratic challenges and solutions; facilitate advanced discussions on policy development or societal issues.

Assessment: Students provide a critical analysis of democratic practices.

2. *Language as a Tool for Democracy*: Facilitate advanced simulations of democratic processes, such as negotiations; encourage reflective tasks on the role of language in shaping societal outcomes.

Assessment: Students lead and articulate complex arguments in democratic scenarios.

Integrated Competences-Oriented Outcome

Basic Level

Conduct guided simulations addressing simple democratic or intercultural challenges.

Assessment: Students mobilize basic competencies to respond to scenarios.

Intermediate Level

Facilitate debates or projects requiring students to cluster competencies in collaborative tasks.

Assessment: Students demonstrate integrated competencies in mid-level challenges.

Advanced Level

Assign leadership roles in real-world projects addressing intercultural or democratic challenges.

Assessment: Students mobilize and integrate advanced competencies in real-life contexts.

Conclusion

This conceptual framework for foreign language programs integrating democratic competencies provides a structured and comprehensive approach to fostering active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, and societal cohesion in learners. By aligning learning outcomes with well-established frameworks such as the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC), the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), and Michael Byram's Intercultural Citizenship Education (ICE) pedagogy, it ensures that language education transcends linguistic proficiency to develop values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge essential for democratic participation.

The framework emphasizes the holistic development of learners across basic, intermediate, and advanced levels, tailoring strategies to progressively enhance their capacity to navigate complex democratic and intercultural contexts. It advocates for a learner-centred, lifelong education model rooted in *Bildung*, which equips individuals with the tools for personal and societal transformation and fosters a deeper understanding of their role within diverse and interconnected global communities.

Key to this framework is the integration of democratic competencies through practical and experiential learning. Simulations, debates, collaborative projects, and real-world applications are pivotal in helping learners internalize and apply their competencies meaningfully. This active engagement ensures the development of critical thinking, empathy, communicative proficiency, and the ability to address intercultural and societal challenges responsibly and effectively.

By preparing students to use language as a tool for dialogue, negotiation, and participation, the framework positions foreign language education as a critical medium for shaping inclusive, democratic, and resilient societies. Ultimately, this approach empowers learners to engage constructively in their communities and prepares them to be global citizens capable of navigating and contributing to a rapidly changing and culturally diverse world.

Learning outcomes of foreign language programmes incorporating democratic competences

Types of Outcomes	Basic Level	Intermediate Level	Advanced Level
Values-Oriented Outcomes	Commitment to Democratic Values		
	Introduce basic concepts of human dignity, equality, and justice through simplified case studies or visual content; facilitate group activities where students discuss fairness and justice in everyday scenarios/ <i>Assessment:</i> Students identify and articulate examples of democratic values in familiar contexts.	Encourage group projects where students apply democratic principles to resolve conflicts or make decisions; facilitate debates on justice or equality in historical and contemporary contexts. <i>Assessment:</i> Students explain the relevance of democratic values in diverse scenarios.	Facilitate leadership roles in community service projects addressing justice and equality; encourage reflective essays or presentations analysing real-world applications of democratic values. <i>Assessment:</i> Students propose solutions to complex societal challenges based on democratic principles.
	Integration of Cultural Diversity		
	Provide exposure to cultural traditions and practices through videos, guest speakers, or simple reading materials; organize basic collaborative projects to explore cultural customs and their significance. <i>Assessment:</i> Students recognize and respect cultural differences in classroom discussions.	Engage students in virtual exchanges or projects involving peers from different cultural backgrounds; include role-play activities simulating multicultural collaboration. <i>Assessment:</i> Students demonstrate appreciation and respect for cultural diversity in teamwork and presentations.	Guide students in organizing cultural awareness campaigns or events within their communities; foster discussions on global issues requiring multicultural cooperation. <i>Assessment:</i> Students exhibit leadership in promoting cultural diversity and democratic principles.
Attitudes-Oriented Outcomes	Openness to Other Perspectives		
	Introduce discussions or storytelling sessions highlighting diverse viewpoints; facilitate activities encouraging	Conduct structured debates or collaborative problem-solving activities involving diverse viewpoints; incorporate	Facilitate projects requiring students to mediate or advocate for diverse perspectives; assign reflective tasks

	students to listen actively and respect others' opinions. <i>Assessment:</i> Students express curiosity about different perspectives.	case studies that challenge students to evaluate multiple perspectives. <i>Assessment:</i> Students analyse and articulate balanced views during discussions.	analysing the impact of transparency on intercultural dialogue. <i>Assessment:</i> Students lead discussions or initiatives promoting inclusivity
	<i>Civic Responsibility and Tolerance</i>		
	Use cooperative games or simple tasks that require responsibility and respect; organize structured group activities to address minor social challenges. <i>Assessment:</i> Students demonstrate basic responsibility and tolerance in teamwork.	Facilitate projects addressing local or classroom challenges, emphasizing collective responsibility; engage students in simulations requiring them to navigate ambiguous scenarios. <i>Assessment:</i> Students demonstrate tolerance and responsibility in group problem-solving.	Encourage leadership in community outreach projects addressing societal issues (social networks); facilitate advanced simulations of real-world democratic challenges. <i>Assessment:</i> Students demonstrate accountability and leadership in complex contexts.
Skills-Oriented Outcomes	<i>Analytical and Critical Thinking</i>		
	Use guided analysis of simple texts or videos to identify key arguments; introduce puzzles or tasks requiring logical problem-solving. <i>Assessment:</i> Students explain basic reasoning behind their answers.	Assign tasks analysing current events or intercultural issues; facilitate debates or structured discussions requiring evidence-based arguments. <i>Assessment:</i> Students present reasoned arguments during discussions.	Assign in-depth research projects analysing intercultural or societal challenges; facilitate discussions on ethical dilemmas or controversial issues. <i>Assessment:</i> Students propose innovative, well-reasoned solutions to complex problems.
	<i>Linguistics and Communicative Proficiency</i>		
	Teach basic conversational phrases and collaborative communication strategies; organize small group discussions to practice simple exchanges.	Encourage intermediate-level conversations on cultural and societal topics; include writing tasks like composing letters or short essays for diverse audiences.	Guide students in delivering persuasive presentations or leading discussions; assign tasks requiring advanced writing skills, such as drafting proposals or reports.



	<i>Assessment:</i> Students participate in basic dialogues effectively.	<i>Assessment:</i> Students effectively communicate in more complex linguistic contexts.	<i>Assessment:</i> Students demonstrate proficiency in sophisticated communicative contexts.
	Empathy and Conflict Resolution		
	Use storytelling to build empathy by exploring different perspectives; conduct role-playing exercises addressing minor conflicts. <i>Assessment:</i> Students demonstrate empathy when resolving simulated disputes.	Facilitate group projects requiring negotiation and compromise; assign reflective tasks exploring the role of empathy in resolving disputes. <i>Assessment:</i> Students resolve conflicts collaboratively and respectfully.	Facilitate mediation exercises addressing real-world disputes or challenges; encourage leadership in group projects involving diverse participants. <i>Assessment:</i> Students exhibit empathy and leadership in complex conflict resolution.
Knowledge-Oriented Outcomes	Knowledge of Democratic Practices		
	Teach fundamental concepts of democracy through interactive games or visuals; provide examples of democratic systems and their impact. <i>Assessment:</i> Students recall key democratic concepts in discussions.	Assign tasks analysing democratic systems and their societal effects; facilitate group discussions linking democratic principles to real-world issues. <i>Assessment:</i> Students analyse and explain the role of democracy in various contexts.	Assign research projects exploring global democratic challenges and solutions; facilitate advanced discussions on policy development or societal issues. <i>Assessment:</i> Students provide a critical analysis of democratic practices.
	Language as a Tool for Democracy		
	Introduce simple tasks demonstrating how language enables expression and participation; organize activities like voting or surveys requiring basic language use. <i>Assessment:</i> Students explain how language facilitates democratic engagement.	Encourage intermediate-level debates or discussions on societal topics; guide students in composing persuasive letters or short essays. <i>Assessment:</i> Students demonstrate effective use of language in democratic contexts.	Facilitate advanced simulations of democratic processes, such as negotiations; encourage reflective tasks on the role of language in shaping societal outcomes. <i>Assessment:</i> Students lead and articulate complex arguments in democratic scenarios.



Integrated Competences-Oriented Outcome	Conduct guided simulations addressing simple democratic or intercultural challenges. <i>Assessment:</i> Students mobilize basic competencies to respond to scenarios.	Facilitate debates or projects requiring students to cluster competencies in collaborative tasks. <i>Assessment:</i> Students demonstrate integrated competencies in mid-level challenges.	Assign leadership roles in real-world projects addressing intercultural or democratic challenges. <i>Assessment:</i> Students mobilize and integrate advanced competencies in real-life contexts.
---	---	--	---

4. Overview of foreign language teaching methodologies

Authors:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kalina BRATANOVA

Dr. Dilyan GATEV

Affiliation:

University of National and World Economy, Bulgaria

Introduction

Before the analysis of the implications of CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis) for FLT, a brief overview will be made of the commonly shared precepts of CDA and the major researchers in the field. In the first place, discourse and society are seen as mutually constitutive. Second, it typically examines specific discursive situations where dominance and inequality are to the fore. Third, CDA is open to multiple readings. The research of the pioneers in CDA attests to these major assumptions. According to van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach, CDA is an instrument of analysing power structures in discourse and is "is specifically interested in power abuse that is in breaches of laws, rules and principles of democracy, equality and justice by those who wield power" (van Dijk, 1993, pp. 254–255). Working from a mental model approach, van Dijk sees discourse, processed via long- and short-term memory, as shaping our perceptions and understandings. Stereotypes and prejudice can occur when such models become overgeneralized (Flowerdew, 2016, p. 181).

According to Bhatia (2016), typical of CDA is its "concern to describe the different positions which people assume in the discourse process with regard to attitudes, beliefs and so on, but also by a commitment to reveal the impositions of power and ideological influence" (pp. 25–26). Widdowson argues that "discourse is a matter of deriving meaning from text by referring it to contextual conditions, to the beliefs, attitudes, values which represent different versions of reality. The same text, therefore, can give rise to different discourses" (Widdowson, 1995, p. 168; cited in Bhatia, 2016, p. 26).

According to Fairclough et al. (2011), CDA involves an interplay of text and context, between the micro-analysis of texts and the macro-analysis of social structures and formations and power relations. In the study of context (ibid) the historical dimension is referred to – understanding the historical sociopolitical situation in which a text is produced. In her research agenda, Wodak (2001) combines elements of ethnography, argumentation theory, rhetoric and functional systemic linguistics, focusing on gender, language in politics,

prejudice and discrimination. CDA is thus defined by its attempt to analyze and redress the ideological and asymmetrical power imbalances that impede socio-political and cultural processes through the analysis of semiotic data. Fairclough (1989), Fairclough and Wodak (1997), and Wodak (2001) in a similar manner reiterate such interpretations of CDA, arguing that it is “fundamentally concerned with analysing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language. In other words, CDA aims to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, signalled, constituted, legitimized and so on by language use (or in discourse). (T)hree concepts figure indispensably in all CDA: the concept of power, the concept of history, and the concept of ideology” (Wodak, 2001, pp. 2–3).

Widdowson (1995) argues that “discourse is a matter of deriving meaning from text by referring it to contextual conditions, to the beliefs, attitudes, values which represent different versions of reality. The same text, therefore, can give rise to different discourses” (Widdowson, 1995, p. 168).

Overall, CDA focuses on the role of language and social interaction in the production of power relations (Fairclough, 1992, 1995; Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999; van Leeuwen, 1993; van Dijk, 1993, 1997; and Wodak, 1995, 1997). CDA thus explores the tension between understandings of language as being socially shaped, and language as socially shaping, i.e. language use constitutes social identities, social relations, and systems of knowledge and belief to varying degrees (Fairclough, 1995).

Hence, in foreign language teaching (FLT) CDA is widely used to foster a deeper understanding of language as a socially situated practice and provides a framework for analysing how language reflects, constructs, and influences social power dynamics, ideologies, and cultural norms. Considering this, CDA develops critical language awareness in students, who are guided (by the lecturer) how to uncover implicit biases, stereotypes, or persuasive techniques in authentic texts, such as advertisements, political speeches, or news articles, among other. Next it develops cultural competency, as students are enabled to explore the cultural and social contexts embedded in language by comparing and contrasting cultural norms reflected in the target language with those of the learners’ native language. This is how learners understand the nuances of politeness, power relationships, and societal values expressed through language. Moreover, CDA enhances communicative competence, given the awareness created of the pragmatic and rhetorical functions of language. By analysing dialogues or debates students practice language use in real-world communicative contexts. Students are helped understand and produce various text types and genres. CDA encourages students to critically engage with issues such as inequality, discrimination, or stereotypes.

Overall students are empowered to become active participants in their linguistic and cultural environments. By integrating CDA, FLT moves beyond teaching linguistic structures and vocabulary, fostering learners’ ability to navigate the complexities of real-world communication and social interaction in the target language.

Many researchers provide theoretical and practical insights into how CDA can be integrated into FLT to make language education more critical, meaningful, and socially aware. Janks (2010) bridges CDA and education, focusing on how critical literacy can transform language teaching. *Literacy and Power* (Janks, 2010) advocates for a critical literacy approach to teaching, which emphasizes the importance of understanding how language is tied to power, identity, and social justice. Educators should presumably move beyond a functional approach to literacy and address how it shapes and is shaped by societal norms and ideologies. Also, critical literacy involves analysing how texts represent individuals and communities, often reflecting unequal power relations. Given that texts are embedded within ideologies that influence how people think and act, students should be taught to recognize and challenge these ideological influences in the texts they encounter. Furthermore, Janks advocates for an educational approach that encourages students to question and critique the texts they read, promotes the creation of texts that reflect students' own experiences and perspectives and integrates a variety of textual genres and mediums, including digital and multimodal texts.

Alastair Pennycook's *Critical Applied Linguistics: A Critical Introduction* (2001) offers a transformative perspective on applied linguistics, challenging traditional approaches and advocating for critical engagement with language education and its sociopolitical dimensions. Hence his critical perspective on applied linguistics and the sociocultural aspects of language teaching is aligned with CDA principles. Encouraging the interpretation of language education as a site for critical engagement with social issues, applied linguistics is positioned as inherently political and intertwined with social justice. The researcher defines the scope of critical applied linguistics (CAL) as encompassing linguistic imperialism, social inequalities in language policies and the role of language in constructing identities and maintaining power. Such an interdisciplinary framework allows CAL to address broader issues such as globalization, colonial histories, and neoliberal ideologies shaping language education.

Furthermore, the relationship between language and identity is exposed, emphasizing how language is used to construct and contest identities. Pennycook explores how linguistic practices can reinforce or challenge power hierarchies in society. CAL views language teachers and researchers as active agents of change. Pennycook advocates reflexivity, urging educators to question their practices and critically engage with the sociopolitical implications of their work. Pennycook questions the dominance of English as a global lingua franca, challenging the assumption that English is a neutral tool for communication and highlighting its role in perpetuating inequality. The researcher draws on critical pedagogy to advocate for educational practices that empower marginalized groups. He calls for a teaching approach that fosters critical awareness and challenges oppressive language ideologies. Providing a framework for applying CAL principles in diverse contexts, such as curriculum design that incorporates local languages and cultures and policies that address linguistic rights and social

justice, Pennycook encourages scholars and practitioners to reconsider their roles, given that they can contribute to transformative social change.

Another researcher that incorporates CDA in FLT is Rebecca Rogers with her *Critical Discourse Analysis in Education* (2011). CDA is seen as a framework to analyse the relationship between discourse and social practices in education, and the latter is in turn positioned as a critical site where discourses reinforce or challenge social hierarchies. Rogers integrates foundational CDA theorists' perspectives into educational research. The researcher highlights how educational discourses often reproduce power imbalances, privileging dominant groups while marginalizing others. Examples include how standardized testing, curriculum design, and classroom interactions reflect broader societal inequities. Furthermore, in Rogers' view, CDA in education goes beyond written or spoken texts to include visual, digital, and multimodal discourses, exposing the importance of analysing how various semiotic modes work together to construct meaning in educational contexts. Her research presents diverse case studies, demonstrating how CDA can be used to analyse topics like literacy practices, teacher- student interactions, and policy documents. These studies show how discourses in education perpetuate ideologies related to race, gender, class, and other axes of identity. She also addresses the tension between maintaining academic rigor and fostering transformative practice. Overall, researchers are encouraged to engage with participatory and activist methodologies, linking their analyses to concrete efforts for social change.

Task-based language learning (TBLL), or task-based language teaching (TBLT)

Task-based language learning (TBLL), also known as task-based language teaching (TBLT), is an approach in language education where learning occurs through the completion of meaningful tasks. This method focuses on using the target language for real- world purposes rather than explicitly teaching grammar and vocabulary in isolation.

There are many researchers in this field. They have defined what TBLL involves, the benefits and challenges of this approach, and the role of teachers and instructors in it. These are David Nunan, Rod Ellis, Peter Skehan, Michael Long, Jane Willis, Zoltán Dörnyei, to mention but a few. All are leading figures in second language acquisition (SLA) and TBLL, and Ellis has extensively written on task-based approaches and their role in fostering communication and interaction in the classroom. A pioneer in the practical application of task-based approaches in curriculum design, Nunan has authored accessible and influential works in the field. His seminal work that outlines the key principles, concepts, and practices of TBLL is *Task-Based Language Teaching*.

Nunan defines a task as a classroom activity that involves learners in understanding, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the target language. Furthermore, the task focuses

on meaning rather than form and has a clearly defined communicative outcome. What is more, Nunan identifies five key components that define and structure tasks:

- Goals: The purpose or objectives of the task, often linked to real-world language use.
- Input: The language materials or stimuli learners work with (such as texts, audio, images).
- Activities: What learners do with the input (such as answering questions, role-playing).
- Teacher's Role: Guiding, facilitating, or observing learners as they engage with the task.
- Learners' Role: Active participants, collaborators, or problem-solvers.

Tasks can be placed on a continuum from rehearsal tasks (closely resembling real-world activities) to pedagogical tasks (designed for language learning with less real-world applicability).

In a similar fashion, Rod Ellis (2003) defines a task as an activity that requires learners to use language for a communicative purpose, focuses on meaning rather than on explicit language form and has a clear outcome that learners aim to achieve. Ellis further outlined several principles that underpin TBLT:

- Focus on Meaning: Tasks emphasize meaningful communication over form-focused instruction.
- Input and Output: Tasks provide opportunities for both language input (listening/reading) and output (speaking/writing), crucial for SLA.
- Learner-Centeredness: Learners actively use the language in problem-solving or decision-making tasks.
- Authenticity: Tasks should mirror real-world language use to enhance relevance and motivation.
- Task-Based Syllabus: TBLT organizes the curriculum around tasks, rather than grammar or vocabulary lists.

The researcher distinguishes between two major types of tasks: unfocused that encourage general communication and can include any language forms and focused that aim to elicit the use of specific linguistic features (such as past tense or modal verbs). He also divides tasks into input-providing tasks, which emphasize comprehension (namely listening and reading) and output-promoting tasks, which focus on production (namely speaking and writing).

Michael H. Long's Second Language Acquisition and Task-Based Language Teaching (2015) integrates research from SLA with insights into how tasks can be designed to promote language learning. Long builds on his Interaction Hypothesis, which emphasizes the role of interaction in SLA. He argues that tasks provide an ideal context for learners to interact, negotiate meaning, and receive feedback, all of which facilitate language development. Long

discusses the concept of “focus on form” (FoF), which refers to attention to language form (grammar, syntax, etc.) within communicative tasks. He highlights the importance of incidental focus on form during tasks, rather than explicit, isolated grammar instruction. A task is yet again defined as an activity in which the focus is on meaning, and learners use language to achieve a specific outcome. Tasks should be communicative, goal-oriented, and relevant to real-world language use. As regards task types, Long categorizes tasks into different types based on their complexity and the cognitive demands they place on learners. He emphasizes that tasks should be sequenced in a way that gradually increases in difficulty and promotes cognitive processing. Tasks should be selected that promote meaningful communication, encourage interaction, and are cognitively engaging and their key features include authenticity (reflecting real-world language use), complexity (matching learners’ proficiency levels) and outcome (having a clear and tangible outcome that motivates learners).

Furthermore, Long explores the following task types: jigsaw tasks, in which learners are given parts of information and need to collaborate with others to complete the full picture (each pair of students is given a different section of a story or a diagram); information gap, in which information is exchanged to complete a task or solve a problem; problem-solving, which requires critical thinking and collaboration and students are expected to communicate and negotiate to come to a consensus on the solution; decision-making, in which a decision should be made about a particular situation or issue, requiring negotiation and argumentation; role play, in which assume roles and simulate real-world scenarios, using language to act out situations; creative tasks, involving the creating of a story, advertisement, etc.; opinion exchange, involving discussing and exchanging their opinions or perspectives on a particular topic.

According to Skehan (1998), tasks provide rich opportunities for cognitive processing as learners actively use language, leading to both the acquisition of new linguistic forms and the development of fluency. Furthermore, learners benefit from tasks where the cognitive load is well-measured and that are appropriately challenging – those that push learners to use existing knowledge while requiring them to expand their capabilities. According to Dörnyei, the design of tasks and activities is crucial for motivating students. Tasks should be: **challenging yet achievable** (providing a sense of challenge without overwhelming students); **varied and engaging** (incorporating different types of activities such as games, debates, projects to keep students engaged and prevent monotony; **relevant** (tasks should be directly related to students’ goals and interests to maintain motivation).

Willis (1996) proposes a framework for organising tasks into three phases:

- Pre-task phase, during which the teacher introduces the topic, and the task and learners should presumably activate their prior knowledge. Teachers can set up the context, introduce key vocabulary, and clarify any unfamiliar concepts before the task begins.
- Task phase, during which learners perform the task, often in pairs or groups, focusing on meaning and communication rather than form. The emphasis is on fluency. Teachers

monitor learners but generally avoid interrupting during the task. This phase encourages learners to negotiate meaning and practice using language in context.

- Post-task phase after completing the task, when learners reflect on their performance. The teacher provides feedback, focusing on form and discusses any difficulties learners encountered during the task. This phase may include language analysis, where learners review and practice language points that emerged during the task.

Willis provides guidelines for designing effective tasks, stressing that tasks should be engaging, challenging, and appropriate for the learners' proficiency level. Furthermore, they be sequenced from simpler to more complex, gradually increasing in difficulty to challenge learners and promote language development.

All the aforementioned scholars highlight the role of the teacher in the task-based language classroom. Teachers may need training to effectively implement TBL, as it requires a shift from traditional methods of language teaching. What is more, managing a classroom with a focus on group work and tasks can be challenging, requiring clear instructions and structured monitoring (Willis, 1996). Overall, teachers are seen as facilitators in TBLT, guiding learners through tasks, monitoring interactions, and providing feedback. Long suggests that teachers need to be skilled in creating tasks that strike a balance between communication and language focus (Long, 2015). While TBLT emphasizes meaning and communication, Long argues that teachers can incorporate form-focused instruction within tasks, without disrupting the communicative nature of the activity. According to Skehan (1998), feedback plays a critical role in helping learners refine their language use.

With regard to designing a task-based syllabus, Ellis (2003) advocates for organising curricula around tasks rather than traditional structures like grammar or vocabulary. Key components of a task-based syllabus include task selection based on learners' needs and proficiency; sequencing tasks from simple to complex and incorporating both focused and unfocused tasks. Such a syllabus is flexible and dynamic, adapting to the needs and interests of learners, and can be more motivating than traditional grammar-based approaches (Willis, 1996).

Benefits and advantages of TBL

Ellis (2003) highlights several advantages of TBLT: This method promotes natural language use and fluency. Furthermore, it encourages learner autonomy and engagement, providing rich contexts for language learning. Furthermore, the researcher exposes some challenges in the implementation of TBLT. These pertain to the implementation difficulties due to classroom constraints or teacher unfamiliarity. They also involve balancing fluency and accuracy in language development. The third identified challenge refers to the adaptation of tasks for diverse learner needs and proficiency levels. Long (2015) addresses the challenge of assessing task-based learning, suggesting that assessments should focus on both fluency and accuracy, taking into account the complexity of tasks. Furthermore, Long suggests that teachers and

administrators may need to adapt task-based approaches to meet local needs, and professional development may be required for teachers to effectively use TBLT. Willis (1996) sums up three major advantages of TBLT: real-world relevance, focus on communication, which develops learners' confidence in using the language in practical contexts. The third benefit involves the learner-centred approach as TBLT promotes learner autonomy, and students are actively engaged in tasks rather than passively receiving input.

Peter Skehan's *A Cognitive Approach to Language Learning* (1998) explores how cognitive theories can inform language learning and teaching. In this work, Skehan emphasizes the role of cognitive processes in second language acquisition (SLA) and advocates for an understanding of how learners process, store, and retrieve linguistic information. The researcher focuses on the role of attention, suggesting that learners can only process a limited amount of linguistic information at a time, so tasks should be designed to optimize attention without overwhelming cognitive resources. Furthermore, attention should be directed at both form and meaning. Motivation is a key factor in sustaining cognitive effort during language learning, as learners with high motivation are more likely to engage deeply with language tasks, leading to better learning outcomes (Skehan, 1998). Zoltán Dörnyei's *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom* (2001) examines how teachers can effectively enhance and maintain student motivation in language learning environments. Focusing on the practical application of motivational theories in the classroom, Dörnyei offers a detailed framework for using various strategies to boost students' motivation.

Dörnyei identifies several categories of motivational strategies that teachers can use to encourage students:

- **Creating a Motivating Classroom Environment**, which involves establishing a positive classroom atmosphere that fosters motivation and reduces anxiety; interest should be maintained, and a sense of group cohesion and mutual support among learners should be created.
- **Generating Student Motivation**, which involves creating a strong rationale for learning and demonstrating the relevance of the language to students' personal and academic lives. Furthermore, students should be encouraged to set goals and make their own decisions about their learning paths.
- **Maintaining and Protecting Motivation**, which suggests that strategies should be implemented to keep motivation high over time, such as offering praise, rewarding progress, and maintaining a balance between challenge and success, and regular feedback should be offered.
- **Increasing Learners' Self-Confidence**, which involves providing opportunities for success to build learners' confidence in their language abilities and encouraging positive self-talk and self-reflection to promote autonomy and self-efficacy.

Content and language integrated learning (CLIL)

The European introduction of content and language integrated learning (CLIL) in 1994 was due to political and educational circumstances. The political ones were based on the assumption that movement across the European Union needed higher levels of language proficiency in particular languages than was the situation at that moment in time. The educational circumstances were related to the need for adjusting current language teaching approaches, so that they can provide a wide variety of learners with higher levels of competence (Marsh, 2012, p. 1). The term CLIL was coined in the early 1990s (Mehisto et al., 2008, p. 9) in order to produce a neutral and generally accepted label, whose purpose is to facilitate communication among international specialists (Dalton-Puffer, Nikula & Smit, 2010, p. 3).

CLIL is a double-centred teaching approach in which a foreign language is used for the purpose of teaching and learning of content and language with the aim of boosting both content and language proficiency to pre-determined levels (Marsh et al., 2010). CLIL can be defined as a teaching approach in which disciplines such as geography or biology are taught through the means of a foreign language, usually to learners at primary, secondary or tertiary level of education (Dalton-Puffer, Nikula & Smit, 2010, p. 1).

The language of instruction is one which learners study at school or university, and it is usually not widely used in the community they live in. This means that, in most cases, teachers delivering CLIL lessons are not native speakers of the target language. Neither are they foreign- language specialists, but content-specialists (Dalton-Puffer, Nikula & Smit, 2010, p. 1).

According to Wolff (2007, pp. 15–16), CLIL can be distinguished from other content-based approaches of teaching in that “classroom content is not so much taken from everyday life or the general content of the target language culture but rather from content subjects, from academic/scientific disciplines or from the professions”. This implies that CLIL classes at school are most often scheduled as content-classes (e.g. biology, geography, music), while the target language of instruction also continues as an independent subject in the form of foreign language classes taught by language experts (Dalton-Puffer, Nikula & Smit, 2010, pp. 1–2).

CLIL is usually perceived as an educational environment in which naturalistic language acquisition can take place, suggesting that the most successful type of language acquisition occurs without formal instruction. Language learning is thus observed to develop in a self-triggered way, in which meaningful language input of any type leads to the gradual formation of a full L2 communicative competence with regard to both the rules of system and the rules of use (Dalton-Puffer, Nikula & Smit, 2010, p. 6).

There are two versions of CLIL – content-driven CLIL and language-driven CLIL. Escobar Urmeneta (2019) describes the differences between them. While in content-driven CLIL teachers are content specialists, classes are scheduled as content classes, evaluation is most often carried out in accordance with content-related aims, foreign language classes usually continue side-by-side, in language-driven CLIL teachers are foreign language specialists,

classes are scheduled as foreign language classes, evaluation is carried out in accordance with language-/communication-related aims, content classes are usually taught in L1 (Escobar Urmeneta, 2019, p. 17).

One conclusion that can be drawn for CLIL programmes in Europe is that they are based on the content disciplines. It is the curriculum of the content discipline that is executed in the foreign language while language aims may remain implicit (cf. Dalton-Puffer & Smit, 2007, p. 12; Wolff, 2007, p. 16). In other words, on Stoller's (2004, p. 261) continuum ranging from language-driven to content-driven programmes, European CLIL practices can definitely be located towards the content end (Dalton-Puffer, Nikula & Smit, 2010, p. 2).

The European Commission's action plan for the promotion of language learning and linguistic diversity for the period of 2004–2006 (European Commission, 2003) emphasizes the main contribution that CLIL can provide to the Union's language learning aims. "CLIL provides greater opportunities within a given school curriculum for foreign language exposure. In its dual-focussed approach CLIL accommodates both subject-specific content and language, offering a more natural context for language development and brings an immediacy, relevance and added-value to the process of language learning" (Marsh, 2012, p. 14).

The growing popularity of CLIL comes, to a certain extent, as a result of the European-level political support for it as a useful means of raising the level of multilingualism in Europe, facilitating the current processes of globalization and internationalization and overcoming their challenges for language teaching (e.g. Cameron & Block, 2002; Luke, Luke & Graham, 2007) (Dalton-Puffer, Nikula & Smit, 2010, p. IX).

In conclusion, CLIL is an approach of teaching language, which integrates content into the classes. Learners are not only acquiring the language, but also other subject knowledge simultaneously. This approach is efficient and time-saving because it enables learners to acquire both language- and subject-field knowledge. Besides, CLIL offers a more natural way of acquiring a new language. Learners who undertake the CLIL programme are more fluent in the language in comparison with the traditional way of language learning. CLIL also concentrates on the formation of four competencies, which are content, cognition, communication and culture. There are some obstacles to implementing this teaching approach, such as insufficiency of qualified teachers and teaching materials. Indeed, it is challenging to find language teachers who have expertise in both the academic discipline and the foreign language. Furthermore, it should become a main priority to develop teaching resources which can combine language teaching and subject content. Nevertheless, in the future, it is expected of the widespread of CLIL to facilitate and improve the quality of language teaching and learning around the world (Le & Nguyen, 2022, p. 4).

Computer-assisted language learning (CALL)

At the 1983 TESOL conference held in Toronto, Canada, the term “computer-assisted language learning (CALL)” was coined in order to refer to the use of computers in the process of second language teaching and learning (Chapelle, 2001). In general terms, CALL can be defined as “the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning” (Levy, 1997, p. 1). It is often perceived as the applications of computers as facilitators for presenting the teaching material. Schofield (1995) defines CALL as any type of language acquisition task performed through the use of computers. Another definition of CALL, reflecting its changing essence, is “any process in which a learner uses a computer and, as a result, improves his or her language” (Beatty, 2003, p. 7).

The term “computer-assisted language learning (CALL)” used in British English or “computer-aided instruction (CAI) / computer-aided language instruction (CALI)” used in American English refers to finding and examining applications of the computer in the process of language acquisition. CALL comprises a wide variety of applications and methods for foreign language teaching and learning, ranging from the “traditional” drill-and-practice programmes that were typical of CALL in the 1960s and 1970s to more contemporary demonstrations of CALL, such as the ones applied in virtual learning environment and distance mobile-assisted language learning (MALL). It also covers the application of language corpora and concordances, interactive whiteboards and so on. A lot of researchers think that digital technology is the perfect instrument to improve students’ learning a foreign language. Beatty (2003, p. 7) defines CALL as “any process in which a learner uses a computer and, as a result, improves his or her language” (Shokrpour, Mirshekari & Moslehi, 2019, p. 2). Oliva and Pollastrini’s (1995) research demonstrate that the computer presents opportunities for learners to be less reliant on the teacher and have more autonomy to experience individually real language in real or semi-real environment.

CALL was established in the 1950s and 1960s and has since undergone plenty of transformations. The modifications of CALL reflect the most influential educational theories, as well as the respective computer technology of the time. Warschauer and Healey (1998) have divided the development of CALL into three clear-cut stages: behaviouristic CALL, communicative CALL and integrative CALL. These three phases comply with certain levels of technology and specific educational theories (Warschauer & Healey, 1998).

In the 1950s and 1960s, behaviourism was the dominant theory applied in educational practice. The theory claims that students learn by exposure to recurrent drills and practical sequences and are provided with positive feedback for adequate responses. The design of CALL programmes at that time reflected the behaviouristic approach, with most of the tasks being recurrent language drills called drill-and-practice (Levy, 1997; Warschauer & Healey, 1998).

By the late 1970s, complying with the criticism of the behaviouristic approach not offering enough authentic communication, communicative language teaching (CLT),

respectively communicative CALL, became popular in language acquisition. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, methodologists were looking for more integrative approaches to teaching in authentic environments, such as the content-based, task-based and project-based approach (Warschauer & Healey, 1998). For that reason, integrative CALL appeared as a potential way “to integrate various skills (e.g. listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and also integrate technology more fully into the language learning process” (Warschauer & Healey, 1998, p. 5). Bryan Braul (2006, pp. 26–40) summarizes the most common potential benefits of

CALL as follows: individualized instruction, exposure to more authentic materials and communicative opportunities, self-paced instruction, immediate feedback, lower anxiety levels, a positive impact on language learning achievement, experiential learning and interaction.

Experiential learning (EL)

Experiential learning theory (ELT) defines learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (Kolb, 1984, p. 41). The experiential learning pattern is a circular process of learning situations. For efficient learning to take place, the learner has to pass through the whole circle. The four-stage learning pattern reflects two polar opposite directions of gaining experience – concrete experience (CE) and abstract conceptualization (AC), and two polar opposite directions of processing experience – reflective observation (RO) and active experimentation (AE). Experiential learning is a cycle of forming knowledge, which includes a creative strain amidst the four learning abilities. The learner has to sustainably select which set of learning abilities to apply in a certain learning environment. To sum up, learning is perceived as a four-stage circle, in which the learner had to pass through each stage – experiencing, reflecting, thinking and acting. It is essential to mention that the learner can enter the cycle at any stage (Kolb, 1984).

Lewis and Williams (1994, p. 5) define experiential learning as follows: “In its simplest form, experiential learning means learning from experience or learning by doing. Experiential education first immerses learners in an experience and then encourages reflection about the experience to develop new skills, new attitudes, or new ways of thinking.” Experiential learning can be classified into two main categories – happening out of the classroom (called field-based experiences) and happening in the classroom, usually during classes (called classroom-based learning) (Chan, 2023, p. 6).

Kolb (1984) claims that learners have a preference for learning in a specific way. Learners may accept different learning styles in different contexts. However, they tend to prefer some styles to others. He points out the following four learning styles, each of which is related to a different approach to resolving problems:

- Divergers observe situations from different angles and depend strongly on brainstorming and generating ideas.

- Assimilators use inductive thinking and have the capacity to develop theoretical models.
- Convergers depend strongly on hypothetical-deductive thinking.
- Accommodators execute plans and experiments and adjust to current circumstances (Healey & Jenkins, 2000, p. 187).

According to Kolb, people learn better when content is presented in a way complying with their typical learning style (Healey & Jenkins, 2000, pp. 187–189).

Conclusion

The exploration of foreign language teaching methodologies presented in this material underscores the dynamic and multifaceted nature of modern language education. Each of the approaches discussed—Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), and Experiential Learning (EL)—contributes distinct pedagogical benefits and challenges, reinforcing the importance of integrating multiple perspectives in language instruction.

CDA stands out for its potential to develop learners' critical awareness of language as a vehicle for ideology, power, and social identity. Through CDA, language learning becomes not only a linguistic process but also a critical social practice that empowers students to engage with the world around them. TBLL, on the other hand, promotes authentic communication and learner autonomy by focusing on meaning-driven tasks, with empirical support from SLA research highlighting its efficacy in fostering fluency and engagement.

CLIL brings a dual focus on language and content, offering a pragmatic solution to the growing demands of multilingual competence in an increasingly globalized world. Despite its implementation challenges, CLIL fosters deeper cognitive engagement and supports the simultaneous development of subject matter knowledge and language proficiency. CALL illustrates how technology can transform language learning environments by enhancing autonomy, interactivity, and accessibility. The evolution from drill-based systems to integrative, multimodal platforms marks a significant shift in how digital tools support communicative competence.

Finally, Experiential Learning emphasizes the centrality of learner agency and personal engagement through reflection, action, and adaptation. It offers a robust framework for accommodating diverse learning styles and fostering deeper retention through active involvement.

Together, these methodologies reflect a paradigm shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered instruction, with a strong emphasis on authenticity, interaction, critical thinking, and learner empowerment. As foreign language teaching continues to evolve, successful instruction will likely depend on the ability to flexibly combine these methodologies to meet varied learner needs, contextual realities, and educational goals. Ultimately, a holistic

and critically informed approach can ensure that language learning is not only effective, but also meaningful and transformative in today's interconnected world.

Works cited:

- Beatty, K. (2003). *Teaching and researching computer-assisted language learning*. New York: Longman.
- Bhatia, V. K. (2016). *Critical genre analysis: Investigating interdiscursive performance in professional practice*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Braul, B. (2006). *ESL teacher perceptions and attitudes toward using computer-assisted language learning (CALL): Recommendations for effective CALL practice* [Unpublished master's thesis]. University of Alberta, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, Department of Secondary Education.
- Cameron, D., & Block, D. (Eds.). (2002). *Globalization and language teaching*. London: Routledge.
- Chan, C. K. Y. (2023). *Assessment for experiential learning*. London and New York: Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group. DOI: 10.4324/9781003018391
- Chapelle, C. (2001). *Computer applications in second language acquisition: Foundations for teaching, testing and research*. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Dalton-Puffer, C., Nikula, T., & Smit, U. (2010). Charting policies, premises and research on content and language integrated learning. In Dalton-Puffer, C., Nikula, T., & Smit, U. (Eds.), *Language use and language learning in CLIL classrooms* (pp. 1–19). John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Dalton-Puffer, C., Nikula, T., & Smit, U. (2010). Preface. In Dalton-Puffer, C., Nikula, T., & Smit, U. (Eds.), *Language use and language learning in CLIL classrooms* (pp. IX–X). John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Dalton-Puffer, C., & Smit, U. (2007). Introduction. In C. Dalton-Puffer & U. Smit (Eds.), *Empirical perspectives on CLIL classroom discourse* (pp. 7–23). Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2001). *Motivational strategies in the language classroom*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language teaching and learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Escobar Urmeneta, C. (2019). An introduction to content and language integrated learning (CLIL) for teachers and teacher educators. *CLIL Journal of Innovation and Research in Plurilingual and Pluricultural Education*, 2(1), 7–19. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/clil.21>
- European Commission. (2003). *Promoting language learning and linguistic diversity (2004–2006)*. Brussels.
- Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and power*. New York: Longman.
- Fairclough, N., Mulderrig, J., & Wodak, R. (2011). Critical discourse analysis. In van Dijk, T. (Ed.), *Discourse studies: A multidisciplinary introduction (2nd ed.)* (pp. 357–378). London: Sage.

- Fairclough, N., & Wodak, R. (1997). Critical discourse analysis. In van Dijk, T. (Ed.), *Discourse as social interaction* (pp. 258–284). London: Sage.
- Flowerdew, J. (2013). *Discourse in English language education*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Healey, M., & Jenkins, A. (2000). Kolb's experiential learning theory and its application in geography in higher education. *Journal of Geography*, 99(5), 185–195. DOI: 10.1080/00221340008978967
- Janks, H. (2010). *Literacy and power*. London: Routledge.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Le, N. P., & Nguyen, P. (2022). Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) method and how it is changing the foreign language learning landscape. *Open Access Library Journal*, 9(e8381), 1–5. DOI: 10.4236/oalib.1108381
- Levy, M. (1997). *Computer-assisted language learning: Context and conceptualization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lewis, L. H., & Williams, C. J. (1994). Experiential learning: Past and present. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 1994(62), 5–16. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/ace.36719946203>
- Long, M. H. (2015). *Second language acquisition and task-based language teaching*. New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Luke, A., Luke, C., & Graham, P. (2007). Globalization, corporatism, and critical language education. *International Multilingual Research Journal*, 1(1), 1–13.
- Marsh, D. (2012). *Content and language integrated learning (CLIL): A development trajectory*. University of Cordoba.
- Marsh, D., Mehisto, P., Wolff, D., & Frigols-Martin, M. (2010). *The European framework for CLIL teacher education*. Graz: European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML).
- Mehisto, P., Marsh, D., & Frigols, M. J. (2008). *Uncovering CLIL: Content and language integrated learning in bilingual and multilingual education*. Oxford: Macmillan Education.
- Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-based language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Oliva, M., & Pollastrini, Y. (1995). Internet resources and second language acquisition: An evaluation of virtual immersion. *Foreign Language Annals*, 28, 551–563.
- Pennycook, A. (2001). *Critical applied linguistics: A critical introduction*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Rogers, R. (2011). *Critical discourse analysis in education* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Schofield, J. W. (1995). *Computers and classroom culture*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Shokrpour, N., Mirshekari, Z., & Moslehi, S. (2019). Learning vocabulary electronically: Does computer assisted language learning (CALL) instruction have any impacts on Iranian EFL learners? *Cogent Education*, 6(1), 1702827. DOI: 10.1080/2331186X.2019.1702827

- Skehan, P. (1998). *A cognitive approach to language learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stoller, F. L. (2004). Content-based instruction: Perspectives on curriculum planning. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 24, 261–283.
- van Dijk, T. A. (1993). Principles of critical discourse analysis. *Discourse and Society*, 4(2), 249–283. SAGE journals
- Warschauer, M., & Healey, D. (1998). Computers and language learning: An overview. *Language Teaching*, 31, 57–71.
- Widdowson, H. G. (1995). *Discourse analysis: A critical view*. *Language and Literature*, 4, 157–172. Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/096394709500400301>
- Willis, J. (1996). *A framework for task-based learning*. London: Longman.
- Wodak, R. (1999). Critical discourse analysis at the end of the 20th century. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 32(1&2), 181–193.
- Wodak, R. (2001). What CDA is about: A summary of its history, important concepts and its developments. In Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (pp. 1–13). London: Sage. TUK
- Wolff, D. (2007). CLIL: Bridging the gap between school and working life. In D. Marsh & D. Wolff (Eds.), *Diverse contexts – converging goals: CLIL in Europe* (pp. 15–25). Frankfurt: Peter Lang.

5. Challenge-based learning – methodology, rationale and good practices

Author:

Chrystalla PACHITA

Affiliation:

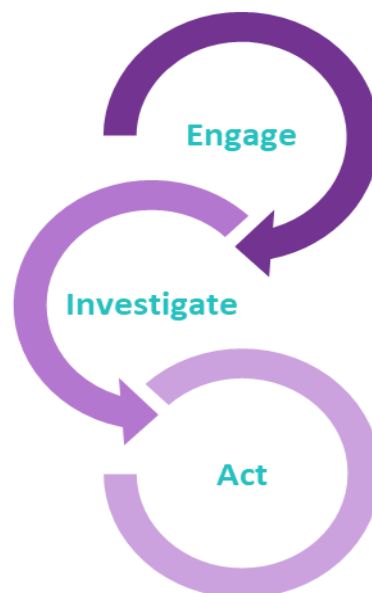
University of Nicosia, Cyprus

Introduction to challenge-based learning

Challenge-Based Learning (CBL) is a student-centred, inquiry-driven educational framework that emphasizes active learning through the exploration of complex, real-world problems. It was first conceptualized by Apple Inc. in 2008 as an evolution of problem-based learning, focusing on collaboration, technology integration, and practical solutions (Nichols and Cator 5). Unlike traditional instructional approaches that rely on passive knowledge acquisition, CBL immerses students in a structured, yet flexible, problem-solving process that requires critical thinking, teamwork, and iterative refinement of ideas (Johnson et al. 3).

CBL follows a three-phase model: Engage, Investigate, and Act (Johnson et al. 4). In the Engage phase, students identify a broad societal issue that is relevant and meaningful to them. This is followed by the Investigate phase, where students conduct research, gather data, and analyze different perspectives related to the challenge. The final Act phase requires students to develop and implement a solution that has a tangible impact, ensuring that their learning experience extends beyond the classroom. This iterative approach fosters a deep understanding of content and cultivates skills such as problem-solving, collaboration, and digital literacy (Bransford et al. 58).

Figure 4: The three phases of Challenge-Based Learning



A distinguishing feature of CBL is its emphasis on authentic learning experiences, where students engage with real-world problems that transcend disciplinary boundaries. This aligns with constructivist learning theories, which argue that knowledge is best acquired through active participation and contextual application (Dewey 25). CBL encourages learners to apply their knowledge in meaningful ways, bridging the gap between academic learning and real-life challenges. Moreover, technology plays a critical role in facilitating CBL, as digital tools and online collaboration platforms enable students to communicate, research, and implement their solutions effectively (Helm 17).

Within the realm of foreign language education, CBL offers an innovative way to enhance linguistic proficiency while fostering intercultural awareness and democratic competencies. By engaging students in real-world challenges related to civic engagement, sustainability, and human rights, CBL provides opportunities for authentic language use in diverse contexts (Byram 89). The dynamic nature of this methodology prepares students to navigate complex sociocultural landscapes, equipping them with the communication skills necessary for active European citizenship.

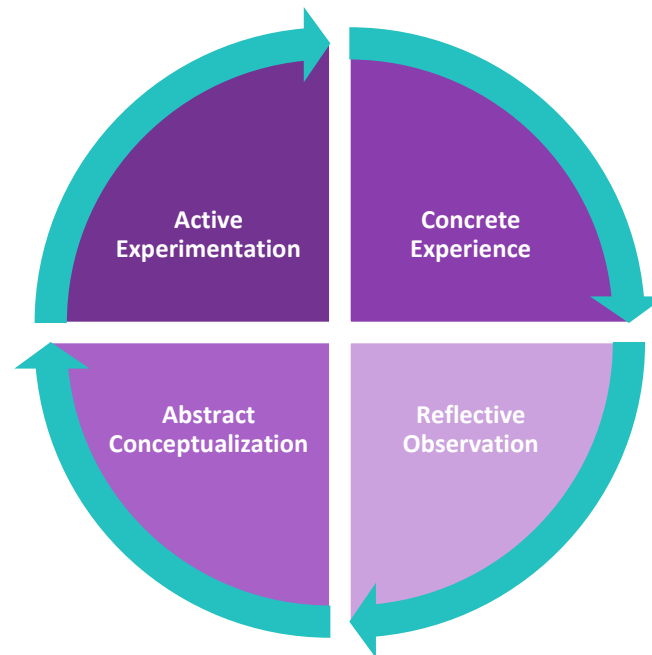
Theoretical foundations of CBL

CBL is rooted in constructivist theories of learning, particularly Vygotsky's concept of social constructivism, which emphasizes the role of interaction in cognitive development (Vygotsky 86). According to this perspective, students learn best when they engage with peers in meaningful discussions and collaborative tasks. Learning is not simply a process of absorbing information but an active experience shaped by social and cultural interactions. In this sense, CBL aligns with Vygotsky's notion of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which suggests that learners can achieve higher levels of understanding with the guidance of more knowledgeable peers or educators (Vygotsky 90).

Dewey's experiential learning theory further informs CBL, advocating for education that prioritizes direct experience and reflection (Dewey 25). He argued that learning should be deeply rooted in real-life experiences, as these provide the foundation for critical thinking and problem-solving. In this regard, CBL enhances learning by immersing students in practical challenges that require them to apply knowledge dynamically. This active learning approach is particularly valuable in fostering democratic engagement and social responsibility, as learners become directly involved in solving issues that affect their communities.

Kolb's experiential learning cycle offers another important framework for understanding CBL. His model consists of four key stages: **concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation** (Kolb 41). In the context of CBL, students first encounter a real-world problem (concrete experience), analyze and reflect on it (reflective observation), develop theoretical insights and solutions (abstract conceptualization), and then apply their learning in a practical setting (active experimentation).

Figure 5: Kolb's experiential learning cycle



This cyclical approach ensures that students continuously refine their understanding through hands-on activities, reflection, and adaptation.

Furthermore, CBL draws on elements of inquiry-based learning, where students take an active role in investigating and exploring problems. Inquiry-based learning encourages learners to formulate questions, conduct independent research, and synthesize their findings into meaningful conclusions (Bruner 56). This process fosters curiosity, autonomy, and deeper engagement with the subject matter, aligning well with the goals of CBL in promoting self-directed learning and problem-solving skills.

The integration of CBL into modern education also reflects broader developments in 21st-century learning skills, particularly the emphasis on collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking (Trilling and Fadel 78). In an increasingly complex and interconnected world, CBL helps students develop competencies that are crucial for both academic success and future professional careers. By working on real-world challenges, students learn to think critically about global issues, communicate their ideas effectively, and collaborate with diverse teams to implement solutions.

Overall, the theoretical foundations of CBL highlight its strength as an interdisciplinary and dynamic learning approach. By combining elements of constructivist theory, experiential learning, inquiry-based learning, and 21st-century skill development, CBL provides a robust framework for fostering deep learning and meaningful engagement with real-world challenges.

CBL in foreign language education

Integrating CBL into foreign language education aligns with modern pedagogical shifts that emphasize communicative competence and task-based learning. Research suggests that language acquisition is most effective when learners engage in meaningful interactions within

real-world contexts. By designing learning experiences around authentic societal challenges, CBL creates opportunities for students to develop both linguistic and intercultural competencies (Byram 89). Additionally, projects centred on democratic engagement and active citizenship provide a valuable framework for applying language skills in diverse sociopolitical settings.

CBL facilitates foreign language learning by emphasizing contextualized communication—students are not just learning grammatical structures and vocabulary in isolation but applying them in meaningful conversations and problem-solving scenarios. Through project-based learning and collaborative tasks, students develop functional language skills, such as negotiation, argumentation, and critical discussion. These skills are essential in real-world multilingual environments, where individuals must navigate diverse social and political landscapes effectively (Kramsch 117).

Moreover, foreign language education through CBL often incorporates digital tools and virtual exchange programs that connect learners across different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Platforms such as COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) and Erasmus+ virtual exchanges provide students with immersive experiences in cross-cultural communication, reinforcing their ability to engage in authentic language practice while addressing global challenges (Helm 17).

Instructors play a critical role in facilitating these experiences by designing challenges that integrate both linguistic objectives and civic engagement goals. For example, a language course focused on sustainability might include a CBL project where students collaborate with international peers to develop multilingual awareness campaigns on climate change. This not only strengthens language proficiency but also fosters global citizenship and intercultural empathy (Little 76).

Implementing CBL in higher education curricula

Successful implementation of CBL in higher education requires careful planning and alignment with institutional goals. The European Commission's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) serves as a useful guideline for integrating democratic values into curricula (Council of Europe 12). Higher education institutions can facilitate CBL through interdisciplinary collaboration, digital learning platforms, and partnerships with community organisations.

To effectively implement CBL in higher education curricula, institutions must address several key factors:

- **Curriculum Design and Integration:** CBL should not be an isolated component but rather an integral part of the broader language learning curriculum. This requires syllabus restructuring to ensure that CBL activities align with linguistic proficiency goals, democratic competencies, and intercultural awareness.
- **Faculty Training and Pedagogical Support:** Educators need proper training in designing and facilitating CBL projects. Professional development workshops and collaborative teaching networks can provide instructors with the necessary tools and methodologies to integrate challenge-based approaches effectively.

- **Assessment Strategies:** Traditional assessment methods, such as exams and written essays, may not fully capture the depth of learning that occurs in CBL environments. Instead, performance-based assessments, such as digital portfolios, reflective journals, and peer evaluations, can provide a more holistic view of student progress and engagement.
- **Technological Infrastructure:** Digital tools play a crucial role in supporting CBL initiatives. Online learning management systems, video conferencing tools, and collaborative platforms such as Padlet, Miro, and Google Workspace can facilitate communication and project management among students.
- **Community and Industry Partnerships:** CBL thrives when students work on challenges that have real-world applications. Universities can collaborate with NGOs, businesses, and local government agencies to provide students with meaningful projects that address pressing social and environmental issues. These partnerships not only enhance the learning experience but also strengthen students' professional networks and employability.
- **Student Engagement and Motivation:** To maintain high levels of student engagement, CBL projects should be student-driven and allow for flexibility and autonomy in problem-solving. Giving students a voice in selecting challenges and designing solutions fosters intrinsic motivation and deeper investment in the learning process.

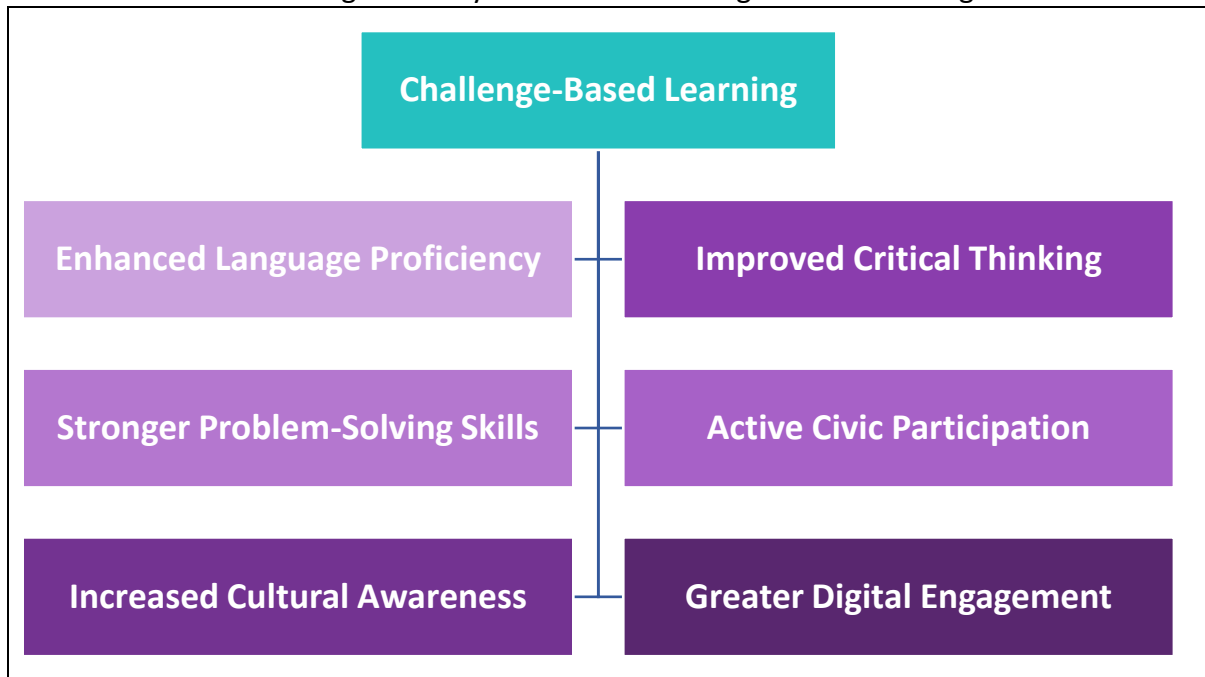
By addressing these factors, institutions can create dynamic and inclusive learning environments where students develop both linguistic competence and essential life skills. CBL has the potential to transform foreign language education by fostering not only communication proficiency but also critical thinking, social responsibility, and global awareness.

Case studies and best practices

Several higher education institutions have successfully implemented CBL in foreign language education, demonstrating its transformative potential. One notable example is the Erasmus+ project "Intercultural Communicative Competence through Virtual Exchange," which leveraged digital platforms to facilitate cross-cultural interactions and authentic language use among students from different countries. This initiative highlighted how virtual exchange can enhance both linguistic proficiency and intercultural awareness, providing students with real-world communication experiences that mirror global professional environments.

Another successful application of CBL is the "Language Challenges for Active Citizenship" initiative, which engaged students in multilingual, project-based learning activities centered on social issues such as climate change, migration, and digital democracy (Little 76). Through collaborative research and problem-solving, participants developed their language skills while deepening their understanding of European democratic values. These case studies underscore how CBL fosters not only linguistic competence but also civic engagement and critical thinking skills essential for global citizenship.

Figure 6: Key Benefits of Challenge-Based Learning



Challenges and future directions

Despite its advantages, implementing CBL presents several challenges. One significant obstacle is the need for extensive faculty training. Educators must be equipped with the skills to facilitate CBL effectively, including designing meaningful challenges, guiding inquiry-based learning, and assessing student progress through non-traditional means (Bransford et al. 58). Universities must invest in professional development programs to support instructors in adopting this innovative pedagogical model.

Another challenge is the difficulty in assessing student outcomes in CBL environments. Unlike traditional assessments that rely on standardized testing, CBL requires alternative evaluation methods, such as portfolio assessments, self-reflections, peer evaluations, and real-world project outcomes. Developing robust and scalable assessment frameworks remains a key area for future research and institutional support.

Additionally, technological accessibility and infrastructure can pose barriers to effective CBL implementation, particularly in institutions with limited resources. Ensuring that all students have equal access to digital tools, virtual exchange programs, and collaborative platforms is essential for maintaining inclusivity and equity in CBL-driven education (Helm 17).

Looking ahead, future research should explore ways to scale CBL in diverse educational settings, investigate its long-term impact on student learning and employability, and examine how digital advancements—such as artificial intelligence and virtual reality—can further enhance challenge-based learning experiences.

Conclusion

Challenge-Based Learning represents a transformative approach to foreign language education, bridging the gap between classroom learning and real-world application. By immersing students in meaningful, authentic challenges that require linguistic and intercultural competencies, CBL aligns with contemporary educational goals of fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and active citizenship.

For higher education institutions, integrating CBL into language curricula requires strategic planning, faculty development, and investment in digital infrastructure. However, the potential benefits – including enhanced student engagement, improved language acquisition, and stronger connections between language learning and global issues – make it a valuable approach for modernizing education.

As global challenges continue to evolve, equipping students with the skills to navigate complex linguistic and sociopolitical landscapes is more critical than ever. Challenge-Based Learning offers a dynamic framework for achieving this goal, preparing learners to become competent communicators, socially responsible citizens, and lifelong learners in an interconnected world.

Works cited:

- Bransford, John D., et al. *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School*. National Academy Press, 2000.
- Byram, Michael. *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*. Multilingual Matters, 1997.
- Council of Europe. *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture: Volume 1*. Council of Europe Publishing, 2018.
- Dewey, John. *Experience and Education*. Macmillan, 1938.
- Helm, Francesca. *Virtual Exchange for Intercultural Language Learning and Teaching*. Routledge, 2020.
- Johnson, Larry, et al. *Challenge Based Learning: An Approach for Our Time*. New Media Consortium, 2009.
- Kramsch, Claire. *Language and Culture*. Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Little, David. "Language Learners as Democratic Citizens." *Language Policy and Political Issues in Education*, edited by Stephen May, Springer, 2017, pp. 65-83.
- Nichols, Mark, and Katy Cator. *Challenge-Based Learning: The Report from the Implementation Project*. Apple Inc., 2008.
- Vygotsky, Lev S. *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Harvard University Press, 1978.

6. Survey and focus group results

Authors:

Assoc. Prof. Dana Rus

Senior Lecturer Sorina Moica

Affiliation:

G.E. Palade University of Medicine, Pharmacy, Science, and Technology of Targu Mures

SURVEY RESULTS

Background Information

This survey was conducted as part of the project *Digitally-Enhanced Foreign Language Education for Active European Citizenship*. It aimed to gather insights into students' interests, needs, and gaps related to English language learning with a focus on digital tools and citizenship/democracy-related content. Similar surveys were also administered for students studying Romanian, Bulgarian, Ukrainian, and Greek as foreign languages, ensuring a comparative and multilingual perspective.

The instrument used was a structured questionnaire combining multiple-choice, Likert-scale, and open-ended items. The questionnaire included 26 questions designed to explore students' motivations, learning preferences, digital learning experiences, and their perspectives on integrating democratic and intercultural values into language education.

Data collection took place from December 2024 to January 2025 and was carried out online using Google Forms. Participating institutions included:

- George Emil Palade University of Medicine, Pharmacy, Science and Technology of Târgu Mureș, Romania
- University of Nicosia, Cyprus
- University of National and World Economy, Sofia, Bulgaria
- Sumy State University, Ukraine

The responses were collected anonymously and treated confidentially. The results will inform the development of innovative, digitally enhanced language learning resources that promote democratic engagement and intercultural understanding.

Language Learners' Profiles and Perspectives on Active European Citizenship

Identification of Respondents

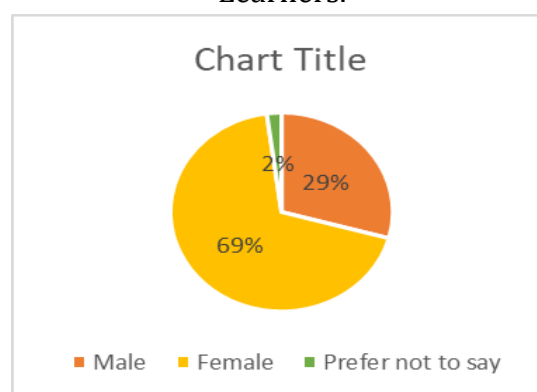
This report analyses the responses of learners of English, Romanian, Ukrainian, Greek, and Bulgarian as foreign languages in the context of the ENLACE project. The focus is on identifying their profiles, motivations, learning preferences, and reflections on democratic competence and active European citizenship. The data derives from 465 total respondents across the five languages, providing a comprehensive perspective for future educational strategies.

Gender	Number of Respondents ENGLISH	Number of Respondents ROMANIAN	Number of Respondents BULGARIAN	Number of Respondents UKRAINIAN	Number of Respondents GREEK
Male	75 (24%)	28 (45%)	10 (41%)	15 (47%)	8 (26%)
Female	235 (74%)	33 (52%)	13 (55%)	17 (53%)	21 (68%)
Prefer not to say	5 (2%)	2 (3 %)	1 (4%)	0	2 (6%)
Total Respondents	315	63	24	32	31

Observation:

- across all groups, the majority of respondents are female
- the English language group has the largest respondent base
- "prefer not to say" was selected by a very small number of respondents.

Figure 7: Gender Distribution among total respondents per Language Learners.



Justification – Motivation and Experience

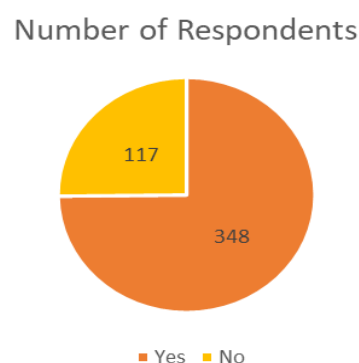
Item 7: Use of Language Learning Apps

Response	Number of Respondents
Yes	348
No	117
Total	465

Observation:

- English learners have the highest absolute use of language learning apps.
- Ukrainian and Greek learners show strong engagement relative to their group sizes

Figure 8:
Use of language learning applications.

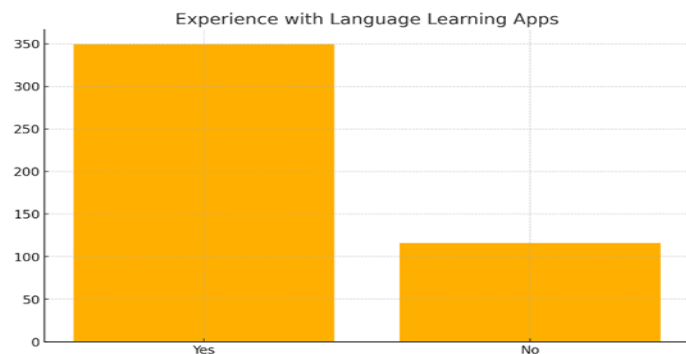


Item 7: Experience with Language Learning Apps

Observation:

- high engagement with language learning apps across all languages
- English learners show the highest numbers overall, followed by Romanian and Ukrainian learners proportionally

Figure 9:
Experience with language learning applications.

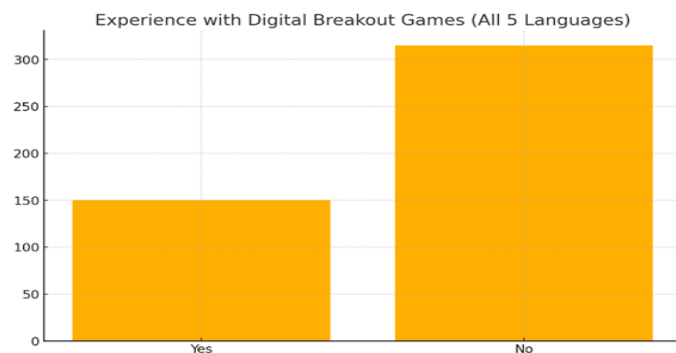


Item 8: Experience with Digital Breakout Games

Observation:

- digital breakout games are less commonly used compared to apps, with the English group leading
- Ukrainian learners show an even split between users and non-users

Figure 10:
Experience with Digital Breakout Games across the five languages.

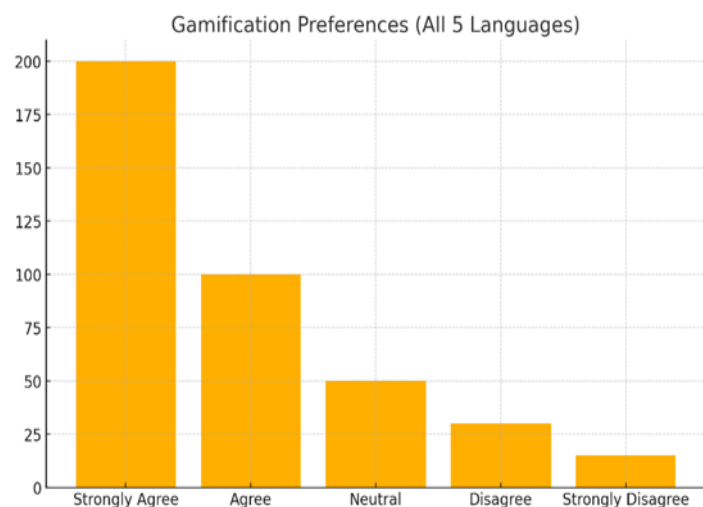


Item 9: Gamification Preferences

Observation:

- positive attitude toward gamification across all languages
- English learners show the strongest support, followed closely by Romanian and Ukrainian learners

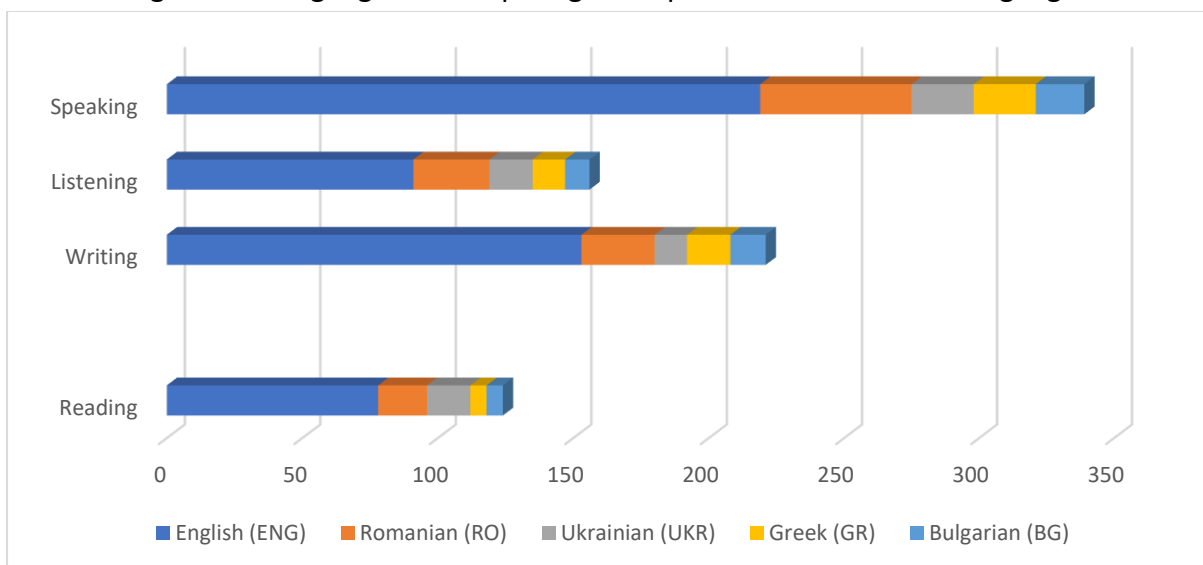
Figure 11: Gamification Preferences across the five languages.



Item 12: Attitudes on language learning content (In which of the main language skills do you feel you need more practice in your language learning endeavour? Select all that apply.)

Main language skills	English (ENG)	Romanian (RO)	Ukrainian (UKR)	Greek (GR)	Bulgarian (BG)
Reading	78	18	16	6	6
Writing	153	27	12	16	13
Listening	91	28	16	12	9
Speaking	219	56	23	23	18

Figure 12: Language skills requiring more practice across all five languages



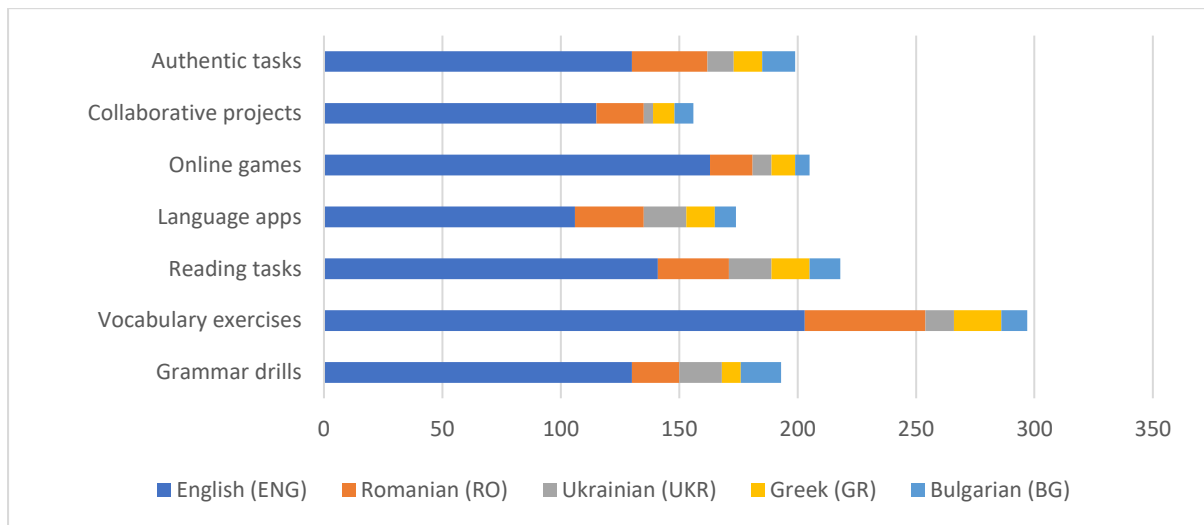
Item 13: Attitudes on effective learning methods and practices

Method	English (ENG)	Romanian (RO)	Ukrainian (UKR)	Greek (GR)	Bulgarian (BG)
<i>Grammar drills</i>	130	20	18	8	17
<i>Vocabulary exercises</i>	203	51	12	20	11
<i>Reading tasks</i>	141	30	18	16	13
<i>Language apps</i>	106	29	18	12	9
<i>Online games</i>	163	18	8	10	6
<i>Collaborative projects</i>	115	20	4	9	8
<i>Authentic tasks</i>	130	32	11	12	14

Based on the graph above, vocabulary exercises were the most preferred learning methods among all language groups, followed by online games, reading tasks, grammar drills, authentic tasks and collaborative projects, while the least preferred were language apps.

Item 13: Which language learning practices do you find most effective? Select all that apply.

Figure 13: Preferred Learning Methods across all five languages.



Observation:

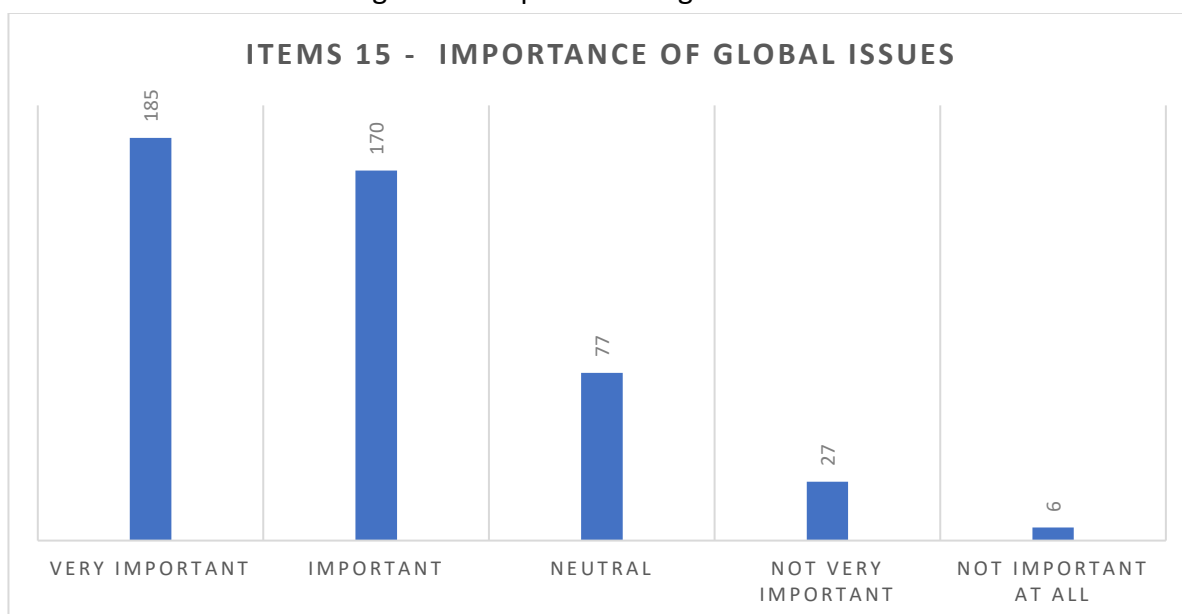
- language apps and authentic tasks are preferred methods across all groups
- English learners show the highest preference in nearly all categories

Motivation for the ENLACED Project

Item 15 - Importance of Global Issues (How important do you think it is for foreign language learners to be informed about global issues such as climate change, human rights violations, and international conflicts?)

Language	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Not very important	Not Important at all
<i>English (ENG)</i>	141	112	53	9	0
<i>Romanian (RO)</i>	18	26	9	6	4
<i>Ukrainian (UKR)</i>	9	8	7	7	1
<i>Greek (GR)</i>	10	14	2	4	1
<i>Bulgarian (BG)</i>	7	10	6	1	0

Figure 14: Importance of global issues



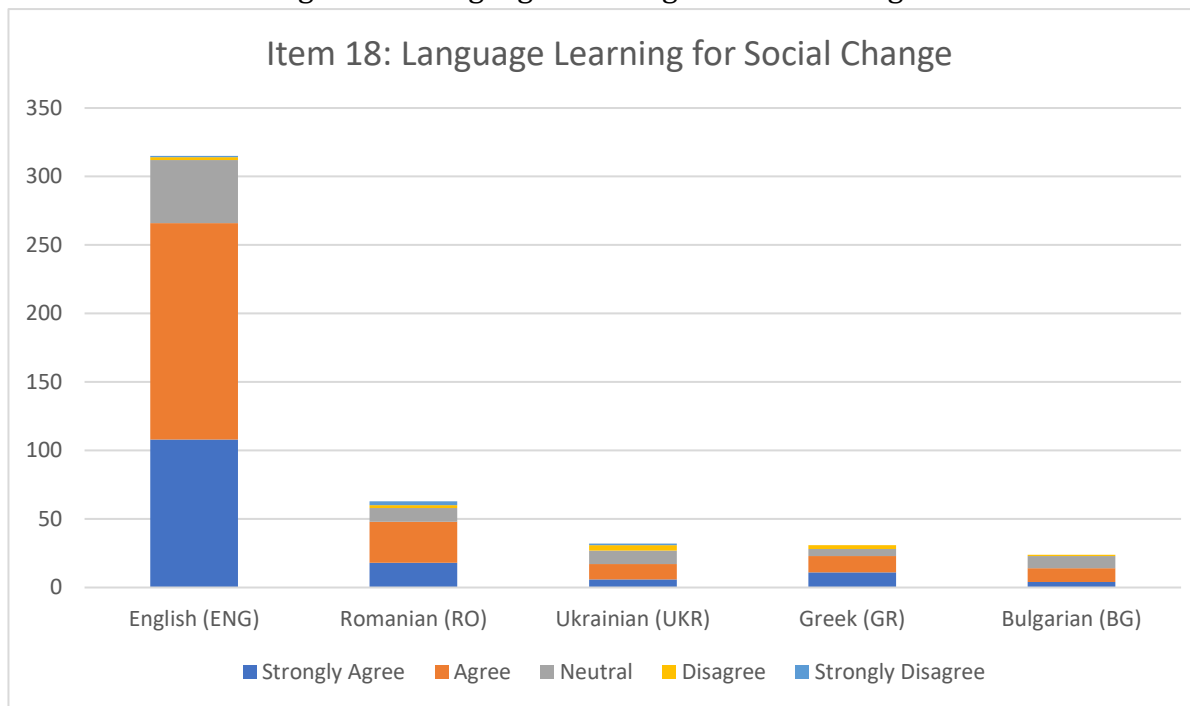
Observation:

- strong consensus on the importance of global issues, especially among English and Ukrainian learners
- smaller language groups also recognize importance but at slightly lower intensity

Item 18: Language Learning for Social Change (Do you believe that incorporating topics such as human rights and multiculturalism into English language learning can promote tolerance and inclusivity?)

Language	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<i>English (ENG)</i>	108	158	46	2	1
<i>Romanian (RO)</i>	18	30	10	2	3
<i>Ukrainian (UKR)</i>	6	11	10	4	1
<i>Greek (GR)</i>	11	12	5	3	0
<i>Bulgarian (BG)</i>	4	10	9	1	0

Figure 15: Language Learning for Social Change



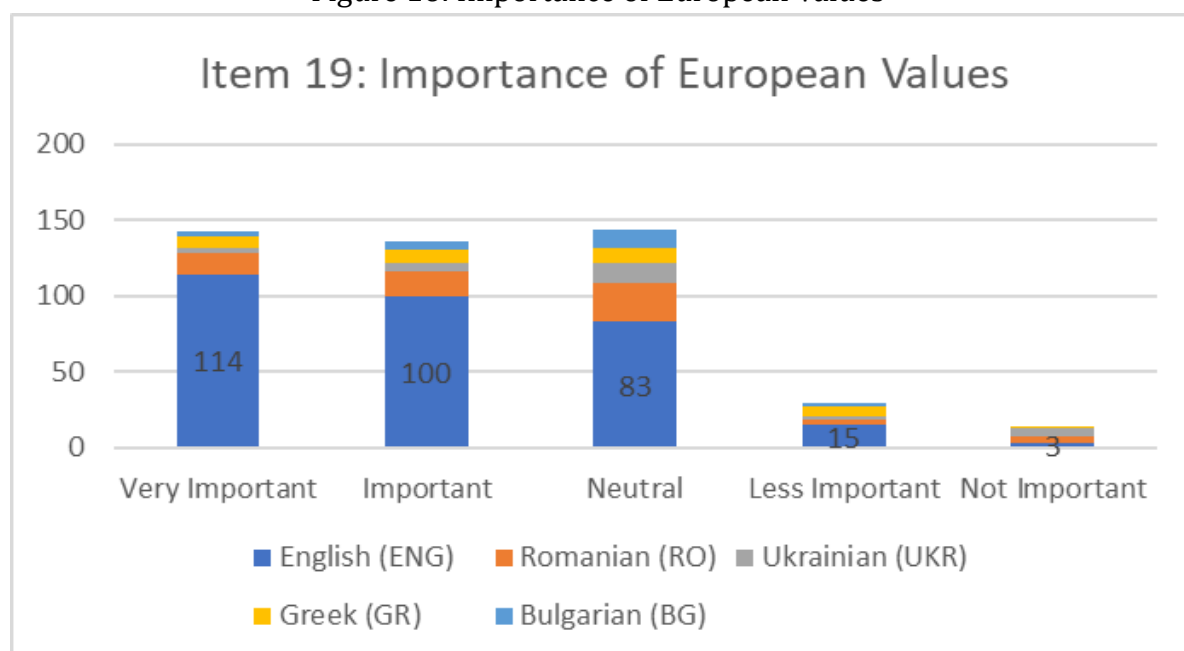
Observation:

- most learners see language learning as a strong contributor to social change
- English and Romanian learners show high levels of agreement

Item 19: Importance of European Values (How important do you think it is to incorporate European values into educational curricula?)

Language	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Less Important	Not Important
English (ENG)	114	100	83	15	3
Romanian (RO)	14	16	25	3	5
Ukrainian (UKR)	4	6	14	3	5
Greek (GR)	7	8	9	6	1
Bulgarian (BG)	3	6	13	2	0

Figure 16: Importance of European Values

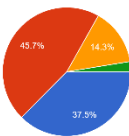
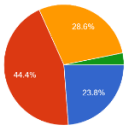
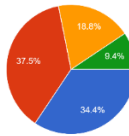
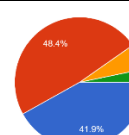
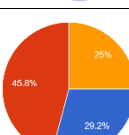


Observation:

- European values are highly appreciated by all groups
- English learners and Romanian learners show the strongest emphasis

Item 20: Interest in Transnational Collaboration

Figure 17: Interest in Transnational Collaboration

<i>Language</i>	<i>Yes, definitely</i>	<i>Yes, to some extent</i>	<i>No, not really</i>	<i>No, not at all</i>	
English (ENG)	118	144	45	8	 ● Yes, definitely ● Yes, to some extent ● No, not really ● No, not at all
Romanian (RO)	15	28	18	2	 ● Yes, definitely ● Yes, to some extent ● No, not really ● No, not at all
Ukrainian (UKR)	11	12	6	3	 ● Yes, definitely ● Yes, to some extent ● No, not really ● No, not at all
Greek (GR)	13	15	2	1	 ● Yes, definitely ● Yes, to some extent ● No, not really ● No, not at all
Bulgarian (BG)	7	11	6	0	 ● Да, определено ● Да, до известна степен ● По-скоро не ● Определено не

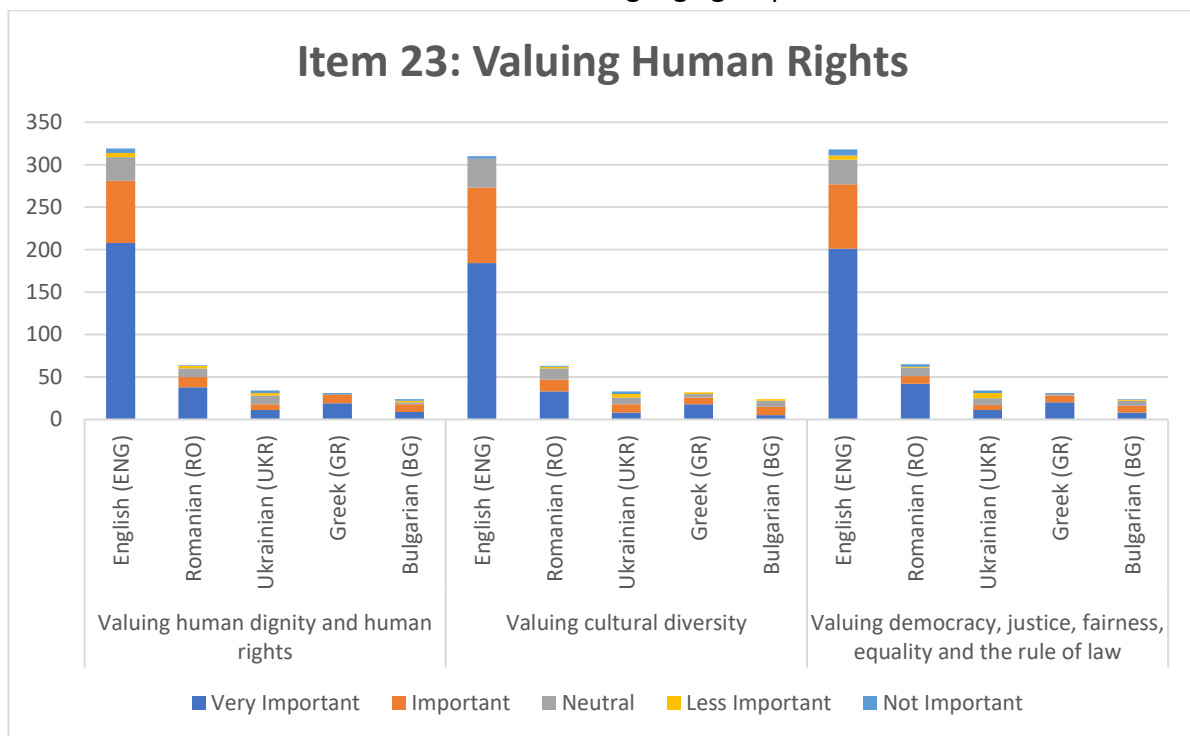
Observation:

- strong interest in transnational collaboration across all languages
- English learners demonstrate the highest enthusiasm, followed by Romanian

Self-Assessment and Reflection on Democratic Competence

Item 23: Valuing Human Rights [On a scale from 1-5, (where 1 = not so important, and 5 = very important) how important do you think it is that students develop the following values (from the Reference Framework of Competence for Democratic Culture):]

Figure 18: Comparison of Analytical Thinking and Responsibility across the five language groups



This competence assesses the respondents' commitment to human dignity and the protection of human rights. The highest ratings come from English learners, followed by Ukrainian learners.

- English learners (4.8) show the highest alignment with valuing human rights, followed closely by Ukrainian learners (4.5).
- Romanian and Greek learners also value human rights, though at a slightly lower level.

Conclusions

The survey findings demonstrate that learners of English as a foreign language show the strongest connection between language learning and active European citizenship. The integration of digital tools and experiential learning methods significantly enhances their engagement and perceived usefulness of the learning experience.

Across all language groups, there is a shared recognition of the importance of global issues, European values, and democratic competences. Ukrainian learners show strong alignment similar to English learners, while Romanian and Greek learners also reflect positive attitudes but at slightly lower levels.

Based on the findings, we recommend the following actions:

- Expand the use of gamified and interactive digital tools in all language curricula to boost engagement.
- Encourage transnational collaboration to promote intercultural understanding and active citizenship.
- Integrate European values and global citizenship education consistently across language programs.
- Support learners' development of democratic competences through targeted activities and reflection tasks.
- Enhance awareness of the societal role of language learning, especially its contribution to social change and inclusivity.

This report aims to support the further development of the ENLACED project and contribute to shaping future educational initiatives that foster active European citizenship through foreign language education.

FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

Introduction

Brief overview of the ENLACED project and its objectives

Digitally-Enhanced Foreign Language Education for Active European Citizenship and Democratic Culture (ENLACED, Project No. 2024-1-RO01-KA220-HED-000249951) is a KA2 Erasmus+ project joining partners from Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, and Cyprus. It focuses on creating a synergy between contemporary foreign language teaching methodologies and the methodology of challenge-based learning in the digital environment.

Focus group interviews are activities implemented within Work Package 2: Conceptual Framework.

Purpose of the focus group interviews

The activity foresees the involvement of internal and external stakeholders in consultations aimed at discussing the possibilities for enhancing foreign language teaching through challenge-based learning in digital environment. Partners will tap into stakeholders' expertise to brainstorm synergies between contemporary foreign language teaching methodologies, intercultural citizenship education and challenge-based learning, as a basis for the development of the Conceptual Framework.

Methodology

Partners conducted online focus group interviews, which were recorded and analysed. Using a shared data collection template, responses were documented, emphasizing the most significant findings. Each partner then compiled a national report summarizing the results of their respective interviews. This transnational report synthesizes key insights from all national reports, providing a comparative perspective on the findings.

Participants

The focus group brought together a diverse range of professionals from the four countries of the project consortium (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Romania, and Ukraine), including academics, educators, researchers, artists, policymakers, and practitioners from fields such as linguistics, pedagogy, digital education, public policy, and the creative industries. Each interview featured six respondents—three internal respondents from each university / institution, and three external stakeholders—who shared a common interest in enhancing foreign language teaching through challenge-based learning in digital environments. Their discussions explored the intersections of modern language teaching methods, intercultural citizenship education, and innovative pedagogy, providing valuable insights for the consultation process.

Key Themes and Findings

Challenges and opportunities

- How would you describe the opportunity of using foreign language education to foster intercultural understanding and democratic culture? What would be the main advantages of such an approach?
- What challenges/obstacles do educators and institutions face in achieving this integration? How can these barriers be addressed?
- What institutional and policy initiatives already exist to support the integration of democratic competences into foreign language teaching? Which of them are the most effective?

UMFST	Advantages: Encourage students to develop critical thinking and openness toward diverse perspectives; Enhance communication skills that facilitate civic participation and integration in multicultural societies; Provide authentic contexts for discussions on democratic values, fostering engagement in social issues. Increase critical thinking Increased motivation for language learning Achieve a set of common values and principles. Availability and ease of use Challenges: Difficulty in assessing cultural competence on an objective basis Variability in teachers' preparedness to address democracy-related topics in language classrooms. Resistance from traditional educational structures that prioritize linguistic competence over broader educational goals. Institutional and policy initiatives: Erasmus partnership experiences Moot court competitions for law students "Be a lawyer in your school" programme in Romania
-------	--



UNWE	Advantages: Break stereotypes and encouraging critical thinking. Proficiency in foreign languages also facilitates direct dialogue and collaboration across cultures; Encourage the use of authentic cultural materials (e.g., films, books, media) to present diverse perspectives; Build intercultural competence; Explore topics such as equality, freedom of speech and social justice; Enhance students' cognitive and social skills by fostering intercultural understanding and democratic culture; Promote empathy, tolerance and respect for diversity – fundamental values in democratic societies. Challenges: Limited resources; Lack of teacher training in intercultural competencies; Resistance to change from students; Cultural stereotypes, language barriers and curriculum constraints; Lack of standardized frameworks that effectively combine language skills and democratic competences. Institutional and policy initiatives The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) EU's Erasmus+ Program; Council of Europe: Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC); Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) – Companion Volume (2020); UNESCO: Global Citizenship Education (GCED); The German Academic Exchange Language Course Programme.
------	---



SSU	Advantages: Facilitate the integration of democracy into the educational process; The dissemination of democratic values through the interactive aspect of the project. Challenges: Teachers' understanding of the topic or in-depth training; Time resources; Prioritization of democratic values; Possible conflict between democratic values and national identity. Institutional and policy initiatives: Inclusion of a democratic component into the curriculum, regularly reviewed by experts to ensure that it is in line with democratic values and other fundamental principles that are integrated into the educational process; Numerous initiatives from NGO's to promote democratic competencies through numerous extracurricular initiatives and courses; "Dictionary of Barrier-Free Education," initiated by Olena Zelenska - Ukrainian and English versions of key terms aimed at creating an inclusive and democratic language environment.
UNIC	Advantages: Foreign language education can play a key role in developing skills such as social responsibility, critical thinking, and civic engagement; foreign language learning involves developing competences related to intercultural understanding, beyond just grammar and vocabulary; Foreign language teachers can use various texts, media, and exposure to global content to promote intercultural understanding. Challenges: Time restrictions; The proficiency level of students is often not suitable for tackling higher-level discussions; Lack of knowledge among educators regarding democratic values Inflexible curricula. Institutional and policy initiatives Positive and encouraging policies regarding foreign language learning from private schools; The introduction of French as a required second foreign language in middle and upper secondary education.

TETRA	Advantages: Developing a deeper understanding of cultural contexts that enables learners to communicate more effectively and appropriately in diverse situations. Developing respect and open-mindedness, reducing stereotypes and prejudices towards representatives of other countries and cultures. Developing critical thinking skills, especially when the intercultural material exposes learners and makes them analyse diverse viewpoints. Enhancing intrinsic motivation for learning, because usually intercultural learning materials are more engaging for learners (they spark interest). Preparing learners for global citizenship by developing their ability to navigate diverse cultural contexts. Challenges: Language teachers have few possibilities to experience in-service training in the linguistic and cultural environment of the country, the language of which they teach. This hampers the realization of the goals of intercultural learning in the FL classroom. Poor interdisciplinary links of the FL curricula with the curricula of other subjects. Building such interdisciplinary link would ensure that students are more prepared to participate actively in the discussion of the given cultural or democratic issues. The communicative competence would be activated easier when students have what to say (when they have studied the related issues in other disciplines). Lack of modern, authentic teaching-learning resources that would incorporate intercultural and democratic issues. Assessment challenges: it is more difficult and complex to evaluate intercultural and democratic competences than to assess grammar or vocabulary.
-------	---

Gamified Learning: Advantages and Implementation

- What are the advantages of using gamified learning in general and language education in particular?

Overall, respondents agree on the benefits of gamification in foreign language teaching, especially its motivational outcomes. The table below captures some of the most relevant points. Best practices and examples from partner countries include dedicated language learning apps such as Duolingo or Kahoot.

UMFST	Advantages: Enhances motivation and engagement by creating interactive and immersive learning experiences; Encourages collaboration and teamwork, reinforcing shared responsibility as a core democratic value; Provides structured learning pathways that adapt to different proficiency levels for personalized learning; Supports adult learning—while gamification is often associated with younger students, andragogy confirms its effectiveness in adult education across both physical and digital environments; Utilizes branched programmed instruction, an adaptive learning method that adjusts based on learner responses and performance; Employs synectics as a key gamification strategy—this creative technique enhances lateral thinking, problem-solving, innovation, and design thinking by linking seemingly unrelated concepts.
UNWE	Advantages: Increases engagement, motivation, and active participation; Increases exposure to the target language through immersive dialogues, narratives and contextualized tasks featured in apps like Duolingo and Memrise, promoting daily practice; Supports contextualized vocabulary acquisition by presenting new words in meaningful, real-life settings; Enhances speaking and listening skills through voice recognition and listening exercises; Increases motivation for the study of grammar; Creates a more natural learning environment and engages the learners' perception; Uses rewards, progression levels and challenges to enhance the learning experience; Encourages collaboration; Allows embedding democratic principles – such as teamwork, ethical decision-making and respectful competition – into the learning experience.

SSU	Motivates students through competitive elements, badges, progress levels, and other mechanics that make the learning process more engaging.
UNIC	Makes learning experience feel more like playing a game than completing lessons; Provides immediate feedback; Helps foster a sense of accomplishment through rewards and level-ups.
TETRA	The gaming element enhances both the speed and long-term retention of learning content, making it particularly effective for language education. Gamified learning not only reinforces language skills but also makes the process more engaging and enjoyable. The added element of fun boosts motivation, encouraging learners to practice more consistently. Gamified learning encourages learners to actively engage with the language, enhancing their confidence and willingness to communicate. Games often foresee working in a team, cooperating and communicating with peers, communication, that strengthens both linguistic skills and social (soft) skills. Gamified learning in a digital environment often allows for implementing personalized learning pathways, and enables instant feedback, which can potentially enhance student's learning outcomes. FL games in mobile apps have tremendous potential because smartphones have become an essential part of students' daily lives.

Learning Content and Methodology

- Select the most important competences included in the RFCDC which, in your perspective, are best suited to be integrated into teaching foreign languages. Explain your choice.
- Suggest methodologies you find relevant for implementing the learning modules (learning methods and approaches, specific activities/procedures, types of interaction, examples of good practice).
- Considering specific local, national, and European realities, what examples of real-world challenges could engage students in applying both linguistic and democratic competencies? (e.g., integrating into multicultural environments).

- Which gamification mechanics (badges, levels, competitions, storytelling, etc.) do you consider the most effective in language education?
- How can learning modules be adapted for different language proficiency levels while maintaining the integration of democratic competences?

Respondents' answers were significantly similar when identifying priorities in terms of democratic competences ranked as most relevant for FLT. Similarly, partners from different countries mentioned relatable methodologies as significant for the synergetic teaching of language and democratic culture (mainly methods, techniques and activities based on communication and collaborative work). Interesting and meaningful differences appeared in the suggestion of real-life situations which might constitute the pretext for the input material, where cultural specificity was present.

UMFST	Democratic competences: Civic mindedness, Responsibility (5 answers) Valuing human dignity and human rights, valuing cultural diversity, Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality, and the rule of law, Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, worldviews, and practices, Autonomous learning skills, Analytical and critical thinking skills, Flexibility and adaptability, Knowledge and critical understanding of the world (politics, law, human rights, cultures, religions, history, media, economies, environment, and sustainability) (4 answers) Skills of listening and observing, Cooperation skills (3 answers) Respect, Empathy (2 answers) Linguistic, communicative, and plurilingual skills, Knowledge and critical understanding of the self (2 answers) Self-efficacy, Tolerance of ambiguity, Conflict-resolution skills (1 answer, Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication (1 answer) Relevant methodologies: Interactive methods (e.g. collaborative discussions, peer teaching, and structured dialogues), flipped classroom, Content and Language Integrated Learning, Quests (digital escape rooms), role play, trial simulations. Real-life challenges: problems related to environment protection and climate change; media literacy and fact checking (fake news); civic involvement in specific local community problems; the limits of freedom of speech. Effective gamification techniques in FLT: Rewards, avatars, colours and levels.
-------	---



UNWE	Democratic competences in no particular order emphasised as important by respondents: Intercultural competence, Critical thinking, social interaction, linguistic, intercultural and civic competences, recognition of cultural diversity, recognition of human dignity and human rights, responsibility, openness to cultural differences and other beliefs, empathy, language and communication skills, knowledge and critical understanding of the self, knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication, knowledge of the world, politics and law. Relevant methodologies: Content and Language Integrated Learning, flipped classroom, Task-Based Language Teaching, project-based learning, Critical discourse analysis, the direct method, the communicative approach, the action-oriented method, challenge-based learning, collaborative group work, peer review, role-playing. Real-life challenges: promoting integration of immigrant communities through language exchange programs and community events; civic participation campaigns that encourage dialogue between diverse cultural groups; EU youth forums, virtual exchange programs, or collaborative multicultural events; addressing fake news, media literacy and environmental protection; impact of EU policies on their local communities, such as labour mobility, free trade, or education opportunities; foreign language acquisition (third or fourth language).
SSU	Democratic competences: Values such as respect, inclusiveness, and democracy create an atmosphere where students feel part of a learning community, ready to interact and develop themselves; Communication and intercultural exchange; Openness to new ideas; Interaction in a multicultural environment. Relevant methodologies: Case studies and role-playing games to develop democratic values through language. Real-life challenges: Communicating with peers in international contexts, participating in reasoned discussion, work in global organizations. Effective gamification techniques in FLT: Role-playing games, cooperative tasks, rewards, and levels.

UNIC	Democratic competences Autonomous learning, critical thinking, cooperation through project-based learning, and linguistic, communicative, and plurilingual skills; Knowledge related to critical understanding of the world, politics, law, and human rights; Flexibility and adaptability. Relevant methodologies: Task-based learning and project-based learning; writing mystery stories, creating stories using AI with just pictures, the use of audiovisual material, the use of games, the use of literature (poetry, fiction, and drama). Effective gamification techniques in FLT: Digital badges, points, and certifications, games that involve communication and collaboration. How can learning modules be adapted for different language proficiency levels? Adaptation strategies vary based on institutional structure (secondary vs. university), existing policies, and classroom composition. Successful adaptation relies heavily on teacher skill and experience in gauging classroom dynamics. Teachers should begin with clear learning objectives, including both linguistic goals and value-based competencies, before adapting teaching methodologies accordingly. Real-life challenges: Multicultural environments, violence against women, child labour, the immigrant experience (learning for citizenship requirements), applying to international companies, working abroad, or studying in foreign countries, the integration of foreign-language speaking children in monolingual schools.
------	---



TETRA	Democratic competences Valuing human dignity and human rights (5 answers) Valuing cultural diversity (5 answers) Openness to cultural otherness and other beliefs, worldviews and practices (5 answers) Respect (4 answers) Responsibility (4 answers) Autonomous learning skills (5 answers) Analytical and critical thinking (5 answers) Flexibility and adaptability (4 answers) Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills (4 answers) Cooperation skills (3 answers) Skills of listening and observing (2 answers) Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: politics, law, human rights, cultures, religions, history, media, economics, environment, and sustainability (4 answers) Knowledge and critical understanding of the self (2 answers) Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication (1 answer) Relevant methodologies: Interactive teaching and learning, Computer assisted learning, Challenge-based learning, Critical discourse analysis (CDA). Real-life challenges: Diversity of perspectives: Immigration and refugee rights, climate change. Ethical dilemmas: Freedom of speech vs. hate speech, Privacy vs. national security, Protests and civil disobedience. Collaborative decision making: Designing a sustainable campus (energy use, renewable energy / solar panels on campus, energy saving measures), waste management, water conservation, digitalization, green spaces, student and staff engagement).
-------	--

Measuring Impact and Assessment Strategies

- *How can the impact of integrated language and democracy education be assessed and measured?*
- *How do you envisage the impact that the combined approach of teaching language + democracy values might have on the HEI community / local community / global European community?*

UMFST	Assessed by longitudinal evaluation, by comparing universal competences (rather than national ones) by deriving them in three different performance descriptors: minimal, medium, maximal. The instruments to measure such descriptors must be identified together with the partners.
UNWE	Assessing the impact of integrated language and democracy education requires a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Language proficiency can be measured through tests, presentations, and written assignments: standardized tests (e.g. CEFR), task-based assessment, portfolio assessment. Democratic competences can be evaluated via participation in debates, group projects, and reflective journals, surveys and questionnaires. Tools to measure and assess critical thinking and discourse analysis skills: Surveys and questionnaires – to assess students’ commitment to various socially-relevant issues; Peer review and teacher’s evaluation; Observations of classroom interactions, peer assessments, and self-evaluation tools – to measure students’ intercultural understanding, critical thinking, and collaborative skills. Local Community Impact: Empowerment through communication, cultural understanding, active citizenship. National Impact: Civic engagement and debate, social cohesion and unity, impact on policy and governance (prepare students to take on leadership roles) Global Impact: Impact on global citizenship and cooperation, diplomatic relations and international collaboration, global advocacy and social justice.



SSU	Assessment can be done by using different vocabulary and grammatical structures for each level of language proficiency (beginner, intermediate, advanced). Assessment of progress can be done through tools such as exercises, tests, or role-playing games. The impact of synergies can be measured through practical assignments where students must apply the language to solve specific cases or problems and demonstrate an understanding of democratic principles and the ability to interact based on these principles. Assessment may include an analysis of students' participation, their ability to work in teams, reach consensus, and exchange views in international cooperation, human rights protection, and the development of democratic values. Local, national, global impact Such educational approaches inform the formation of an understanding of democratic values in the community; -Facilitate integration into European and international unions, organizations, and associations and influence pan-European democratic processes.
UNIC	Assessment could focus on both the process and the final product (formative or summative approaches) Tools: student portfolios, surveys, Reflective writing, reflective journals. Local, national, global impact Such approaches may foster greater understanding, self-respect, empathy, and stronger social bonds. They can provide valuable insights into students' cultural identities and create a more inclusive learning environment.
TETRA	Impact evaluation is a difficult task. Assessing the democratic competences is a challenge, because it can only be done "in action", by observing students' behaviour and attitudes in different situations. Strategies mentioned by the participants: case-based assessment, scenario-based assessment, role-playing.

Conclusions and Perspectives

- *What is the perspective on the role of educators in this integrated learning approach? Do teachers need additional training to effectively implement it?*
- *Considering today's geopolitical and technological developments and their inevitable impact on education, would you agree that integrating language teaching with democratic values in a digital environment could represent a significant future trend in education?*

UMFST	Role of Teachers in an Inclusive, Interdisciplinary Education Teachers act as facilitators and promoters of an inclusive culture rather than just information providers. The educator's role shifts from informative to formative, emphasizing critical thinking and values education. Interdisciplinary approaches are already in place and are expected to evolve into transdisciplinary education. The ENLACED learning product aligns with this shift, integrating multiple disciplines into a cohesive learning experience. Impact of the ENLACED Project The project brings contemporary challenges into the classroom in a controlled, gamified environment. This approach enhances critical thinking, helping students make informed decisions and develop democratic values. Democratic rights and liberties require practice before their real-world application, reinforcing the need for such educational models. The ENLACED project provides a structured, effective setting for fostering democratic engagement and responsible citizenship.
-------	---



UNWE	Changing Role of Teachers Educators act as facilitators, mentors, and role models in combining language education with democratic values. Their role extends beyond teaching language skills to fostering critical thinking, civic engagement, and intercultural understanding. Teachers must create inclusive, interactive learning environments that encourage respect, fairness, and participation. They need to model democratic values in their teaching practices to encourage students to uphold these principles. Professional development in democratic education, intercultural communication, and student-centred methodologies is essential. Training should equip educators to adapt materials and activities to meet diverse learners' needs while embedding democratic principles. Methods such as challenge-based learning, gamification, and interdisciplinary teaching are recommended. Workshops, peer collaboration, and continuous learning ensure teachers remain adaptable and confident. Educators must foster environments where students actively engage, question assumptions, and reflect on their beliefs. Teaching should incorporate role-plays, case studies, debates, and discussions on global issues like free thought and free trade. The approach helps students develop intercultural competence, vital for both language proficiency and understanding democracy. This integrated approach is already established in many educational institutions, including UNWE. Given global interconnectedness and digital tools, combining language education with democratic values is relevant and necessary. It could become a defining feature of 21st-century education, equipping students for global business and democratic participation.
------	--

SSU	Changing Role of Teachers Gamification requires teachers to adapt their methods to make lessons more engaging and interactive. Traditional teaching was largely academic with minimal interactivity, but gamification shifts the focus to active participation. Many current gamification techniques are oversimplified and ineffective, especially for older students and adults. Teachers must ensure that gamification is meaningful and educational, not just entertaining. Need for Additional Training Teachers need training in the principles of gamification and how to design high-quality educational games. They must learn to distinguish between effective and ineffective game elements. Consideration of student age and learning needs is essential for effective gamification. Teachers should integrate technology and innovative techniques while maintaining educational depth. Gamification as a Future Trend Gamification has the potential to become a key trend, but only if the quality of games is high. Poorly designed games can disrupt learning and devalue educational content. Serious, intellectually engaging games (e.g., detective or quest-based learning) can deepen engagement and enhance learning. Gamification should enhance motivation and knowledge retention without trivializing important subjects like democratic values. If properly integrated, gamification can make learning more dynamic and effective without sacrificing content depth.
-----	--

UNIC	Role of Educators in the Integrated Approach Teachers need both training and motivation to implement this approach effectively. Institutional constraints (curriculum requirements, administrative policies) can discourage innovation. Institutional support is crucially systematic staff training and interdisciplinary collaboration are key to widespread adoption. Relying solely on individual teacher efforts is insufficient for sustainable integration. Future Prospects of the Approach The integration of language teaching and democratic values in digital environments presents both opportunities and challenges. Geopolitical and social issues (e.g., rising right-wing politics, social inequalities) may limit its real-world impact. AI in education raises concerns about bias, but equipping students with critical thinking skills to navigate AI-generated content is a practical goal. Early education is essential for shaping responsible citizens—waiting until adolescence is too late. Parental and family involvement is critical in reinforcing democratic values alongside formal education. State schools struggle with language barriers, highlighting the need for systemic solutions rather than reliance on individual teachers.
TETRA	There is a need for in-service training for teachers, aimed at building capacity for integrating democratic competences in FLT. Teachers should be able to scaffold students' learning and create a dynamic environment, in which every student will be able to practice "learning-by-doing".

Conclusion

The focus group discussions provided valuable insights that informed the activities of the ENLACED project, particularly in refining its **Conceptual Framework** and shaping the development of learning modules. Participants emphasized the benefits of integrating foreign language education with democratic values through challenge-based learning in digital environments, highlighting the motivational impact of gamification, the need for adaptable methodologies, and the alignment of learning content with real-world societal challenges. At the same time, they identified key challenges, such as institutional constraints, the necessity of targeted educator training, and the careful selection of pedagogical strategies to ensure both linguistic and civic competencies are effectively developed.

While concerns about policy barriers and institutional readiness were raised, the discussions reinforced the growing relevance of digital education and the importance of fostering intercultural understanding as essential components of modern language learning. The findings from these interviews will guide the project's next steps, ensuring that its outputs—particularly teaching methodologies and assessment strategies—are grounded in expert feedback and real-world needs, ultimately supporting the sustainable integration of this approach in higher education.

7. ENLACED Framework Proposal – English as a foreign language

Course Title: ENGLISH LANGUAGE FOR DEMOCRATIC CULTURE

Level: Upper-Intermediate / Advanced (B2–C1 CEFR)

Number of ECTS Credits: 3

Language of Instruction: English

Delivery Format: Online via ENLACED App

Course Description

This course is designed to enhance learners' English language proficiency while engaging critically with contemporary digital challenges through narratives centered on concepts related to democratic citizenship. Delivered via a purpose-built app, the course includes ten interactive units, each focusing on a unique real-life-inspired scenario that encourages both linguistic development and civic reflection in digital contexts.

The course develops reading, writing, listening, speaking, vocabulary, and grammar skills while fostering media literacy, online civic participation, and intercultural dialogue.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Communicate effectively and confidently in English at a B2/C1 level across various civic and democratic contexts.
- Interpret and evaluate complex civic and societal issues using critical thinking and democratic literacy skills.
- Collaborate in respectful dialogue on controversial issues, using inclusive language, demonstrating openness, empathy, and cultural awareness.
- Produce coherent, well-structured written texts in English that address ethical dilemmas and societal challenges in the digital world.
- Use topic-specific vocabulary and advanced grammatical structures accurately to express nuanced ideas in spoken and written form.
- Understand, critically react to and analyze spoken and written input (e.g., debates, interviews, podcasts) on civic and digital issues.
- Apply democratic competences such as responsibility, civic-mindedness, and self-efficacy to respond constructively to real-life inspired digital dilemmas.

Course Content and Structure

Each unit includes:

- A narrative-based scenario linked to a digital challenge (e.g., human rights, fake news, freedom of expression, civic responsibilities);
- Language input (vocabulary and grammar);
- Receptive tasks (reading/listening);
- Productive tasks (writing/speaking);
- Discussion prompts and reflection activities based on RFCDC descriptors.

Unit Themes:

1. **Speak Freely?** *(on freedom of speech and its limits)*
2. **Truth Check** *(on fake news and media literacy)*
3. **Join In** *(on civic engagement and youth participation)*
4. **Us and Them** *(on stereotypes, identity, and inclusion)*
5. **Power and Protest** *(on democracy, activism, and dissent)*
6. **Digital You** *(on online identity and privacy)*
7. **Green Talks** *(on environmental citizenship)*
8. **Respect Rules** *(on law, justice, and responsibility)*
9. **Worlds Collide** *(on intercultural communication and conflict)*
10. **Speak Up** *(on public speaking, argumentation, and civic debate)*

Teaching Methods

- Interactive app-based modules
- Narrative immersion and branching dialogues
- Peer collaboration
- Reflective journals and media projects
- Gamified quizzes and discussion boards
- Collaborative online international learning

Assessment Methods

- Continuous in-app progress tracking
- Vocabulary and grammar quizzes
- Written reflections and narrative responses
- Collaborative assessment (peer review, group assessment)
- Final project or portfolio

8. ENLACED Framework Proposal – RO, BG, UKR, and GR as foreign languages

Course Title: FOREIGN LANGUAGE FOR DEMOCRATIC CULTURE

Level: Elementary / Upper beginner (A2 CEFR)

Number of ECTS Credits: 3

Language of Instruction: Romanian/Bulgarian/Ukrainian/Greek

Delivery Format: Online via ENLACED App

Course Description

This course is designed to enhance learners' foreign language proficiency while engaging critically with contemporary digital challenges through narratives centered on concepts related to democratic citizenship. Delivered via a purpose-built app, the course includes ten interactive units, each focusing on a unique real-life-inspired scenario that encourages both linguistic development and civic reflection in digital contexts.

The course develops reading, writing, listening, speaking, vocabulary, and grammar skills while fostering media literacy, online civic participation, and intercultural dialogue.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Use simple language to talk about everyday topics related to school, community, and democratic life.
- Understand basic information and express simple opinions about civic and social issues.
- Take part in short conversations on familiar topics, showing openness and interest in others' ideas.
- Write short and simple texts (e.g., messages, notes, short paragraphs) about everyday situations, including personal opinions or simple social issues.
- Use basic topic-related vocabulary and simple grammatical structures to talk or write about simple civic matters.
- Understand and react to the main idea of short, clearly spoken and written texts (e.g., short interviews, simple articles, or videos) about community aspects.
- Show awareness of democratic values (e.g., fairness, cooperation, responsibility) by giving simple examples from daily life or digital experiences.

Course Content and Structure

Each unit includes:

- A narrative-based scenario linked to a digital challenge (e.g., human rights, fake news, freedom of expression, civic responsibilities);
- Language input (vocabulary and grammar);
- Receptive tasks (reading/listening);
- Productive tasks (writing/speaking);
- Discussion prompts and reflection activities based on RFCDC descriptors.

Unit Themes:

1. **Speak Freely?** *(on freedom of speech and its limits)*
2. **Truth Check** *(on fake news and media literacy)*
3. **Join In** *(on civic engagement and youth participation)*
4. **Us and Them** *(on stereotypes, identity, and inclusion)*
5. **Power and Protest** *(on democracy, activism, and dissent)*
6. **Digital You** *(on online identity and privacy)*
7. **Green Talks** *(on environmental citizenship)*
8. **Respect Rules** *(on law, justice, and responsibility)*
9. **Worlds Collide** *(on intercultural communication and conflict)*
10. **Speak Up** *(on public speaking, argumentation, and civic debate)*

Teaching Methods

- Interactive app-based modules
- Narrative immersion and branching dialogues
- Peer collaboration
- Reflective journals and media projects
- Gamified quizzes and discussion boards
- Collaborative online international learning

Assessment Methods

- Continuous in-app progress tracking
- Vocabulary and grammar quizzes
- Written reflections and narrative responses
- Collaborative assessment (peer review, group assessment)
- Final project or portfolio



Digitally-Enhanced Foreign Language Education
For Active European Citizenship and Democratic Culture
Project No. 2024-1-RO01-KA220-HED-000249951



GEORGE EMIL PALADE
UNIVERSITY OF MEDICINE,
PHARMACY, SCIENCE, AND
TECHNOLOGY OF TARGU MURES



UNIVERSITY
of NICOSIA



Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.



Co-funded by
the European Union