

# LESLLA Symposium Proceedings



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## A Blended Approach to Second Language Learning at the Workplace: Also Suitable for LESLLA Learners?

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### **ABSTRACT**

Workplace language learning provides a powerful, task-based learning environment for adult L2 learners, which allows the embedding of SLA in real life situations and job-related tasks. Considering the advance of technology in educational settings, this paper wants to explore if and to what extent workplace language learning can be further improved by blending the prevalent face-to-face instruction with technology-mediated learning. What are the possibilities and benefits of technology in task design and the planning of L2-learning paths?

To this end, we conducted field experiments with technology-mediated tasks as an enrichment of the language learning process in five different workplaces. A needs analysis enabled us to tailor functional online tasks to the specific context of each workplace. Results show that blending online and face-to-face tasks enhances learner control, interaction and motivation and also increases the flexibility and intensity of the learning process, provided that the digital devices and tasks correspond closely to the context of the learners and fill gaps in the face-to-face approach.

## INTRODUCTION

### **Second language learning at the workplace**

Workplace language learning provides a powerful, task-based learning environment for adult L2 learners, which allows the embedding of second language acquisition (SLA) in real life situations and in job-related tasks, thus establishing a direct relationship between instruction and the practical needs of the learners. In that way, workplace language learning fits in seamlessly with one of the most important insights from empirical research into SLA, which is that adult L2 learners should be provided with learning opportunities that are challenging and connected with what they want and need to do with the language in real life (Doughty & Long, 2003; Ellis & Shintani, 2014). Moreover, in the context of the workplace, L2 learners are exposed to rich and extensive input in the target language and they are provided with frequent opportunities to produce output themselves, two other imperatives of successful SLA.

Building on this, the government of Flanders has invested heavily in courses ‘Dutch in the workplace’ in which a teacher, starting from a thorough needs analysis, develops a language course that is highly customized to the specific language and language needs of the workplace and that responds to real life situations in the workplace and to the linguistic interaction (with colleagues) that goes with it (Lanssens et al., 2001). While this approach has a number of pronounced strengths with regard to how languages are learnt as stated above, it also features a number of gaps (Droogmans, Van Dooren, De Cuyper & Van Waeyenberg, 2015), mainly due to the fact that these courses are often restricted to twenty teaching hours spread over five weeks. Twenty hours of language training is often insufficient for learners to gain enough self-confidence to effectively seize the more implicit practice opportunities the workplace offers, and to make full use of them. Due to this limited teaching time, the moments of feedback are limited as well, although feedback is of paramount importance for the language learning process. Additionally, there are also some practical constraints. Workplace language learning is often difficult to schedule and for some professions, such as night workers, taxi drivers and shift workers, it is nearly impossible. Because of the limited amount of time the teacher is present at the workplace and because there is little contact with the teacher in between sessions, the teacher cannot give the ‘just-in-time’ support that is needed when the employee encounters a language problem beyond the teaching hours.

### **Can technology enhance workplace language learning?**

Here is where blended learning – and, more in general, the use of technology in the (language) learning process – comes in. Given the strengths of blended learning as stated in the literature (Graham, 2006), our hypothesis was that the use of technology – and more specific a blended approach – could help to fill the gaps mentioned. According to Graham (2006), one of the strengths of blending a face-to-face approach with online tasks is that it increases the flexibility of the learning process (in time, place, pace...). Also, additional practice opportunities are created, outside of the official teaching hours. Finally,

the use of technology creates the possibility to have contact with the teacher outside the class.

However, blended learning does not automatically lead to success. Studies have indicated learners need help to develop independent study skills, persistence and motivation for work in an online environment where they operate without direct teacher control (Grgurovic, 2017). In addition, students may lack the necessary advanced computer-literacy skills to participate in high-tech blended classes that would employ, for example, video-conferencing and podcasting. For lower educated and lower literate profiles in particular, the lack of both self-regulating skills and computer-literacy skills is found to be an important threshold to engage successfully in blended learning activities (Grgurovic, 2017; Van Laer, 2016). At the same time, in the context of workplace language learning, these lower educated and lower literate profiles – which we will from now on refer to as LESLLA learners – form an important target group. Question is if and under which conditions blended learning – and, more in general, the use of technology in the language learning process – can also be beneficial for these LESLLA learners.

## THE PRESENT STUDY

### Research questions

The present study aims to assess the added value of meaningful online tasks in the context of workplace language learning, with special consideration for the group of LESLLA learners. The research questions are threefold: (1) To what extent can technology-mediated tasks enrich the language learning process of (low-skilled and low-literate) employees? (2) What are the possibilities and benefits of technology in task design and the planning of L2-learning paths? (3) Which existing tools are sufficiently accessible and user-friendly (with special attention to adult learners with less digital skills)?

### Method

In order to answer these questions, we firstly conducted a needs analysis among the project stakeholders of the courses ‘Dutch in the workplace’ – learners/employees, teachers and employers – to gain a general overview of the gaps in the current face-to-face courses and of the possible added value of a blended approach. Secondly, five field experiments were set up in a variety of workplaces, each with different learner profiles. Each field experiment again started with a needs analysis in which we mapped the workplace context, the learner characteristics and the language needs. Based on this analysis, which will be further discussed in the section below on WhatsApp, an intervention was set up introducing meaningful online tasks as an enrichment of the existing face-to-face approach of the courses. After each experiment, all project stakeholders were questioned using the technique of a semi-structured interview. In these interviews the tips and tops feedback method was used in order to find out which aspects of the blended approach were perceived positive, and which could be further improved.

In this paper we will discuss the design and the results of the field experiments in which LESLLA learners were involved. As an introduction to this discussion, we will explain the general pedagogical framework that we set up as a guideline for the powerful technological interventions we wanted to achieve. We will show that the success of blending online and face-to-face tasks depends above all on a complex interplay between student- and teacher-related factors but also on the quality of the tools. This applies in the context of workplace language learning but we will demonstrate that these insights are also applicable in other, more formal, contexts of language learning.

## **BLENDING ONLINE AND FACE-TO-FACE TASKS: PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **A thoughtful Integration of online and face-to-face learning**

As stated above, the degree to which students have sufficient self-regulating and computer-literacy skills determines the extent to which they can engage successfully in blended learning activities. But, another and maybe even more important predictor of successful online SLA is the pedagogical approach of the teacher. One of the most consistent insights into the field of blended and technology-enhanced language learning is that teachers should rethink and adapt their teaching practice to the new possibilities these technologies bring (Chapelle & Sauro, 2017). As for blended learning, this is already suggested in the definition. Blended learning has proven difficult to identify but in the most general terms, blended learning is defined as a combination of face-to-face and computer-mediated instruction (Graham, 2006). More specifically, it is the thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences and online learning in which online learning moments and contact education complement each other and together form a powerful, learner-centred learning environment (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). The idea of 'integration' is an important component of the blended learning definition. If blended learning is to impact positively on the quality of teaching and learning, as is the case for other technology orientated teaching endeavours, an integrated rather than superficial approach will force reexamination of existing approaches and subsequent adoption of new or enriched strategies (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). Studies into blended learning explicitly refer to a lack of integration between online and face-to-face components as one of the major challenges to overcome (Grgurovic, 2017). In the section "WhatsApp!? Examples of low-tech interventions for LESLLA Learners" below, we will discuss how we have operationalized this idea of 'integration' in the present study as a cyclic model of learning.

### **Technology as a lever for new tasks, previously inconceivable**

The idea that teachers should rethink and adapt their teaching practice to the new possibilities these technologies bring, is also present in the SAMR model (Puentedura, 2018) which states that the use of technology in educational contexts should open up new possibilities and should allow for the creation of new tasks that were previously unthinkable. To illustrate this, Puentedura's

model categorizes technological interventions in education on four levels (Figure 1). On the first two levels technology acts as a tool substitute, with no or restricted functional improvement. On the third and fourth level of the SAMR ladder, technology allows for significant task redesign and even for the creation of new tasks, previously inconceivable. For instance, when students collaborate with students on other locations (around the world) on a common writing project using VoiceThread and a blog and then share the final project on a social network, technology is used in such a way that a task arises that would not have been possible without technology. Using a word processor program such as pages to type a story, on the other hand, is exemplary for the first level where technology acts as a tool substitute with no functional improvement.

Again, this model has strong implications for the teacher who plays a crucial role in rethinking the kind of tasks that can be performed by using technology. In the present study, a needs analysis was conducted to detect the gaps in the current face-to-face approach of Dutch in the workplace in order to define the added value and the new tasks that could be created by using technology. We will briefly discuss the results of this needs analysis below.

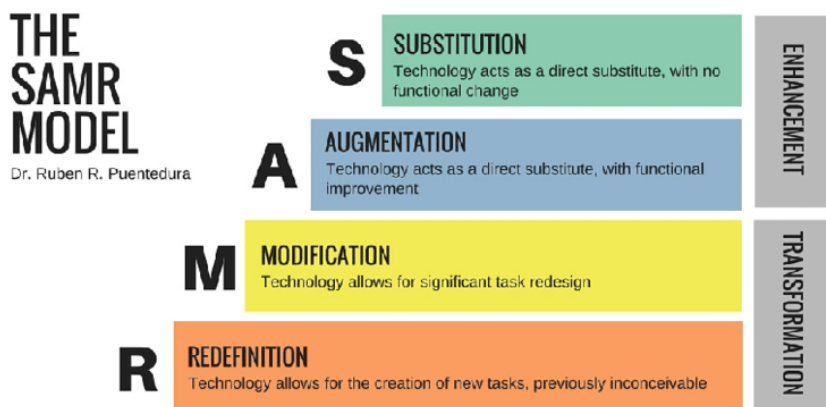


Figure 1: The SAMR model (figure copied from Puentedura, 2018)

### Building blocks for the successful design of online SLA

For online SLA to be successful teachers should not only rethink their teaching practices as clarified above. They should also take into account the findings from empirical research on SLA as well as on online education (Nielson & González-Lloret, 2010). Nielson and González-Lloret state that, when designing (online) tasks for L2 learning, teachers should integrate the building blocks for adult SLA as derived from research. In short: adult L2 learners need to perform tasks in which they get access to significant amounts of authentic input in the target language – i.e. written and spoken texts that offer rich examples of language as produced by native speakers – and in which they get the chance to produce the language themselves and to interact and negotiate with fluent (native) speakers. During those tasks, adult L2 learners should be provided

with both implicit and explicit feedback on their language performance and the tasks themselves should provide them with learning opportunities that are connected with what they want and need to do with the language in real life. Finally, adult L2 learners need substantial practice opportunities in a variety of (safe) contexts in order to build up their language skills.

To be mutually reinforcing these building blocks for adult SLA should be combined with research findings about the conditions under which online education can be successful. These conditions include that you should create an online environment in which learners can experience a sense of community and in which they can interact – synchronously and asynchronously – in the target language, with each other but also with native speakers through tasks that require collaboration; an intuitive and easy-to-use online environment in which learners are in control of task selection and task execution, thus customizing the content to their own specific needs and contexts. These building blocks were taken into account as much as possible in the present study when designing tasks for the different field experiments. This will be further illustrated in the section below on WhatsApp.

## **ADDED VALUE OF TECHNOLOGY IN THE COURSES ‘DUTCH IN THE WORKPLACE’: A NEEDS ANALYSIS**

### **Population**

As a first step in the research process, a needs analysis was conducted among 20 companies that organised a course ‘Dutch at the workplace’. The group of participants consisted of 20 managers and 42 employees that participated in the course. The participants worked in diverse professional fields like construction, hotel, cleaning, transport and retail, the majority having a technical background. Based on the self-report data of the participants, more than a quarter of the learners were LESLLA-learners.

### **Questions**

The needs analysis focused on the following main questions:

- Which devices do the learners have at their disposal, and which of them are allowed to be used during working hours?
- Which digital tools and programs are they familiar with?
- What is the opinion of the learners and the employers towards a blended approach of the course? Which possible added value do they see?

### **Results**

Results showed that a large majority of the learners (83%) uses a smartphone and/or a laptop (79%). A smaller part uses a tablet (38%) or a desktop (26%). Most of these devices are personal and not business property. For almost half of the smartphone users it is allowed and possible to use their device at work. For the other devices this is respectively 24% (laptop), 21% (tablet) and 12% (desktop).

More than half of the learners already makes use of websites and apps to practice their L2 Dutch. 83% uses technology to interact with others, e.g. with their family abroad. Programs they are familiar with are Skype (77%), and WhatsApp, Facebook and Viber (49%). Handling these programs and apps is no problem for most of the users: 91% finds them easy to very easy to use. For the course 'Dutch in the workplace' however, most of the learners do not employ these technologies. Half of them even reports to have no contact at all with their teacher in between the classes, nor by mail or by telephone.

A large majority of the participants favours a blended approach of the course 'Dutch in the workplace'. 81% of the learners thinks that it is a good idea to have more online contact with the teacher in between the face-to-face sessions. 79% is prepared to perform online tasks outside the teaching hours. Also the employers stand positive towards blended learning: 85% thinks that a blended approach has an extra value for the employees and for the company. Most mentioned as a potential additional value are the flexibility in place and time, the creation of additional practice opportunities, and the possibilities for the follow-up of the learners after the course.

## **WHATSAPP!?: EXAMPLES OF LOW-TECH INTERVENTIONS FOR LESLLA LEARNERS**

In this section we will discuss the three field experiments in which LESLLA learners were involved. A first experiment, conducted in a small-scale family hotel, will be described in detail. The other two experiments – in construction and in a thrift store – will be discussed more briefly insofar as they confirm or further differentiate certain insights.

### **Dutch in the workplace in a housekeeping team**

**Method.** Prerequisite for effective course design is a thorough analysis of learners needs (Long, 2005). This applies in particular to workplace language learning where language requirements vary greatly depending on the workplace and on the position and the tasks that someone performs. Therefore, conducting a needs analysis in order to list the linguistic goals the employees must work on is the starting point of each course 'Dutch in the Workplace'. Information is obtained through various sources (workplace documents and artefacts such as work schedules, safety signs and welcome brochures) and methods (interviews, questionnaires, participant and non-participant observations and language proficiency tests). In function of the interventions that we wanted to set up with meaningful online tasks, the existing approach was further extended by an interview about which digital devices and apps the students were already familiar with and the possibilities on the work floor to get started digitally. In other words, the needs analysis as described above was briefly repeated for each workplace.

**Results needs analysis.** A first workplace in which we set up an experiment was a small-scale family hotel. As a first step we conducted a needs analysis as described above. Results contained detailed information about the characteristics



of the target audience, about the language learning goals they had to acquire and about the added value and possibilities to work with online tasks.

- Target audience were five hotel housekeepers who had in common that they were all low-educated. Three of them were also low-literate. According to the language assessment conducted by the teacher, their Dutch language proficiency was limited to level A1 of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).
- Course participants had to be able to answer customer questions and to solve customer problems in an appropriate manner. Also important was the internal communication with the supervisor and with colleagues: this concerned for instance giving and understanding instructions, passing on the work schedule, and giving an explanation to a colleague about the work that has to be done.
- For the internal communication such as work instructions, questions and changes in the work schedule, the hotel made use of the app WhatsApp. This meant course participants were able (and allowed) to use their mobile phones during working hours. This also meant that, although some of them were low-literate, they were all familiar with a number of basic digital applications and devices which implicated they did possess some digital literacy skills.
- For both the employer and the course participants it was important to have additional and customized training opportunities, on top of the moments in class. These training opportunities had to address real-life tasks the course participants had to perform at the workplace in between classes. As far as the use of technology was concerned, nor the teacher nor the employer considered it feasible to experiment with this group of learners with 'high tech' tools such as a full-fledged Learning Management Systems (LMS) and Video conferencing (VC) tools which are commonly used in a blended learning trajectory. This required us to search for an alternative approach with more low-threshold apps.

**A WhatsApp task a day.** Based on the information from the needs analysis, a second step involved the design of tasks and the planning of these tasks in a L2 learning path in which face-to-face and online tasks complement each other and together form a powerful, learner-centred learning environment (as described above). The elaboration of the blend was accompanied by the selection of the digital tools we were going to use and which also had to be custom-made. The fact that we had to look for more low tech interventions – as an alternative for the high tech interventions with an LMS and a VC-tool – together with the fact that the housekeepers were already familiar with WhatsApp, brought us to the idea to experiment with WhatsApp as a learning tool and to create WhatsApp tasks as an enrichment of the classroom-based instruction.

We designed a WhatsApp task for each day when there was no face-to-face class. Tasks were posted into the WhatsApp group in which every course participant was represented. Tasks included for instance real-life and authentic questions and problems from the hotel guests which they had to answer or solve

in an appropriate way (see Figure 2 for examples). Tasks were presented as well orally as written, thus differentiating between course participants who did have already sufficient literacy skills to read and write the assignments themselves and those who did not. Course participants could choose when and where they performed the task during the day. The teacher was actively present in the online environment, giving feedback on the assignments as soon as possible and encouraging the participants to interact with the teacher and with each other. Thus, the building blocks for as well adult SLA as online education (as described above) were embedded in task design to a large extent.

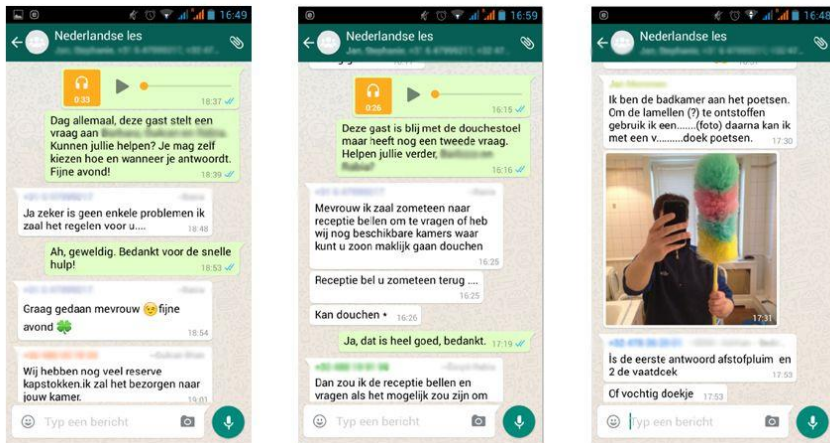


Figure 2: Examples of WhatsApp tasks from the housekeeping experiment.

As far as the planning of the tasks in a L2 learning path is concerned, a cyclic model of learning was developed in order to integrate in-class practices and students' outside-class self-learning with the aid of technology. In this model online tasks serve as a preparation or as a further reflection or consolidation of the face-to-face classes, thus allowing for a more strategic use of classroom time in the sense that teachers can focus on more active and meaningful activities during the face-to-face sessions. Figure 3 illustrates how we have operationalized this cyclic model of learning for the experiment with the housekeeping team. The WhatsApp tasks were used as input for an in-depth discussion in class about the different types of customers questions and complaints in a hotel, and about appropriate ways of responding to them. After the face-to-face session, WhatsApp was used again for a post-task in which the more difficult questions and answers were further practised.

Besides the WhatsApp tasks we also experimented with video reports in which course participants gave a tour in a room and explained to a new colleague how the room should be cleaned.

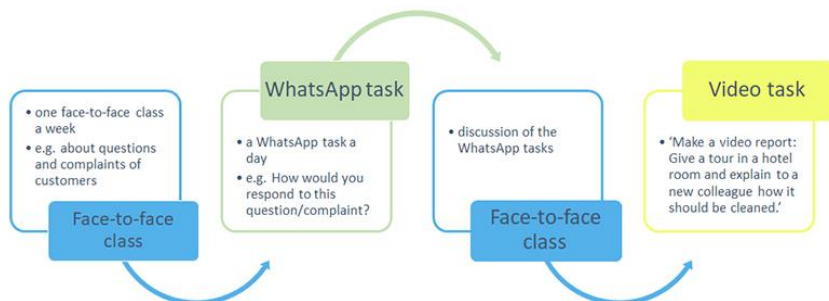


Figure 3: Operationalisation of the cyclic model of learning for the housekeeping experiment.

**Pros and cons.** The engagement of the course participants with the WhatsApp tasks was high and afterwards they evaluated the tasks as very motivating. One of the course participants formulated it this way: ‘a (WhatsApp) task a day helps to practice and remember’. They also thought the interaction with peers during the online tasks was very instructive. The employer was also positive about the additional learning opportunities the WhatsApp tasks created in the sense that ‘online tasks facilitate a more intensive training’ and that ‘students are activated, also in between face-to-face classes’. The teacher thought the WhatsApp tasks were a very accessible and practical way of giving homework in which language as well as digital competences could be practised.

### Dutch in the workplace in construction and in a thrift store

After the first field experiment in the hotel, we set up similar experiments with LESLLA-learners in two other working contexts, namely in construction and in a thrift store. The target population was almost identical as far as language proficiency and the degree of education and literacy is concerned.

In the construction case, the participants were 12 low-educated construction workers, all working at different construction sites. Unlike most courses of ‘Dutch in the workplace’, this course could not take place at the workplace itself, due to organizational and safety reasons. Therefore the weekly face-to-face classes were scheduled on Saturday morning, in a classroom at a central location. The main language learning goal of the participants was to give and understand work and safety instructions to and from their colleagues.

The course in the thrift store was an individual L2 training for a low-educated worker whose task was to sort clothes in the procession center of the store. His main language goals were spoken interaction with colleagues (e.g. during the lunch break) and with the employer (e.g. calling in sick, requesting vacation), and the understanding of written instructions.

As to the added value of the blended approach, the needs analysis for both cases showed similar results as in the first field experiment in the hotel. Also in these cases there was a need for additional practice opportunities in between the face-to-face sessions, and for low-threshold online pre- and post-tasks. Therefore the cyclic learning model with the WhatsApp tasks from the first

experiment was repeated and customized to the specific context of both workplaces. In the construction case for instance, learners had to take pictures of safety signs they came across during their work and share them on WhatsApp (see Figures 4 and 5). In the following face-to-face class, these pictures were used as input for an interactive task about safety instructions, and for an online consolidation task on Quizlet afterwards. Then a new WhatsApp task was introduced (e.g. sharing pictures of dangerous situations at the construction site and recording an adequate safety warning for a colleague in this situation), and the cycle of pre- and post-tasks could start again. An additional benefit of the WhatsApp tasks was that the collection of shared pictures and other authentic materials enabled the teacher to bring real-life situations from the workplace into the classroom, which was in this project more difficult than usual because the course did not take place at the workplace, as normally is the case, and because all participants worked at different locations.

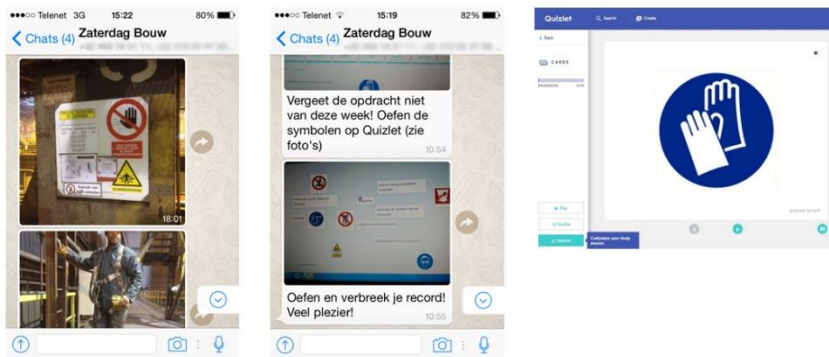


Figure 4: Examples of WhatsApp tasks from the construction experiment.

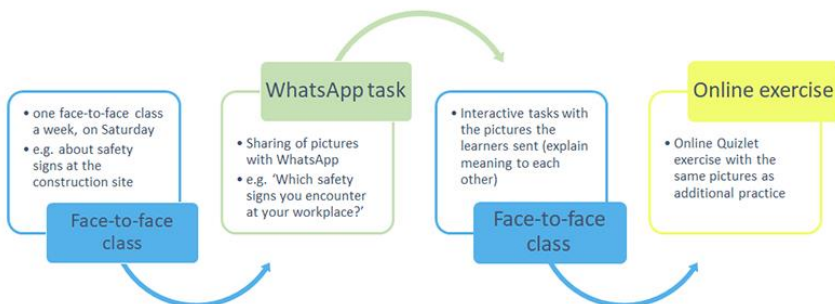


Figure 5: Operationalisation of the cyclic model of learning for the construction experiment.

In the thrift store another tool was added to the blended cycle. To meet the need for additional language support in between the face-to-face sessions, a virtual class through Skype was set up, as this tool was already familiar to the

learner because he used it to communicate with his family abroad. In these virtual sessions not only speaking tasks were performed (e.g. making a phone call to call in sick), but also written input could be discussed by sharing a document on the screen (e.g. looking up information in the work regulations).

Just as in the first experiment, the reactions of the project stakeholders in the construction case and in the thrift store were very positive. Although the learners, teachers and employers stressed the importance of the face-to-face interaction and coaching moments, they reported that the combination with online learning had been very beneficial for the learning process. Especially the flexibility of the approach and the increase of self-regulated practice opportunities and interaction in between classes were appreciated.

## LESSONS LEARNT

In general, what we've learnt from the three field experiments with regard to our research questions, is that technology-mediated tasks can enhance the language learning process, also of LESLLA-learners, provided that you take into account certain conditions that contribute to successful online and blended SLA. Consistent with insights from previous studies into blended learning these conditions are situated at the level of the learner, the teacher and the didactic approach of the teacher and the tools. Below we will discuss our main insights for each of these key factors.

### **New teacher roles: need for adequate training**

As stated in the section above on blending online and face-to-face tasks, one of the most consistent insights into the field of blended and technology-enhanced language learning is that teachers should rethink and adapt their teaching practice to the new possibilities these technologies bring (Chapelle & Sauro, 2017). The argument is that making information and communications technology present does not result in meaningful learning or increase student satisfaction unless the instructors make online learning an integral part of pedagogical practices. This requires new teacher roles, including the role of course designer and organizer, of discussion facilitator, of social supporter, of technology facilitator and assessment designer (Hung & Chou, 2015).

The experiments we set up confirmed that instructor expertise is one of the most significant factors for the successful implementation of blended or online SLA. While teachers should inspire students to have a positive attitude towards online learning activities and while their own attitudes toward e-learning and control over technology should be exemplary (Sun et al., 2008), our field experiments have shown that teachers themselves are often reluctant to start using new technologies, even more than their students. In the same way, they appeared to be even less familiar with some 'low-tech' digital applications – such as Skype and WhatsApp – than their students who often use these kind of apps to communicate with the home country, also the LESLLA learners. Teacher's high threshold to get started with online activities blocked in some cases a positive output of the experiments. We have learned that teachers need extensive

training and time to grow in order to implement online SLA successfully and in order to rethink their existing teaching practices and roles. At the same time, we have found that teachers who were involved in the experiments became easily inspired by the small-scale interventions that were set up with support of the research team and that afterwards they were more inclined to experiment further and to set up more extensive interventions, also with more high-tech tools. Rehearsing an online class with peers was found to be another good practice to overcome the digital threshold.

In general, our experiments also confirmed some guiding principles for teacher's behavior in online environments, namely that teachers should be actively present in the online environment by stimulating the interaction and by giving frequent and personalized feedback, that they should develop meaningful online tasks that require collaboration, that they should plan carefully and integrate online pre- and post-tasks into a cyclic model of learning and that they should adapt the tools to the needs and requirements of the audience, as will be further explained below.

### **High-tech versus low-tech tools: one size does not fit all**

Before setting up the field experiments, our methodology with regard to the selection of tools was to reduce a long list of possible tools to a short list of tools that met a number of clear criteria in terms of usability and accessibility for LESLLA learners and which would be further tested during the field experiments. However, this approach proved inadequate in three areas. First, while there is an abundance of LMS- and VC-systems, few turned out to be sufficiently low-threshold to deploy in the specific context of language learning in the workplace and with LESLLA learners. Second, the threshold to get started with high-tech tools such as LMS- and VC-systems concerned the teachers and employers in the first place – as was the case in the experiment in the housekeeping team – which obliged the research team to search for more low-tech alternatives. Third, the specifics of the workplace – the language goals the course participants had to acquire and the tools and devices that were already used in the workplace, as derived from the needs analysis – had to be taken into account when selecting the tools: this implied not only the tasks but also the tools had to be tailor-made for each workplace.

These insights have led us to discover new possibilities and alternative approaches by using more low-tech apps – that the target audience was already familiar with such as WhatsApp and FaceBook – as learning tools. While the usability of tools stays an important prerequisite for the successful implementation of online SLA, this also proves the paramount importance of the pedagogical choices the teacher makes and how tools are selected in order to support these choices and to make them possible. Thus, the following four questions can serve as a guide when selecting tools in the context of language learning in the workplace: (1) Which tools are the students already familiar with?; (2) which tools do they use in the workplace?; (3) What are the learning goals? and (4) What added value does the teacher want to achieve with ICT?

### Student-related factors: how to stimulate the self-efficacy and motivation of LESLLA learners

The success of online learning programs is influenced by the people who use it, i.e.; the teachers (as argued above) but also the students. As for the students, their cognitive belief and socio-motivational aspects, such as self-efficacy and self-regulated learning skills, are important factors present in the works of many researchers. As stated above, for LESLLA learners, the lack of self-regulating skills as well as computer-literacy skills is found to be an important threshold to engage successfully in blended learning activities. However, our field experiments have proven that the self-efficacy and the motivation of the LESLLA learners can be positively influenced by starting from a solid pedagogical framework and by supporting the pedagogical choices of the teacher by the selection of tools that are tailor-made for the specific context of the workplace and that match the added value the teacher wants to accomplish by using ICT. Moreover, by choosing for low-tech tools learners were already familiar with and by using them as learning tools, a positive effect was generated on the motivation and persistence of the LESLLA learners to accomplish their online tasks. Our field experiments also showed that teachers often underestimate the LESLLA learners and that most LESLLA learners do have some basic digital skills. Also, by challenging them to perform online tasks in the context of language learning in the workplace, they develop digital skills as well as language skills, which is a good example of how you can work in an integrated way on linguistic and digital competences. After all, in a 21st century society, it is necessary more than ever that developing digital competences is stimulated in all possible ways.

### BLEND YOUR OWN LANGUAGE COURSE

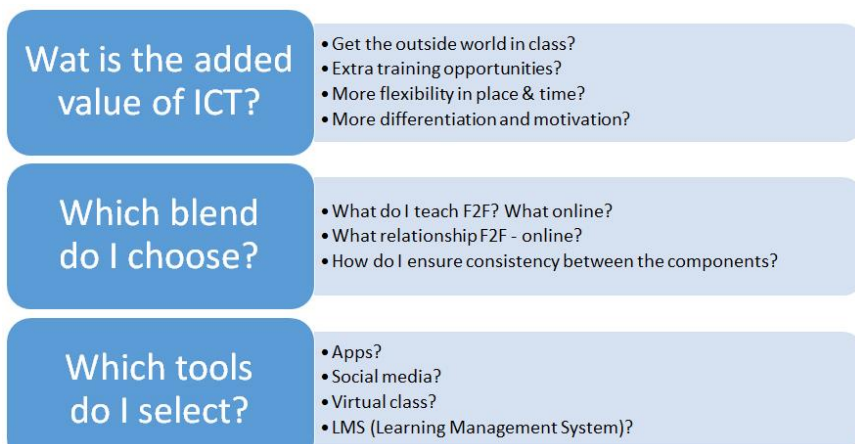


Figure 6: Operational framework: added value of information and communications technology (ICT), choice of blend and selection of tools.

To conclude this paper, a more operational framework is provided in Figure 6 which can serve as a roadmap for whom wants to build his own case and experiment with a blended L2-approach. The roadmap consists of three major steps or questions you have to ask yourself before you start experimenting. First, you have to define the added value of the use of technology for your specific project. For instance, do you want to get the outside world in the class or do you want to create additional practice opportunities? As demonstrated above, a thorough needs analysis can help you define the added value for your project. Once you have a clear idea of this added value, you can choose your blend, meaning that you decide which topics you are going to teach face-to-face and which ones online, but also how you are going to ensure consistency between the different components. Only as a third step, you are going to select the tools that can help you realize your pedagogical choices and the added value you want to pursue in your specific context and with your specific audience. As stated above there is no one size fits all and with LESLLA learners it might be more rewarding to work with low-tech tools that they are already familiar with and that can form a starting point to further develop linguistic as well as digital skills. This step-by-step plan again shows the common thread throughout the paper, namely that didactic choices prevail over the choice of one or another tool which only serves as a vehicle to realize your pedagogical project.

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