

Selecting learning goals

Blog 7 about Erasmus+ KA2 project *How to learn a language? (H2L2)* – March 2024

In the KA2 project *How to Learn a Language (H2L2)*, we are working with adult second language and literacy learners on strategies to strengthen their learning skills. We aim to support them to become more autonomous in language learning and less dependent on formal learning environments. To tap into learners' autonomy, one of the pilots focused on the individual learning goals of the learners.

What did we do?

We started by asking the learners how they wish their future to look like. Subsequently we moved to the question: what language do they need to make their daily lives and their future plans feasible? For some learners this question was too difficult to answer right away. Brainstorming and discussion in the school's safe place made students overcome communication obstacles and share their real dreams and needs. Students learned from others who could reflect on their own needs and got inspired by their answers.

The learning goals addressed everyday communication, education and work and underpinned their need to communicate more adequately in Greek by bringing their outdoors L2 linguistic experience in the class. We then broke down the learning goals on the macro level ('I want to work as a mechanic') into smaller, more micro level steps. A visualisation of a 'stairway' with the goal on the top, proved to be helpful in this discussion: which steps do you need to take to move towards the top? 'I need to learn the terminology for mechanics'. By filling the stairs with 'sub'goals, the learners came to realise the levels required for the achievement of the goal.

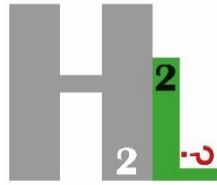
Every lesson started with choosing micro learning goals with the group to work on together, followed by an inventory with the students of useful exercises they could think of to work towards the goal. Ranging from peer presentation of experience and L2 knowledge on the selected topic to role play.

The meetings ended with a summary of what we learned and an evaluation of the methodology and content. Learners who were invited to recall knowledge seemed confident and tested their memory, while the others learned new common vocabulary and expressions.

What we learned

Being invited to bring up own learning goals proved to be a crucial step, as a new awareness emerged. Learners showed much more motivation when they chose a learning goal for every meeting.

These goals can best be *micro* learning goals, that can be reached within one lesson: the same-day experience seems to give them a strong motivation. It turned out to be easier for the teachers to attract the learners' interest.



By allowing students to get inspired by their most recent experience of language needs goal-setting became authentic and motivational. Nevertheless, it must be said that this strategy needs high-experienced teaching staff with rich available material and a well-designed structure - as teachers should be ready to respond immediately to the new micro goals.

Setting and working on (micro) goals also contributed to equality of students and teachers. The students were clearly in the lead to select goals and evaluate their learning process. Moreover students helped each other in translating, taking the lead on the basis of experience (knowledge) and reflecting etc.

When we reviewed the goals by oral and written exercises to see whether and how far students “climbed the stairs”, we noticed an increased fluency in writing - most learners resisted writing in the beginning - as well as an increased confidence in oral speech, self-confidence and motivation.

Partnership

H2L2 is an Erasmus+ KA2-strategic partnership in which the following organisations take part: Second Chance School of Mytilene (Greece), Orient Express (Austria), C.P.I.A. Sede di Ancona and Università degli Studi di Macerata (Italy), TopTaal NT2 Experts, Kaatje Dalderop and ITTA UvA (The Netherlands).