TIMELESS

Guidelines
for adult educators

how to use
TIMELESS materials

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WHAT EDUCATORS NEED TO KNOW ?

Guidelines for adult educators on how to use the materials developed in the TIMELESS PROJECT

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INTRODUCTION

These Guidelines for educators are focused on older learners' acquiring language skills while getting familiar with items of intangible cultural heritage from European and/or their own countries. Descriptions/stories of intangible cultural heritage offer learners learning contexts and opportunities for acquiring *the four language skills* in social contexts related to external (foreign) and their own communities. Learning opportunities created within diverse and similar cultural/social contexts stimulate learning and the acquisition of language skills. Diversity and similarities lead to comparison and contrasts that facilitate learning.

Learning opportunities and language skills

Language teachers addressing older learners can create opportunities for their learners to acquire language skills that can be categorized as productive/active and receptive/passive skills. Occasionally productive/active skills need to be replaced by receptive/passive skills and vice versa in order to maintain the learner's focus and prolong their span of attention.

In this *Guide for adult educators* we focus on all four language skills i.e. *productive skills* (speaking and writing) and *receptive skills* (listening and reading) in an educational process where both teaching and learning are going on. Productive/active skills mean mostly the transmission of information that a language user produces in either spoken or written form. Productive/active skills are supported by receptive/passive skills. Without them they would not exist or would be poorer.

Listening skills

Listening (and observing), helps internalize words, structures of the language and diction conveying a message, i.e. the careful selection of words establishing a particular voice style. So, allow your students to listen as long and as many times as possible. When learning a foreign language, receptive skills usually come first and should be followed by practical application of productive ones. If a learning process lacks one of them, the final outcome will not be complete. Passive language skills do not force students to produce anything actively.

Reading skills

Passive listening and reading leads to the active use of grammar structures, vocabulary lists, heard and repeated sounds of a foreign language. Your older learners can read the storie /descriptions of intangible cultural items. The goal of reading these texts is comprehension or extracting meaning from what is read, sometimes with the

help of charts, diagrams of the story, questions like who, what, where, when, why, what for, what, how, etc.

Speaking skills

Speaking skills may support *various learning styles* such as formal, informal, normal, strong, etc. They are based on situations and in situations/settings where it is important who is speaking, to whom, what they are speaking about and with what intention they are speaking. Speaking is one of the main goals when learning English or any other language as a foreign language.

Writing skills

Educators who do not want their learners to get bored should work with a wide scope of speaking and writing activities. Writing skills are productive skills, learners might be more or less successful at writing, but they should never be discouraged to write. Teachers should keep searching for even more effective activities to meet their learners´ needs and activate their productive skills.

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Reading

Reading is one of the four skills to be taught when learning a new language. When reading, learners are faced with vocabulary in context, grammatically correct sentences. They learn new words and expressions, such as idioms, helping them with their writing and oral skills.

In general, when we read we do it with a purpose, be it to get specific information, to get a general idea of the text or just for pleasure. Depending on what the purpose of the reading is, there are different activities that can be carried out but, in general terms, the ones that you will find below can be used in any case.

Pre-Reading

To introduce the reading we are going to work on, it would be a good idea to do some warm-up activities in order to introduce learners to the topic, such as showing them some tongue twisters or riddles that they can practise or ask them what they know or what they do not know about a certain topic (the one they are going to read about). After that, to prepare them for the reading, you could pre-teach some vocabulary or write a quote related to the text for learners to discuss. Other aspects that could be commented on are the title, the genre, the register, the author or any other topics that you consider to be relevant. Finally, another activity that you could do is to ask learners for predictions, to see what they think is going to happen.

When Reading

When it comes to reading you have two possibilities: students either read on their own, at their own pace, or as a group, out loud, in a way that learners also practice pronunciation. If you use the latter, you can ask about the meaning of certain expressions or you can ask your learners some general questions to see if they understand what they are reading.

Another activity that could be done while reading would be to check whether the predictions the learners had made before are correct or not. You could also ask them to identify the sentences that state the main idea of each paragraph or the connectors that link the ideas that are within the text.

You can ask them about the meaning of words that may be new for them but whose meaning could be guessed by the context.

Post-Reading

To assess whether the text has been understood, there are also several activities that can be designed to check comprehension, these could include:

-   If prior to the reading the title of the text has been hidden or removed, an activity could be to give it an appropriate one.

-   Comprehension questions: either multiple choice, true or false, or short answers.

-   Copy a sentence in which you underline a word (i.e. pronoun) so learners have to check what it is making reference to.

-   Watch some videos related to the topic they have read about.

Writing

"Writing is not about putting syntactically correct sentences end to end, or even to link words, paraphrases and paragraphs. Writing skills, on the other hand, are revealed in the production of a coherent whole that responds to explicit rules according to its stake."

The writing process consists of four parts: planning, texting, editing, and publishing. Despite its seemingly strict framework, written production is not a linear activity. Writing is rather defined as an activity conducive to the development of the imagination, it makes it possible to transmit or understand a reality. It is intended to be dynamic and is also an excellent learning tool.

Below are some strategies to make your writing workshops more attractive and thus help you to use writing as a learning tool.

Pre-Writing

In order to best prepare learners to actively participate in your writing workshop, it would be interesting to introduce the subject in a more playful way. Here are two activities you can set up before you start the workshop.

- View a video related to the theme.

As a first step, please choose a story from the Hidden Culture eBook. In order to best prepare learners, it would be relevant to contextualize the theme selected for the writing workshop. To capture their attention from the first minutes of the writing workshop; it would be interesting to view a video on the chosen theme. This exercise would allow learners to contextualize the selected theme and thus be able to better project themselves within the writing workshop.

Example: If you choose the theme: Arts of Culture and you propose to your learners to write around the history of nestinarstvo dance, the video you are going to project will be related to this traditional Bulgarian dance.

- The image as a didactic support.

Use the image to facilitate comprehension as well as memorization. It would be interesting to present your learners with a set of images related to the digital story you have selected.

Example: If you select the history of Nestinarstvo dance, in the digital book Hidden Culture, present your learners with images related to this Bulgarian tradition and

describe it aloud by writing down the key vocabulary. It would be interesting to encourage learners to take note of the vocabulary list.

When Writing

During the writing session, you can skip an audio file on the theme you have chosen in the Hidden Culture eBook. The purpose of the exercise is for learners to be able to list and write down all the words and/or phrases heard during the audio session. In order to allow learners to take as many notes as possible, it would be relevant to repeat the listening.

Once the audio file is assimilated, you can take time to exchange with the group by setting up exercises such as

- **Make a short description.** You can ask learners to write a short description that summarises their understanding of the audio.
- **Share the description/Questions/Answers.** It is recommended to practice this exercise in a group in order to promote the exchange of ideas and the understanding of all learners of the audio file. In which case, it would be relevant to provide elements of answers to the various questions.
- **Share around the culture of the learner.** The purpose of this exercise is to allow learners to share freely with the whole group about their own culture while respecting the initial theme.

Post-Writing

In order to ensure that all learners understand the theme of the writing workshop, it is important to take stock. Below you will find two activities in this direction.

- **The pooling of vocabulary words/phrases.** It would be interesting to go around the table in order to collect the words/sentences that your learners were able to transcribe, in writing, when listening to the audio. This makes it possible to check the correct spelling of the words/sentences as well as the understanding of the theme.
- **Reading comprehension - Texts with holes.** Make a first reading aloud of the text as well as the list of words available to complete the blank spaces. For this exercise, it would be interesting to put learners in pairs or small groups to complete the missing words in the text.

Listening

Listening should be an active process. However, in many language study groups learners just sit and listen, but do nothing with the information they have just heard. After some time, this passive listening causes them to lose interest. If you ask learners to produce something out of their listening and provide them with some activities, the listening process will be more engaging for them. Below, you will find some strategies to make your learners active listeners.

Pre-Listening

To make the learners ready to listen, there are a few preparation activities that should be conducted with the learners before they start listening to the story.

Creating background knowledge about the theme

First, please choose the story from the Hidden Culture Digital Book to read to your learners in the listening class. It will be wise to create some background knowledge about the theme of your story before the listening activity. Before reading the story to your learners, ask your learners to think about what they have in their own culture related to that theme, and ask them to talk about that theme and their own culture in a whole-class discussion. In order to find the theme of the selected story, please visit the Art and Culture Dictionary and find the topic of your story among the dictionary entries. Finally, check under what theme that dictionary entry was located.

Example: If you select the Zeybek Dance story from the Hidden Culture Digital Book, consult the Art and Culture Dictionary to find the Zeybek Dance entry. Then, check under what theme the Zeybek Dance entry was classified. It is classified under Theme 2: Performing Arts. Now, you can talk with your students about performing arts in general and ask them to give examples of performing arts from their own culture. Then, let them know that the story that you will read to them as a listening text is about performing arts.

Predictions

As another preparatory activity, read to your learners the title of the digital story you selected to read, show them the visuals of that story, and ask them to predict what the story is about.

Example: If you select the Zeybek Dance story from the Hidden Culture Digital Book, then read to your learners the title of the story, Zeybek. Show them a few images from the story, and ask them what they think this story is about, which country's culture it

might represent, etc. You may also ask them to analyze the clothes of the dancers and compare them with the clothes of their own folk dancers.

When Listening

For the listening session, you may either read the story you selected from the Hidden Culture Digital Book to your learners or let a text to speech software read the story for you.

When you start reading the listening text, if your learners are just passive listeners, they may lose their interest in a short while. This is the case especially if they are listening to a story in a language that they are just learning. Therefore, strategies should be used to activate the learners. In addition to some well-known activities such as "Fill in the Blanks", "True – False Questions" and "Match Half Sentences," you could use the following strategies during listening activities.

Taking notes

As during listening activity, you may ask your learners to take notes while you are reading the story. Taking notes may be in any form; they may just jot down what they hear, they may draw about what they listen to, or they may map connections on a diagram or a chart. The main aim here is to keep them as active listeners.

Thinking Aloud

Another strategy to keep your learners active during the listening activity is to think aloud with the reader. While reading the story to your learners, you may stop at a certain point and think aloud with your learners.

While modelling how to think aloud for your learners, you may summarize the part of the story you have just read and ask your learners questions to make connections between the story and their own cultures. You may also ask your learners to predict how the story will go on. Then, continue reading the story and check with the learners if their predictions were correct or not.

Post-Listening

Post listening activities can be used to see whether the listening text that the teacher just read has been fully understood by the learners or not.

Summarizing & Visualizing:

Summarizing and visualizing give us an idea about the level of the learners' comprehension of the listening text. You may ask your learners to briefly summarize

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what they learned from the listening text in a written or spoken form, or you may ask them to visualize what they understood from the listening text.

Finding a Heading

Finding a heading to the listening text is another activity that helps you understand how well the listening text has been understood by the learners. You may ask your learners to find a proper heading, different from the original one, which gives the readers an idea about the story.

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Speaking

Speaking effectively is defined as speaking in such a way that your message is clearly heard and, if possible, acted upon. There are two main elements to speaking effectively: what you say, and how you say it.

'What you say' means your choice of words. The words you might use when chatting to a friend are likely to be quite different from those used in a formal presentation or interview.

Similarly, the way that you speak will also vary in different situations. However, there are also likely to be some common features, for example whether you naturally talk quietly or loudly, and how you use body language.

This section will discuss aspects of effective speaking. It also suggests ways in which you can become a more effective speaker.

Pre-Speaking

The first stage is the pre-speaking stage (presentation stage). This stage prepares students by getting them to think about the topic or situation before they speak about it. The teacher's role is to get students to think about what they are going to say, before they speak. The teacher should set up this pre-task and his/her clear instructions are needed.

Vocabulary preparation

Pre-speaking begins before the students actually speak. Pre-teaching vocabulary is useful for teachers across subjects and age groups, as language acquisition is an important part of learning and key to speaking.

A good pre-speaking activity also includes integrating skills, maybe listening and sometimes reading. This stage should be short, about 10 minutes long and equivalent the presentation stage of a grammar lesson, but giving students enough time to consider what they are going to speak about.

Take for example, The Digital Book "Hidden Culture". At the end of every chapter you will find a glossary for each intangible culture item. Read the terms aloud to students and have them repeat the terms after you. Make sure they understand the items in the glossary. The chapters include photos for better understanding and also can serve as stimuli for conversation in groups.

While Speaking

The second stage is the while-speaking stage (practice stage). This stage is the time when students should practice speaking. The teacher does not have to do a lot of

things because students will be working on the 'while speaking' activities individually or in pairs, or in groups.

When working on the activities, the students may have some problems due to a lack of language variety; thus, during this stage, the teacher can monitor and help weaker students with their problems in completing the 'while speaking' activities. The teacher should evaluate how well students have completed these activities and whether they are ready to go on to the next stage or not. Communicative activities are used in this stage with the aim of helping students practice their skills of speaking.

Pair work

Many 'pair work' activities can feel like games, but sometimes it's fun to introduce some real games into the mix. "Yes, no!" is a game where the only two words that students aren't allowed to say are yes and no.

Pair the students off and play. When a student loses, he or she is out and the winning partner is paired with another winning partner. In this way, you can create a "yes / no!" tournament. Use the topics mentioned in the digital book of "The Hidden Culture" and encourage the students to ask each other questions about celebrations, traditions and customs mentioned in the chapters.

Group work

The game "Hot Seat" is a great way to engage every group member and is designed to motivate lower level learners to speak. A student who takes the "hot seat" sits at the front of the group and pretends to be an expert on the intangible culture topic. Other students then pose questions for the one in the hot seat to answer. The teacher has to make sure the student in the "hot seat" has a sufficiently high language level to lead this activity for the group.

Post-Speaking

The 'post-speaking' stage is the personalization stage. It helps the students to take the information or whatever they have produced in the "during speaking" stage and do something meaningful with it. The post task is "an information transfer" – a production exercise where they respond to what they have just learnt.

Wrap up

Wrap-up activities will tie up learned concepts in a neat bow while solidifying knowledge and naturally leading to the next related topic. It's a perfect way to check for understanding (and any misunderstanding) as well as to summarize important information. Students will appreciate these activities because the transition to the next topic won't be as abrupt.

For example, "exit slips" work wonderfully for a quick wrap-up activity. Perhaps students can say two sentences about what they learned, or have them respond to a specific thought-provoking question about what was taught, such as "What is intangible culture?" "What is a tradition?" or "Which intangible cultural item do you like the most and why?".

WORD OF NON CONCLUSION

These Guidelines are mostly focusing on developing learners' language skills in relation to the selected items of intangible cultural heritage. It has been generally admitted that language, culture and communication are the most important topics in older adult education. Language skills, be they receptive or productive, support oral or written communication, a condition sine qua non for older people to remain included in society and develop together with it.

It is no secret that education is most efficient when based on stories: socially valuable stories of social communities, stories about their values and identity. These concepts should educators have in mind while building and delivering *their* educational programme adjusted to each learning group or each older learner.