Pre-reading 1 for coaches

Over the past two years, the Erasmus+ project, **Autonomous Literacy Learners – Sustainable Results (ALL-SR)**[1], has explored the potential of **coaching** to support **self-directed adult literacy**[2] **and language learning** across a range of different contexts in three countries, UK, Germany and the Netherlands.

This is the first of two pre-readings ahead of the introductory training session for coaches on [date]. It aims to give you an overview of the coaching approach. It includes one reflective learning activity.

The second pre-reading will explain how the approach works in a little more detail.

How long? Allow 20-30 minutes for this pre-reading.

1. Aims of the approach

The approach aims to help adults develop the skills, strategies and confidence they need to become more effective self-directed learners, better able to take advantage of the many language learning opportunities that arise naturally in daily life (including work).

2. Why self-directed learning?

Classroom teaching helps many adults to improve their language skills, but to sustain and develop those skills adults must go on learning outside of and beyond the classroom. Self-directed learning allows adults to do this, greatly extending the benefits of any tuition they receive.

3. What is self-directed learning?

You become a self-directed learner when you take charge of the learning process.

This includes the following five steps,

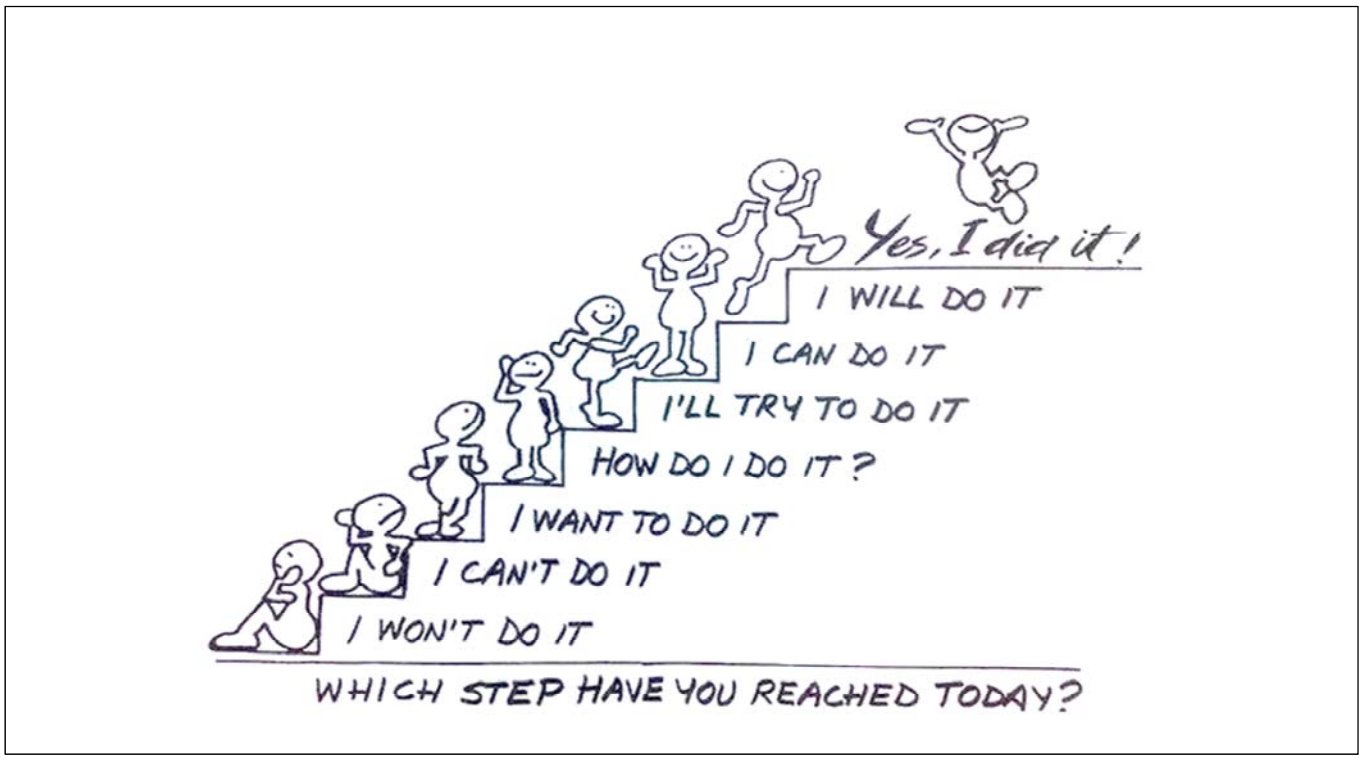
1. Identifying your own learning needs
2. Setting learning goals to address those needs
3. Identifying resources (human, as well as material) to help you achieve your learning goals
4. Applying appropriate learning strategies
5. Evaluating the outcomes of your learning

This process has a lot in common with problem-solving and we use it all the time in daily life to solve problems and achieve goals.

[1] Find out more at http://www.itta.uva.nl/learnerautonomy/learner-autonomy-48

[2] Including numeracy and basic digital skills

Note that confidence (to start learning and then to persist in the face of difficulty) and effective personal learning strategies are key to the process.



Acknowledgement: Helen Hindle Mathematics AST working in Brighton. http://www.growthmindsetmaths.com/

4. Why coaching to support self-directed learning?

Non-directive coaching is a well-established approach specifically designed to help people take charge of their own learning. It uses reflective questioning to help people problem-solve for themselves.

The coach acts as a non-judgemental, but highly attentive, 'critical friend', helping the learner to gain clarity about their learning needs and objectives and how best to achieve those objectives, given the realities of the learner's situation. By taking a close, supportive interest in the learner's progress, the coach builds the learner's confidence and helps the learner to persist in the face of difficulty.

The coach's aim is first and foremost to enable the learner to take full personal responsibility for their own learning. The coach does this by treating the learner at all times as a resourceful adult, fully capable of developing their own solutions – even when the learner doubts their own ability. By refraining from giving advice or instruction to the learner, the coach gives the learner space to devise, test and develop their own personal learning strategies.

In these ways, coaching helps people become more effective autonomous learners.

We can apply this approach to help adults develop the skills, strategies and confidence they need to take charge of their own language learning.

5. Coaching to develop self-directed language learners

Instead of trying to solve the learner's language problems by teaching the learner language skills, the coach helps the learner to problem-solve for themselves. The coach helps the learner first to define their own

language learning objectives and then to frame a self-directed 'learning project' to achieve those objectives.

The learner pursues their project outside of their coaching sessions, using the sessions to report back to their coach.

The coach uses the sessions to help the learner problem-solve where necessary and also to monitor and evaluate their own progress – refining both their learning objectives and their learning strategies as appropriate.

In this way, the coaching helps the person to become a more confident and effective language learner.

Note that the coach's focus is on helping the learner to problem-solve for her/himself.

6. Reflective learning activity

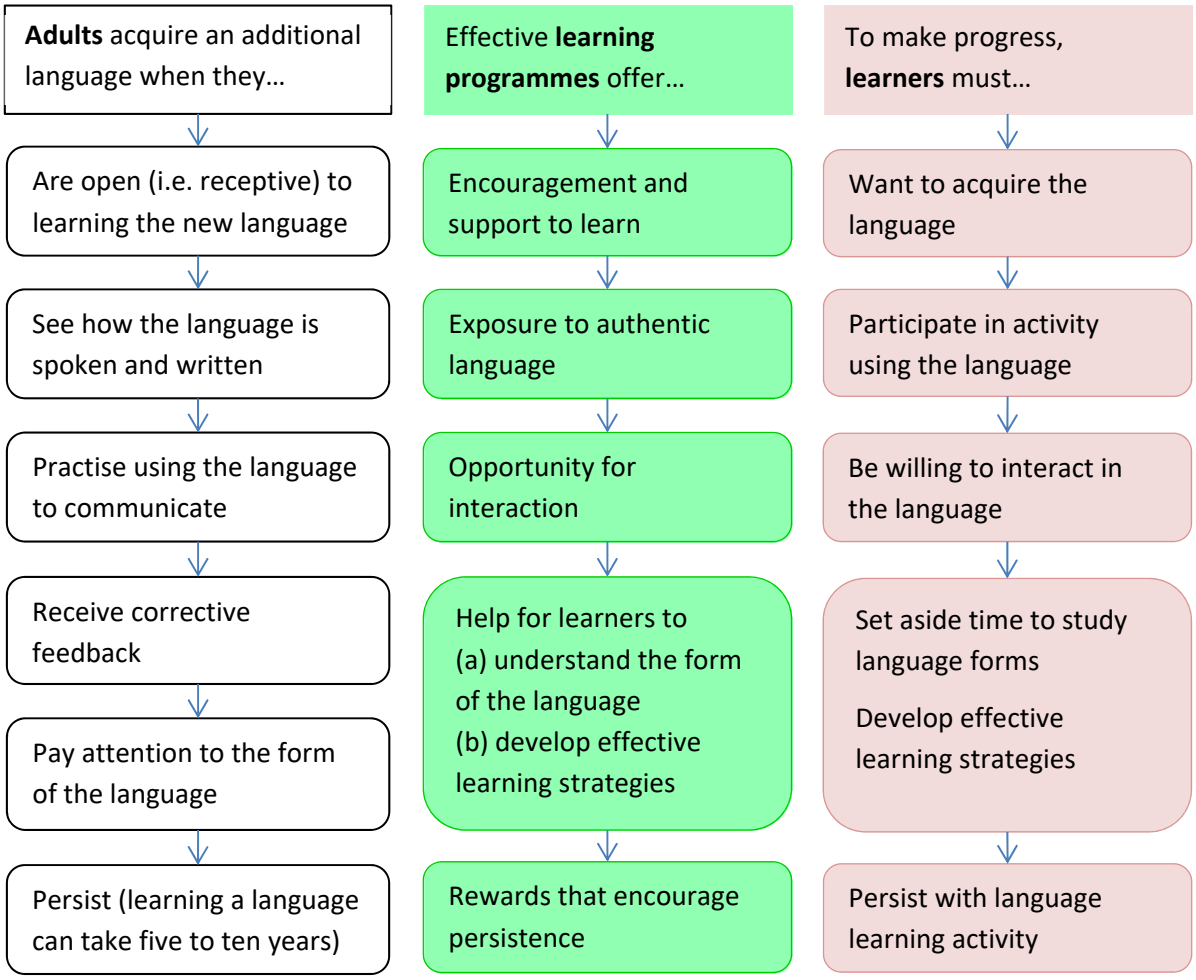
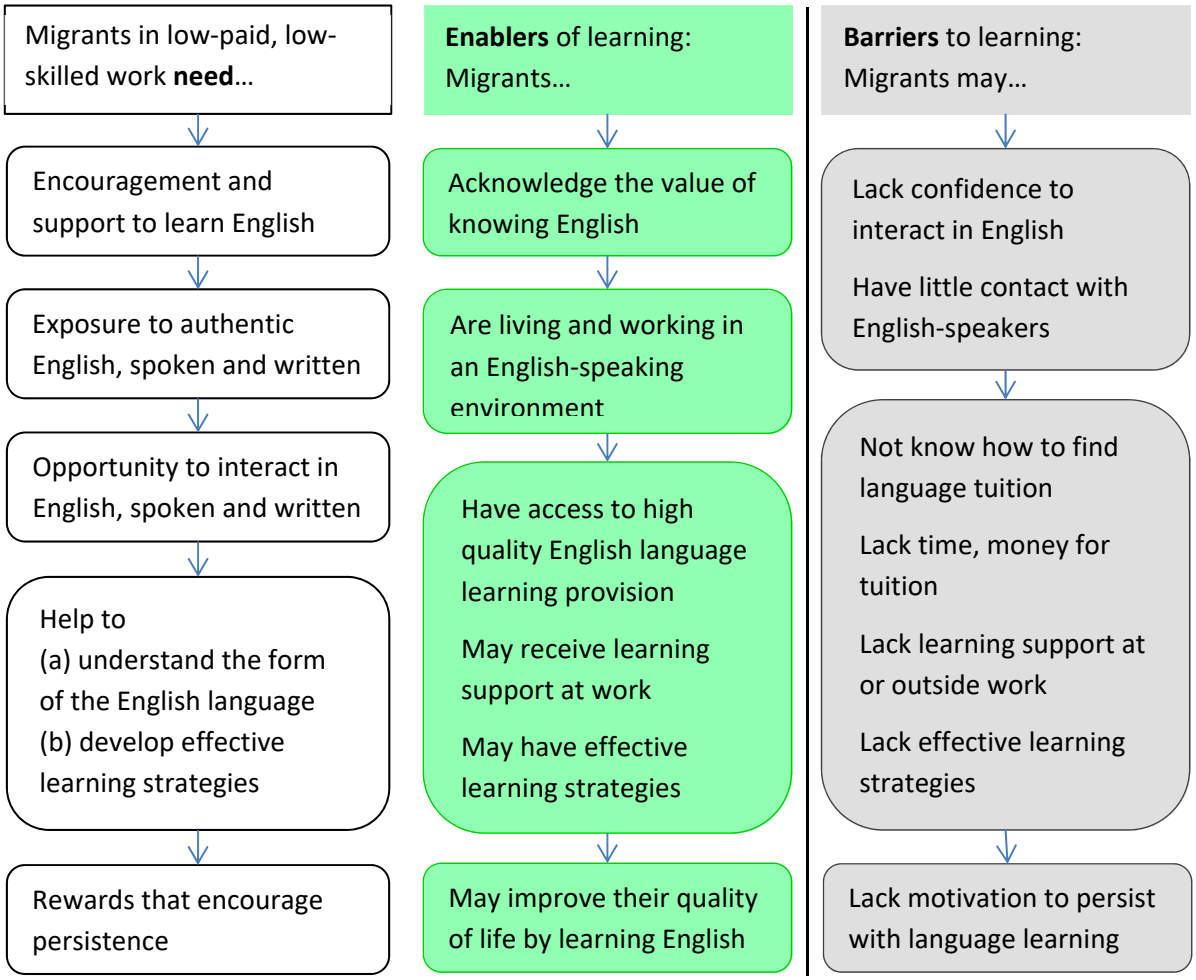
Review the two diagrams below, 'What we know about language learning' and 'Enablers of and barriers to L2 language learning' (L2 = second language).

Consider how coaching might support L2 language learners.

Please note any ideas or questions you have.

What we know about language learning

1. Conditions for successful language learning



Enablers of and barriers to L2 language learning