

LESLLA Symposium Proceedings



Recommended citation of this article

Carrillo, M. E. T., & Avila, R. G. (2017). Teaching Spanish as a Foreign Language to Immigrants in Continuing Education in Granada. *LESLLA Symposium Proceedings*, 12(1), 231–238.

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8250673>

Citation for LESLLA Symposium Proceedings

This article is part of a collection of articles based on presentations from the 2016 Symposium held at Universidad de Granada in Grenada, Spain. Please note that the year of publication is often different than the year the symposium was held. We recommend the following citation when referencing the edited collection.

Sosiński, M. (Ed.) (2017). *Alfabetización y aprendizaje de idiomas por adultos: Investigación, política educativa y práctica docente/Literacy education and second language learning by adults (LESLLA): Research, policy and practice*. Universidad de Granada.

<https://lesllasp.journals.publicknowledgeproject.org/index.php/lesllasp/issue/view/476>

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TEACHING SPANISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO IMMIGRANTS IN
CONTINUING EDUCATION IN GRANADA

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ABSTRACT: State Continuing Education Centers strive to provide adults with the opportunity to re-enter the educative system by offering lifelong learning programs. Immigrants can be initially enrolled in the program "Spanish as a Foreign Language", as an intermediate step towards other courses that lead them to obtain other credentials. Teachers and students have online and free access to instructional units, which are adapted to the students' goals and interests. They don't get an official certificate of their level at the end of this program, but they are offered the opportunity to take a test at an Official Language School to obtain such a certificate.

KEYWORDS: Continuing Education Centers, Spanish as a Foreign Language, Immigrants, State Education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Continuing Education for adults in Andalusia, a region in south Spain, has been changing deeply in recent decades. During the 1970s and 1980s there was a high rate of low educated adults in the region, which made the educational policies focus both their attention and policies on literacy development. Therefore, literacy of the Spanish population was the main purpose of Adult Education Centers at this time, as they were called.

In the 1990s, however, this situation changed and the educational demands of adult population have shifted towards other interests, alongside with European tendencies. New educational policies have been implemented to respond to those demands, which

have led to a root change in the Adult Education Centers, currently called Continuing Education Centers. This new name is only a small reflection of more a deep structural, conceptual and functional conception of the nature of education as it is offered to people over eighteen years old in the state education system in Spain.

2. EDUCATION AS A HUMAN RIGHT GUARANTEED BY AN INCLUSIVE SOCIAL SYSTEM

It is generally accepted that education is a basic human right. Nobody should be denied the possibility of getting access to a quality education system, regardless their age, sex, origin, culture or religion, during their lifetime.

However, it has been demonstrated that this policy is not always followed in different European countries. The education and training policies are different across the countries and the students' success and learning outcomes depend in many cases on social class, socio-economic status, geographical origin, and even gender or age.

The Survey of Adult Skills, published by OECD and the European Commission, also known as the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competences (PIAAC), assessed the literacy, numeracy and problem-solving as well as their skills with Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) of adults aged 16-65 in 17 European countries. It underlines the above-mentioned inequalities as well as the alarming figures that 20% of the working population has low literacy and numeracy skills, and 25% lack the minimum ICT abilities needed to access the job market, with striking differences among the countries participating in the survey. These rates are even higher among the unemployed.

European Union policy makers are working to change this reality by means of encouraging the different European countries to implement education and training policies that guarantee more inclusiveness. These policies have set a target for adult learning that states that by 2020, 15% of the population aged 25-64 should be taking part in Continuing Education. In 2012 only five countries had reached the target and in Andalusia we were at 5%, so the challenge continues.

Supportive lifelong learning policies will help people get the new skills they need to gain access to the labor market, which is more and more demanding everyday. Therefore, it will both keep the population active and subsequently help overcome the economic crisis when new job demands appear in the market.

3. THE ROLE OF CONTINUING EDUCATION CENTERS

It is in this context that Continuing Education Centers have modified their nature in recent decades. Their priority is to meet the needs of the population with no exception in the continuously changing and challenging socio-economic reality. First of all, equality and inclusion must be a reality, not simply an idea.

The Centers' role includes a number of different objectives:

- Set the foundation for equal opportunities for everyone and guarantee an answer to their needs.

- Accept, respect, and work with all kinds of diversity: gender, culture, and levels of literacy and language development.
- Prevent racism and xenophobia through specific programmes designed to actively work toward social and educational equity and make inclusion one of the main principles in their teaching methodology.
- Offer meaningful and practical learning opportunities. Students do not apply just to learn academic content, but to achieve the broader objective of working and living in better conditions. Thus, they must be able to transfer the knowledge and skills they acquire at school to their own realities.

4. EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS OFFERED IN CONTINUING EDUCATION CENTERS

In Granada there are 44 Continuing Education Centers that offer three types of programs:

4.1. COURSES THAT LEAD TO A CERTIFICATE

These courses focus on obtaining the certificate of Secondary Education for Adults – this is similar to a high school credential in other areas of the world – or Official Certificates of Foreign Languages, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. In both cases the methodology and evaluation systems employed is blended learning: students work online and have an online teacher who belongs to a Secondary School or Official Language School, and who is also the person responsible for their evaluation. Apart from that, students also have the support of face-to-face classes with a teacher at their Continuing Education Center.

4.2. EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR EXTERNAL EXAMS

At Continuing Education Centers students can train for different external exams that will give them access to other stages in the educative system when they do not have the required qualifications for each of those stages: University or Vocational studies. For example, if students do not have a certificate of Secondary Education, which is needed to access superior Vocational Studies, there is this parallel pathway of an alternative exam, only with academic value. This means that students can only access other stages in the educational system, but it does not have any value in the job market.

Other available exams give them the opportunity to obtain a Secondary Education certificate or an Official Language School certificate without enrolling an official course.

4.3. OTHER COMPLEMENTARY COURSES THAT RESPOND TO SPECIFIC SOCIAL DEMANDS

- ICT Courses: they include training on digital skills needed to effectively use ICT in real life. They will be able to face many procedures in everyday life in which they need some management of the computer, the Internet, the mobile phone, the e-mail, etc.

- Basic Skills in Foreign Languages (usually English): these courses train students to be able to face everyday situations in which they will need a foreign language. Such a course is also considered as an introduction or a pre-requisite step for those students who want to obtain a certificate at an Official Language School, but who lack the basic knowledge or even self-confidence to face the courses in that institution yet.
- Healthy Life Habits, Illness and Risk Prevention: this course offers a program intended to highlight the importance of the prevention in our society in every aspect life: health and diet, exercise, working conditions, hygiene, etc.
- Andalusian Culture and Heritage: this program is aimed at making people aware of the value of the places where they now live and understand their history as a first step in the process of looking after and keeping their cultural and ethnic heritage.
- Introduction to Entrepreneurial and Business Activities: this program is a vehicle of personal development in which people can acquire or improve their creativity, self-esteem, initiative, collaborative work, responsibility and risk-taking. There are three different lines of work: Entrepreneurial Potential in Europe, Programs for solidary People and Setting up a Business.
- Spanish as a Foreign Language for Immigrants: Intercultural education and Spanish as a Foreign Language are two basic aspects and even two previous steps in the integration of immigrants in our society. They contribute to a faster and more efficient integration not only in the job market but also in every aspect of their everyday life.

5. SPANISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN CONTINUING EDUCATION CENTERS

Immigrants are offered the possibility of learning the Spanish language and culture and to prepare for their Spanish citizenship test. Furthermore, there is a third and very determining objective implicit in this program: Continuing Education Centers have as a primary goal to help people obtain new certificates and to give them access to other stages in the educative system. In this regard, this specific program is understood as an early training step in the learning process of those who would like to obtain the certificate in Secondary Education, Vocational Studies or Official Language Schools, but they lack the basic skills to be able to face those programs straightaway, mainly because they don't know the language sufficiently yet or they need to improve some basic study skills to be successful in those next courses and programs. Thus, this program is also a kind of footbridge, a pathway towards other studies. Ultimately, the main goal is always to help learners become acculturated to Spanish society while avoiding and preventing any kind of inequality or discrimination.

There are very clear data of how Continuing Education Centers are contributing to the development of a more inclusive society by offering the programs that people from every sector of society need to more fully participate in their communities. In the academic year 2015-2016 there were 823 students who finished their studies in Spanish as a Foreign Language and Culture in the different Continuing Education Centers throughout Granada. We must add 135 students more who enrolled the Of-

ficial Language School to learn Spanish and obtained an official certificate. 35 of them studied A1 level, there were 25 students in A2, 31 in B1, 23 in B1+ and 21 in B2. That makes a total of 958 immigrants – almost a thousand – studying Spanish only in one province in Andalusia.

There are absolutely no access requirements. Students do not even need to have Spanish citizenship. Official Language Schools do establish an age limit, however, they must be over 18 to be able to apply.

6. STUDENTS' PROFILE AND INSTRUCTIONAL IMPLICATIONS

We must never forget the real context of Continuing Education Centers, most of them located in small villages that offer their courses to all people living in the community. In this context, it would be completely unrealistic to expect homogeneous profiles in any group of students, especially in those of immigrants in this specific program. Quite to the contrary, what is found is diversity at every level:

It seems obvious that students will have different backgrounds and therefore different cultures and different mother tongues. If we think about the pedagogical implications, this diversity presents a challenge to individualize the teaching and learning processes, not to mention to develop a sense of belonging in the group. Teachers can take months to achieve that basic goal.

We also need to add that students' proficiency level in Spanish will also vary greatly, which creates the need to adapt the language used during instruction continuously so that it is not too basic for those proficient learners nor too difficult for those who have not acquired basic language skills yet.

The different backgrounds of learners also come with varying socio-economic levels, which also relates to their cultural competency. Teachers must model and nurture tolerance in order to ensure equal treatment among the group members.

In these groups of students, as in any others, we also find different learning styles and rhythms, as well as multiple intelligences, all of which result in different study habits and learning strategies. Teachers must adapt to each of them, effectively differentiate teaching, and help students develop learning strategies that they individually need to achieve their objectives successfully and be able to success other stages in the educational system.

The interests and motivations to join the group are also varied among students. The fulfillment of their expectations will define their attitude in class and teachers must be aware of that. They are adult learners, and instruction must be immediately relevant to keep them engaged.

Apart from those contrasts, in many cases deeper differences can be found regarding special education needs. Some immigrants need deeper adaptations in the teaching and learning program as they present some learning of physical or psychological disability that does not allow them to achieve the established objectives in typical fashion.

Designing and establishing an effective initial intake and assessment system to identify all those differences becomes essential in order to obtain a clear picture of the group and its individuals. Each teacher then needs to adapt their instruction to every specific learner profile.

7. TEACHERS' PROFILE

Regarding the teachers' backgrounds, it is necessary to make a distinction between teachers in Continuing Education Centers and in Official Language Schools.

There is not any specific qualification in Spain for teaching adults in Continuing Education Centers. Any primary school teacher or pre-school teacher can apply for those positions. Therefore, the responsible teachers for the programs of Spanish Language and Culture for Immigrants are primary school teachers or pre-school teachers. They must pass a state exam to get their position in any school, either Primary or Continuing Education Centers, but are not asked for any further specialization in adult literacy or in how adults learn.

However, teachers in Official Language Schools must be qualified teachers of Spanish Language and Culture, with the same credential as a teacher of Spanish Language and Literature in a Secondary School.

Currently there are 40 teachers in Granada working in Continuing Education Centers and two teachers working at the only Official Language School in the province.

8. TEACHING METHODOLOGY: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The methodology used in these programs is based on the communicative approach from a functional perspective, but it is not our intention to describe now the principles of this approach, as it is not the purpose of this article. We would like to describe some other general considerations affecting methodology that can be deduced from the main goal and nature of this program as specified above.

The main pedagogical principle is inclusion. Given the diversity found in the classrooms in all its perspectives, it is especially important in these groups to create a sense of belonging and guarantee inclusion both inside the group and projected towards the whole school and the community. This principle must be worked first inside the classroom but it must also be a basic principle of the educational project of the school.

Inclusion must be understood not only as a methodological principle, but also as a democratic principle, as it is a way to guarantee all the students have the same rights and are treated equally inside and outside the classroom, regardless their possible physical or psychological disabilities. Children or adults who present these types of disabilities are never separated from the main group or segregated.

A second methodological principle is interaction. Communication cannot occur if there is no interaction between at least two persons, so every teaching and learning activity is built around interaction. It is also the most efficient means of taking everyday situations into the classroom and making learning functional and meaningful. Very related to this, we must consider dialogue-based learning. It has been demonstrated that one of the best and most efficient ways to learn is by means of creating situations in which interactions between students occur, letting them discuss some questions that the teacher or themselves propose and leading them in the process of reaching some conclusions.

Finally, it is worth mentioning centers of interest. The teaching and learning process is designed to respond to the students' different interests and motivations, both to create meaningful learning and to get them involved more actively in their own learning processes.

Apart from those general considerations, there are specific actions that Continuing Education Centers are taking to help immigrants develop a sense of community and belonging. Some examples are the celebration of extra-curricular activities, such as welcome activities at school and outdoor activities to promote their integration in the educational community and at the same time create opportunities for the rest of students to know other cultures and develop their sense of acceptance and tolerance.

Other specific actions, which may seem small, but make a significant difference in the immigrants' feeling of acceptance is to place school signs in their mother tongue (toilet, exit, room 3, library, etc.), and provide leaflets or other informative material also in their mother tongue. When designing teaching materials, as possible, teachers try to integrate the students' cultural references.

Academic and workplace guidance is also offered in Continuing Education Centers, both in this specific program and as a school policy which is part of their educational project.

9. MATERIALS

The Andalusian Education Policy has established that there must be free online access¹ to materials that support not only this programme, but also all the other programmes offered in Continuing Education Centers. However, as can be deduced from the above considerations, this material must be adapted to the specific features of each group.

The material is structured around eight topics of interest, which form the foundation for eight didactic units starting from the individual (myself), going through immediate and close contexts (at school, at home, my family) and reaching more social environments (shopping, out and about, health and work):

1. Mis primeros días (My first days)
2. En la escuela (At school)
3. Mi casa (At home)
4. Mi familia (My family)
5. Las compras (Shopping)
6. Por la calle (Out on the street)
7. La salud (Health)
8. El trabajo (Work)

Each unit of study contains different resources: teacher's guide, student material, a Picture dictionary, audio files, video files and an interactive unit to work independently online. At the same time, all communicative skills are treated throughout the different sections in the unit, which are the following: listening, speaking, reading, writing, talking to your partner, playing, watching a video and talking about your country.

1 <http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/educacion/permanente/materiales/index.php?espanol#space>

10. TESTS OF SPANISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE AT THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE SCHOOL

Some immigrant students who are evaluated positively and their teacher considers that they could face an official test to certify their level, are advised to take the official exam of Spanish as a Foreign Language at an Official Language School.

This official exam is composed of four tests, and all four of them must be passed independently to obtain the certificate. The four tests evaluate the four skills in the different levels: reading, listening, speaking (both individual presentation and interaction) and writing (both production and interaction).

11. CONCLUSION

Continuing Education Centers try to offer an answer to the social needs of population in Spain today. This answer is not designed only by local education policies but is mostly linked to a pressing need that has been identified and described by the European Commission. We must not forget the minorities of immigrants who need to be accepted and integrated in a society with increasing diversity. The first step in this integration is helping newcomers acquire the necessary communication skills that will allow them to succeed in everyday life. At the same time, we must not forget the acculturation needs, which are also present in the programs designed for this specific student profile.

A group of 42 teachers distributed throughout the province is responding to the needs of almost a thousand immigrants. Each student has a different background, learning style, motivation and level of proficiency in Spanish, but they come to Continuing Education Centers in seek of real help in this completely new and challenging situation in their lives.

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LITERACY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF L2 ENGLISH MORPHOSYNTAX

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ABSTRACT: The course of second language (L2) morpho-syntactic development is said to be uniform, regardless of learners' L1, type of exposure or education. We argue that this conclusion is premature and explore these variables with new cross-sectional data from an on-going study of Arabic-, Somali- and Urdu-speaking English learners with varying amounts of home-language and English literacy whose exposure to English was only after post-puberty immigration. While seminal studies of adult immigrants' naturalistic L2 acquisition have included low-educated adults, instructional not literacy was a variable. There is emerging evidence of different rates and developmental sub-patterns for L2 immigrant adults but it is unclear whether the influence is exposure type or literacy. The structure building approach predicts grammatical elements are acquired in their order in the target syntactic tree, and in English crucial are word order, negation, tense and agreement. Given the standard syntactic structure of English, the predicted order of acquisition (1) word order of the VP projection; (2) sentential negation (NegP); (3) regular past tense marking (TP); (4) subject-verb agreement, including 3rd person singular (AgrP). Data come from speakers' oral production in response to a set of tasks. Results support the predicted order of development for L2 English learners regardless of their L1. Results also reveal subtle individual differences in over-production of suffixes such as *-ing* and *-s* which can only partly be traced to learners' level of home language and L2 English literacy.

KEYWORDS: morphosyntax, tense, L2 English, functional projections, over-production.