

COMBINING VET AND INTEGRATED LANGUAGE LEARNING TO ENHANCE PROFESSIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR MIGRANT PUBLIC THE VINTAGE PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Migration and mobility of the workers play a fundamental role in fostering a flexible and competitive job market at the European level. The objectives defined by the Europe 2020 Strategy - making social cohesion and an inclusive society- imply for migrants and mobile workers to play their role as additional workforce to be employed according to economic needs, but also main protagonists in the social and professional arena. They must be active European citizens - having equal opportunities of professionalization in the hosting society. Communication and linguistic skills are the basis for mutual understanding and therefore an asset for gaining citizenship rights and professional development. They enable a good integration between local populations and foreign people, letting intercultural dynamics and encounters be elaborated in a balanced way by all components of the society. The Vintage project implemented in the framework of the Erasmus + Programme (2014-2020) has designed a toolkit for VET & Language teachers and trainers to master the local language and develop professional opportunities for migrant public with a linguistic level of A2-B1. Based upon the outputs of this three year project implemented in 4 European countries (Switzerland, France, Germany and Italy), we intent to explain the usefulness and innovation offered by a combined learning approach that emerged- requiring different kinds of expertise among teachers & trainers who must combine competence in Linguistic learning and in Vocational Education and Training. We will explain how it has to be applied in order to be fully understood and used by teachers & trainers. We will also insist on the main learning outcomes expected for learners- adult migrant: mastering a foreign language is not enough; other key competences are acquired all along the process. Consequently trainers & learners must acquire or develop many of the eight key competences (EC, Brussels, 2006) such as linguistic and digital skills (KC2 & KC4) but also learning to learn (KC5, civic and social competences (KC7) or sense of initiative & entrepreneurship (KC7)...

A RESEARCH & PRACTICE-BASED PRACTITIONER RESEARCH FOCUSED ON LINGUISTIC & OTHER PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

Globalization of migration flows hampers the traditional use of common languages spoken by migrants in order to manage ordinary communication and cooperation at the workplace. New organizational patterns and new technologies determine a parallel increase of linguistic skills required by any kind of workers, even low qualified – both considering understanding, reading and speaking, but also a certain mastery of written communication, related to the use of reporting, data storage, and feed-backs. The Vintage requires taking into account two European frameworks- the CEFR for linguistic level (implemented by the Council of Europe since 1991) and the Key Competences approach (implemented by the European Parliament & European Commission, since 2006).

Language learning, as any human learning activity, clearly depends on diverse dimensions and triggers: from cognitive potentialities and personal learning styles (differentiated training offers according to divergent needs), from affective dimensions and motivations (proximity of learning achievements to interests and preoccupations of the learners, participation to the definition of achievable and shared learning outcomes), from relational and social enablers of learning (interaction as a main issue in language learning). The idea of the Vintage is to move from a mere “training perspective”, implying consolidated didactical strategies, towards a “learner centered” one. This conceptual and practical shifting could enable innovative approaches to language learning, capable of making it more effective and adequate to a rapidly changing context, both considering needs emerging in the companies, and expectations of the learners.

In this spirit, the Vintage project gathers various European countries with a different background both in the linguistic support provided to migrant learners and in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) perspective. We intent to explain the main outputs achieved by the Vintage- a comparative approach of the linguistic and professional approach implemented in 4 European countries; the designing of a Resource Center offering a selection of best practices; the testing of a training combining the Vintage approach in the different countries. We will first detail the content and pedagogical approach used in the designing of the Vintage training combining two different professional profiles. We will then present the testing implemented in France in 2016 and the stakeholders involved for this purpose. On this basis, we will try to answer, in a third part, the critical issue of the combination of various competences - linguistic competences, VET competences and e-learning competences- required for both teachers & trainers and their learners to successfully use the Toolkit and general approach of the Vintage.

A TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR LINGUISTIC TEACHERS & TRAINERS COMBINING THE VET APPROACH AND A E-LEARNING TOOLKIT

Two main strategies are supported in EU countries: justifying first and foremost a linguistic level (Language first) and building a training path integrating Language & professional opportunities (Language with VET approach at the same time). The teachers & trainers must combine two different learning processes - the VET approach based on skills and competences required in the labour market corresponding to a professional profile (position, employment, qualification) and the Linguistic approach based on linguistic skills - referring to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) which may differ with the professional profile. The Vintage also includes an e-learning approach with a digital platform -a Resource Centre offering a selection of best practices in the field of VET & Language learning freely available for teachers & trainers involved in Linguistic learning & VET.

Combining the language & VET approaches

The first aim of the Vintage approach is to understand the existing European frameworks for linguistic learning & Vocational Education and Training (VET). The first part of the training explains these two main theoretical references both in the field of Linguistic Training & Learning (CEFR, Council of Europe, 1991¹) and in the field of Vocational Education & Training (the 8 key competences, European Commission & Parliament, 2006²).

The CEFR framework is a main reference for trainers & teachers but they usually don't make the bridge between the linguistic levels and the corresponding competences (in terms of professional skills, abilities & responsibilities). They are not enough familiar with the 8 key competences (8KC) approach. They are mainly focused on Key Competence 2- competence in a foreign language but not on the other competences. It is a pity for their learners as the other 7 key competences are worth being explained and detailed in support to the linguistic learning in order to explain the reason for the linguistic requirements asked in a job application. For instance the minimum linguistic level required in a professional context is B1 which corresponds to the average level – 3rd level of a grid including 6 levels (from A1 as the minimum level to C2 as the maximum one).

Many linguistic programmes offered to migrants failed because the learners couldn't see the use or practical application of their learning. In order to be

¹ It is available on - [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre1_EN.asp?](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre1_EN.asp)

² It is available on: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/competences_en

successful, the training has to be connected with their social and professional reality. A main focus of the Vintage approach is to work on real scenarios- such as the one suggested by the Fide project - the Swiss project which was the main reference to design the Vintage project on a European level. Another key issue is to work with authentic documents such an administrative form to be filled, an application form to be answered or a resume or letter of motivation to be written or updated to apply for a job.

Including the e-learning approach to be successful

In a professional perspective, finding a job or improving one's career requires the access to Internet. Many job applications are available only on line. It is also most recommended to use a social network - such as LinkedIn- to have an access to all the job applications. It is more and more used by professionals in charge of human resources and a kind of selection of the candidates. Moreover an e-mail contact is necessary in any official process. The idea of the Vintage is to offer a Resource Centre for trainers & teachers with a selection of best practises in the four countries (Switzerland, France, Germany and Italy) to support their training or learning.

There are three main parts in the Resource centre freely available for teachers & trainers but also for their learners: how to design a learning path with the Vintage approach, how to implement the course on the ground and how to assess the learning outcomes. Two guidelines were published to support teachers & trainers- a first guideline focussing on the two first points (designing & implementing a course for adult migrants) and a second guideline focussing on assessing with a more detailed reference to the different linguistic levels suggested by the CEFR.

Being able to use this e-learning platform implies for teachers & trainers to be competent in Digital competence (KC 4). Depending on their level of competence they will be able to download the tools & methods from the platform (first level of competence), to explain how the platform works for their learners (second level) or upload any material they would find relevant (third level). It is also for their learners a way to play an active role in the process of learning- making suggestions for other tools & methods available online.

Learning outcomes (LO)

At the end of the Vintage training teachers & trainers have experienced the competence approach implemented by the Lifelong learning perspective. They have enriched their knowledge concerning main European frameworks - in the field of Linguistic learning (CEFR) and in the field of Vocational Education and Training (the 8 KC). They have used them not just as a reference framework but as a real pedagogical support in order to express the meaning of the 6 linguistic levels (CEFR) and of the 8 key competences (8KC). They are able to identify and select

useful and relevant tools & strategies for their learners, taking into account both the expected linguistic level and the requirements of the job they are looking for. They also have identified main obstacles faced by their learners in the labour market – language, non recognition of diploma and experience, competences to be updated. They are able to find alternative solutions and strategies to deal and even overcome them. They are able to build an action plan including the SWOT analysis. They are aware that this is most important to take into account different lengths of time (short, medium and long term perspectives) with the different linguistic levels to be achieved with regards to the professional plans. They have experienced some specific tools available from an e-learning platform. They are ready to contribute actively to its content.

TESTING & PILOTING THE VINTAGE STRATEGY AMONG LEARNERS- FEEDBACK IN FRANCE

The Vintage approach was tested in France respecting the criteria of combining linguistic skills and VET skills among trainers. Therefore the testing gathered an association specialising in linguistic learning- the FISPE (French for social and professional integration in Europe) and another organisation specialising in VET and lifelong learning (iriv conseil)³.

Networking- a key issue for involving relevant and motivated learners

In a preparatory phase, many associations working on the ground with adult migrants were involved in the process. They were asked to select learners following two criteria: justifying a linguistic level of A2-B1 (according to the CEFR) and being in an active process of looking for a job- either training opportunities or employment with relevant professional experience.

After this first step, the experimentation among the target groups- migrants and mobile workers- could take place in Paris (April 2016) and in Seine & Marne (December 2016). In Paris, the location was the Cité des Métiers. It has involved several associations – Kolone and Tremplin migrants (two local associations in Paris), France terre d'Asile (national association), Coallia (regional & national association) both providing a linguistic and/or professional support to migrants. In Seine & Marne, the experimentation took place at the Maison des familles in Montereau, a social centre supported by the City hall to offer trainings to migrant publics both qualified - mainly asylum seekers- and/or low qualified female migrants – mainly arrived in France to join their husbands..

³ Fispes-www.fispe.fr & iriv conseil-www.iriv.net

Involving relevant profile of the learners- answering the appropriate Vintage target-groups

The profiles of the learners were quite diverse. In both series of sessions held in Paris (April 2016) and Seine & Marne (December 2016) a total of 40 people attended the experimental training. They were mainly aged between 25 and 50 years ; 5 persons were under 20 years (at the Cité des Métiers). They were in France for 6 months to 20 years. Their level of qualification was different: 1/3 were graduate, 2/3 were low qualified or with a qualification not recognised in France or with their present professional plan. The minimum linguistic level was A2 - according to the CECR- and up to C2 - for graduate who registered in French University (two Spanish students attended the training at the Cité des Métiers). Their regions of origin were first Africa - mainly Algeria & Morocco mainly in Seine et Marne ; Egypt, Mali, Chad, Mauritania, Senegal in Paris. The second main geographical origin was Europe – non EU members such as Ukraine but also Bulgaria, Poland and Spain. The third origin was Latin America – Cuba & Haïti. The last region of origin was Asia with China & India. The reasons for participating (explicit and implicit needs) were mainly to improve their professional opportunities with new approaches, techniques/methods in seeking a job/a training. They also wanted to be supported to re-engage in their transition in the labour market. Some of them already had a professional plan- such as creating a professional activity and they wanted to have the final support to achieve it. The encounter with the councillors at the Cité des Métiers was a main step in this process. For the learners at the Seine et Marne, a visit at the Cité des Métiers in Paris was a way to test on the ground the efficiency of the Vintage approach: mobility and active research. The needs expressed by the learners in the first session or identified by tutors/ trainers have been updated during the sessions through interviews and questionnaires and a final assessing session dedicated to the SWOT analysis: what can I do, what do I want to do, what are my plans.

Achieving relevant Learning outcomes for the Vintage thanks to an appropriate learning pedagogy

The achieved learning outcomes were also various combining “hard skills”- knowledge & competences on the basis of the 8 key competences (8KC) but also “soft skills”- understanding, empowerment & attitudes. Learners have improved knowledge about linguistic & VET issues - both on a national and European level. Most of them didn’t know the two EU frameworks- CEFR & 8KC even though the first one was already used. It was known by the trainers/councillors. They were trained to acquire the appropriate skills to play an active role in searching a job and also to change their professional perspectives. They sometimes found new professional opportunities- employment or training. They discovered new pedagogical approaches : the portfolio approach - Migrapass updated since 2012 thanks to the monthly club at the Cité des Métiers ; building an action plan after the SWOT analysis ; a brainstorming allowing all the participants to play an active

role and gaining self-confidence. Brainstorming is a usual way to confront different approaches and perspectives and to allow all the participants to express themselves.

To enhance participation & collaboration, didactical strategies combined different methods. The round table- in the beginning of each session – was useful to enhance the empowerment process among the learners. They were asked to make a presentation of their professional profile in a given length of time. Their presentation has been improved between the first and the last session. The pedagogy combined theoretical and practical content with interactive participation- participants being asked to give concrete examples of situations they are faced to. Work in small groups (2 to 3) gives self-confidence to the participants who can be more active and specific. The collective approach – during the plenary sessions- is the best way to create a real synergy in the group. The face to face sessions (5 sessions of 3 hours each) were followed by the sending of the pedagogical supports in order to check that the participants had an e-mail and could easily have an access to it. It was underlined that all relevant pedagogical tools could be also downloadable from the Resource center⁴. At the Cité des Métiers, a special area is also dedicated to self-training using a computer with a proposal of tools & strategies to be used.

Applying the SWOT analysis to build a realistic action plan

The “Strength” was the information both on the linguistic reference (CEFR) and the VET approach (8 key competences) and the ways & means to overcome the barriers/obstacles faced in the labour market by using appropriate tools & methods. The “Weakness” was the collective approach as individual support was most necessary after the training in order to adapt the training to specific cases and to offer a personalised support. In this context, a series of interviews were conducted with some participants after the training sessions⁵. The financial dimension or the geographical place- such as Montereau (far away from big cities) may be other “weaknesses”. The “Opportunities” were clearly new professional perspectives and more self-confidence among the learners. The empowerment process succeeded with very positive feedbacks received from the participants and the concrete professional projects built or the updated resumes. They could be better explained during the face to face interviews. The “Threats” are directly linked to the status of some participants (asylum seeker, migrants in a process of regularisation of their situation or updating of their documents) or the lack of recognition of their diploma/professional experience which may be main barriers on the labour market.

⁴ Available from the French Weblog implemented in France : www.vintage-language.fr

⁵ For instance in the framework of the monthly Club of iriv at the Cité des Métiers- <http://club-iriv-paris.blogspot.fr/> or with their trainers

LESSONS LEARNT IN TERMS OF LEARNING STRATEGY FOR ENHANCING PROFESSIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AMONG MIGRANT LEARNERS- COMBINING KEY COMPETENCES

Many questions can be raised on the Vintage approach such as: How is it possible to combine linguistic skills and other skills for trainers & teachers? What are the main obstacles/barriers to be overcome - internal ones (coming from learners) or external ones (access to vocational education and training for migrants)? What should be the balance between the linguistic approach and the VET approach when training migrant adult in the educative/formative systems? On the basis of the testing implemented in France many lessons could be learnt.

The first lesson is to be as clear as possible on the two learning approaches- linguistic & VET. The first one uses a pedagogy which has been tested for a long time among adult migrants- the CEFR (Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 1991). It is fully used and applied by trainers & teachers. The second learning approach-VET- is more recent in the support provided to migrants, especially the competence approach. As far as France is concerned, it was for the first time applied in the framework of the so-called CAI (contract of integration to be signed by new migrants since 2006). It is just a basis as only half day (3 hours) support is offered in order to identify and assess skills & competences of migrant to be value in their professional plan. Compare to the 400 hours dedicated to linguistic learning, there is a gap to be bridged in the future.

The second lesson learnt concerns the pedagogical strategy. The Vintage project is a training programme designed in the framework of the lifelong learning perspective – it is human resources oriented. This is different from other programmes where the focus is made on language. Teachers & trainers using the Vintage approach are trained to learning strategies to overcome barriers in the labour market after reminding the general linguistic principles. The Vintage mentoring addresses trainers, tutors, and professionals working with migrants who have to combine two different approaches. This was the main issue and the challenge of the testing to gather teachers & trainers who would be willing to combine these two professional skills & competences. Moreover a third approach had to be included with the e-learning platform. If more and more trainers & teachers have included Information & Communication technology (ICT) in their practice, it is always a challenge to understand and use a new e-learning tool & strategy.

The third lesson learnt is to answer the expectations of the learners- migrants & mobile workers. As far as the training is concerned, migrant learners were interested in knowing the main barriers to be overcome in the national labour market- language is a first “visible” obstacle but is far from being the only one.

They perfectly understood that to apply for specific jobs with responsibility a higher level of language was required. On the one hand even with low qualified jobs- such as in the cleaning sector- basic competences were required : linguistic competence (KC2) for safety reason but also other competences – such as mathematics & scientific competences (KC3) to know the quantity of a product to be used. On the other hand, requirements for a job must be proportionate to the employment- asking for a linguistic level of C2 for a job with very basic content can be considered as an unfair condition and so a kind of discrimination. The pedagogical approach consists in underlying the combination between the different competences and to enhance the critical thinking.

The fourth lesson learnt is to constantly update relevant tool & strategy to enhance the professional opportunities of migrants. The expected outcome of the Vintage training is to open perspectives both for teachers & trainers and their learners taking into account the variety of their profiles and expectations (in terms of linguistic support and/or VET improvement). The resource platform designed for the Vintage is a selection of tools & methods in 4 European countries- France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland and should fulfil these needs. For teachers & trainers, it should open new pedagogical perspectives on the basis of the selected examples of good practices selected in the four countries. Teachers & trainers but also learners are also asked to play an active role by suggesting new tools & approaches to be uploaded to enrich the existing data basis.

The fifth lesson learnt is that the Vintage training has to be enriched by further feedbacks from participants- both teachers & trainers but also learners. In France, the weblog implemented for the Vintage project presents different key actors in both field of VET & Linguistic learning and the professional opportunities opened for teachers & trainers using the Vintage approach. The experience of practitioners (teachers & trainers) working in both fields will enrich in the future the Vintage approach as the professional requirements to be fulfilled by migrants and mobile workers- as for all the other “national” workers are more and more specific and demanding. This is also the main asset of the Vintage approach- thanks to the e-learning platform, it will be able to update in the future with new guides or new tools & strategies.

CONCLUSION

The Vintage project is an example of applied research in the field of practice-oriented, incorporated and explicit vocational education & training (VET). The activities were designed in the framework of the Lifelong learning programme – on the basis of an Erasmus project. They offered a better support for the transition to the labour market and/or training thanks to a relevant and innovative pedagogical approach. The first public was trainers & teachers; a second public was migrant

learners. The Vintage training was supported by two guidelines and an e-learning platform with relevant tools & methods to achieve this goal. Our article was focused on the innovative approach of the Vintage project (theoretical part) together with the feedback received from teachers & trainers but also from learners – migrants and mobile workers during the testing implemented in France (practical part). We intended to show how far the combination between the linguistic learning & the VET approach could be a main issue in the educational practice and learning in the EU (third part). The Vintage outputs should support any public policy meant to welcome migrants and to enhance their integration in the labour market. It can therefore usually contribute to the international world of Practitioner-based Research especially in a European context characterised by a critical migration issue.

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