Tailor-made Language Education for Beginners in Dutch as a Second Language

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Seminar on the linguistic integration of adult migrants
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During the break, a participant asks the trainer to help him with a letter one of his children brought home from school.
Migrants (want to) take on different roles:

- Be a parent
- Study
- Start own business
- Seek employment
- Be a consumer

→ confronted with different demands on linguistic abilities
not met by introductory courses (general skills)
Customization: a trend

BUT: often limited to grouping learners on basis of pace and language level

BUT: restricted to advanced levels usually assumed unnecessary to offer goal-oriented courses at basic level
Tailor-made Language Education for Beginners DSL

• Goal: instruments that make it possible to respond to the individual needs of newcomers from the start of DSL-courses

• Funded by: Nederlandse Taalunie

• Carried out by:
  - Centre for Language and Education (Louvain)
  - Institute for language research and language education for non-native speakers (Amsterdam)
Guiding principles

• Shaping instruction to needs
• Learner indicates own objectives

Benefits

More efficient language training:
• more relevant, immediately useable → motivation
• Lower threshold to use Dutch in day-to-day life
• Learners are better prepared to enter more specialized follow-up courses

= positive learning experience → higher probability that learning process continues
Central device: website

Information and instruments that aim to stimulate a more needs-centered fashion of second language teaching

www.nt2-beginnersdoelen.org
First instrument: catalogue of learning goals

Organized on basis roles

- Functional domains are identified
- illustrated by practical situations that learners can encounter
- concretized in actions and tasks
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROLE</th>
<th>FUNCTIONAL DOMAIN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Household/family administrator</td>
<td>Contact with official agencies - Housing - Monetary transactions and insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer</td>
<td>Contact in stores</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Course or educational programme</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allocator of leisure time</td>
<td>Social contacts and relationships with neighbors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allocation of leisure time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Media and current events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/caregiver</td>
<td>Parenting/caregiving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Healthcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobseeker</td>
<td>Looking for a job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>At the workplace, general or specific (technology, trade and services, health and welfare)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Running an independent business</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conditions for successful implementation

Overview of learning goals is not enough

- Intake procedures
- Management of learning paths
- Teaching materials
- Instructional skills

= often, conditions are not met

THEREFORE: 2nd fase
pilot projects to solve problems that arise in the realization of customization
1. Intake

• Intake-form
  - to identify learners profiles

• Pilot on intake
  - Working with interpreters of migrant community
  - Repeated intake

• Extra documentation
  - Experiences with intake
  - Documentation on procedure
  - Recommendations
2. Organization of groups

Case: groups not based on roles

Orienting activity
to help participants select relevant roles

Video fragments to illustrate this is possible with beginners
If participants take on different roles:

teaching method: ‘custom corners’ approach

Part of weekly programme
Addition to curriculum

- Participants work in pairs/groups
- Instructor offers help
- Fixed corner, or ‘shopping around’
3. Developing teaching skills

- **Documentation** of necessary skills
- **training modules** for instructors to work on their skills (practice what you preach: instructors work on competencies of their choice)
- **Background literature**
4. Inventory of role-based materials

+ Model to organize and manage materials

+ Model to adapt activities to a role-based approach

+ Exemplary activities for reading skills at level (A1)
5. Help with benchmarking courses (using the CEFR)

Aim:

1. Tuning courses to language proficiency of participants
2. Identifying what participants are capable of
6. Possible implementations

Descriptions of 41 different projects that implement role-based approach
Conclusion

working on customization in beginners’ courses bring a new dynamics in classroom

• More chances for interaction
• More chances for autonomous learning
• Learner can guide own learning process
• Learner gains more insight in own problems
• Different role for instructor
Door to outside world:

- Learners bring in own real-life experiences
- Learners help each other in situations they recognise
- Easily linked with apprenticeship or real-life tasks
Future

new initiatives to supplement, refine and implement the existing instruments

Examples:

- Collection of extra teaching materials
- The Netherlands: government-funded initiatives focus on language actions intended to support learners who wish to start their own businesses
- Taskforce for follow-up