

## Foreign language teaching

**“Teaching a foreign language in a foreign country:  
*Multidimensional class*”**

**Claudia Elena Schuhbeck PhD**

**Salvador Galindo Rogero I.D.**

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## **“Teaching a foreign language in a foreign country: *Multidimensional class*”**

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### **Abstract**

Learning a language in a foreign country is not as easy as it supposed to be. For most teachers and learners speaking is the main issue. There are arguable factors for not speaking such as age, cultural background, lack of language immersion, etc. Although children seem to learn at a different pace; the issue is the same, for adults, young adults and children: Fear of speaking.

Every language learner faces the same problem; they are unfamiliar not only to the words, expressions or grammar, but furthermore to the sounds of the language, to its phonology and to phonetics.

Multidimensional class has integrated these elements in native and foreign language, as well as motor skills and brain gym among other elements. We developed this eclectic program for CEO's and firm executives to improve their verbal negotiating skills with excellent results. This program has been applied for over 10 years now at executive and business programs, and it has been integrated into adult education throughout college improving language learning programs in Mexico and US since 2010.

This paper illustrates the progress achieved during the projects applied in a ten year lapse by EuroCsys in language learning-teaching process as well as the applied strategies based on the cognitive process, application of neuroscience to education and principles of phonetics and phonology in learning by competencies.

### **Introduction**

EuroCsys is a NPO that researches, innovates, adapts and improves educational programs based in key competences. A central purpose of this international network is to guide institutions to develop different perspectives and value the diversity by offering cultural and intellectual experiences in a broad range of academic courses according to the European framework level of excellence within the local setting of sites around the world.

The Mission is to facilitate the acquisition of skills, competences and abilities for communication, for creative and critical analysis, for independent thinking and for team work in multicultural contexts; collaborating in Digital Divide Initiative supported by New Technologies for Education.

EuroCsys supports educational development projects through new Technologies for Education, to promote quality in the teaching-learning process and accessibility, using strategies and alternatives to make education available and permanent for everyone. This

enhances the cognitive system in order to develop the Key Competences for Lifelong Learning.

EuroCsys, as member of the International Language Network works and researches along with other European institutions to improve the quality of language teaching and learning. This scheme of is based on the European framework in language teaching to adults.

A key element in the delivery of quality language teaching is the qualification of teachers. EuroCsys recognizes that many teachers of languages engaged in the field of adult education look for opportunities to advance in their profession. They often do not have the possibility to gain certification for the tasks they are fulfilling. EuroCsys maintains a competence-based framework for language teaching, which allows teachers to plan and track their professional development in an international context. The framework also enables participating institutions to qualify and certify their teachers' proficiency using a common frame of reference, which cuts across educational sectors and national boundaries.

Training for language professors and instructors was carried out for universities and companies to implement the methodology and gather results to improve foreign language teachers in environments where their mother is not available. The methodology was adjusted, observing international communicative requirements. The changes aided Professors who also teach digital natives and immigrants, implementing to the original methodology elements that emphasise on phonetics and phonology as well as educational neuroscience tools.

## Objective

The commission for the educative European reform IP/12/1233 implemented the strategy of the new “**Rethinking Education**” under the following basis:

- Focus on developing transversal skills and basic skills at all levels. This applies especially to entrepreneurial and IT skills.
- A new benchmark on foreign language learning.
- World-class vocational education and training systems and increase levels of work-based learning.
- Technology, in particular, access to education via open educational resources.
- These reforms must be supported by well-trained, motivated and entrepreneurial teachers. e

Several projects around the world support this new strategy based on the “**eight key competences**”, in order to ensure education and training systems deliver the skills required in the modern workplace.

In the area of language teaching, the followed methodology of “**Integrated Learning**” for the projects is part of a larger policy initiative contributing to support the Commission

Communication on “Re-thinking Education”. Each body (Members of the Advisory Board) adapts the methodology according to context needs.

Integrated learning policy aims to raise the language competences will foster the mobility of workers and students and improve the employability of the worldwide workforce.

The methodology must develop the following areas:

- Plurilingualism, pluriculturalism and education for democratic citizenship
- Six content areas
- Individual and group reflection
- Action plans
- Self-assessment
- Autonomy and learning to learn
- Intercultural dimension
- Digital inclusion

The overall aim of a training program is to help teachers to become aware of the issues and processes involved in learning a foreign language in an adult education context and to gain confidence in their ability to contribute positively to these processes.

## **Methodology**

The methodology and approach adopted in the training included:

- Learning by doing: Reflecting and sharing ideas.
- A cooperative learning style, involving trainees wherever possible in the planning and shaping of the program.
- Opportunities to extend theoretical knowledge of language, learning and teaching as well as to evaluate and improve practical skills.
- Practical exercises and the observation of teaching/learning (themselves, their own classes, others, other classes, video sequences) with subsequent analysis.
- Opportunities for self-evaluation, assessment by peers as well as offer opportunities for trainees to evaluate the training program.

Through awareness-raising tasks, experimentation, reflection, adaptation and transfer of training contents to their teaching situations, the trainees developed their teaching competence as well as appropriate strategies to continue their development after the training period was over.

The framework included all the aspects considered essential, within the European standards, for the development of teaching competence, recognizing that language education takes place in a variety of contexts. That framework focuses in the knowledge and skills necessary to plan, to teach and to evaluate their language classes within their institutional context.

The topics and issues explored in basic teacher training programs are grouped into the following content areas:

#### 1/ Language awareness

They have a well-grounded understanding of language; in particular, the behavioral model for defining communicative and linguistic competence as described in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Teaching, Learning and Assessment (CEFR). They are able to draw general comparisons between language systems and they can apply this knowledge in their teaching, in particular in the planning of lessons and in formulating language explanations for their learners. They can make use of reference materials to develop their own meta-linguistic competence, aware of the phonetics as basis of the language usage.

#### 2/ Language and culture

Teachers have an understanding of how language and culture relate. They are aware of the socio-cultural and intercultural issues involved in language use and language learning. They can develop the learners' sensitivity towards cultural differences. They can foster communications strategies in intercultural interactions. A humanistic approach is used. This means that the trainee is in touch with the here and now, his or her subjective experiences and feelings, continually growing and changing.

#### 3/ Language learning processes

Teachers are aware of the motivations and needs of adult learners, and they use neuroscience for education tools in their teaching. They are familiar with the basic ideas in current theories of language learning and acquisition, with the phonetics principle. They can also recognize the learners' level of language competence and are able to structure and support the learning process accordingly.

#### 4/ Language teaching

Teachers are familiar with a minimum repertoire of teaching strategies and techniques and are able to make judgments as to when and how to use them. They are able to make judicious choices with regard to teaching/learning materials and to adapt or supplement them to cater for the specific needs of groups and individual adult learners. They are confident in their role as teachers, and they are able to create a stimulating learning atmosphere and to introduce and monitor a variety of learning tasks based on neuroscience activities.

#### 5/ Planning and evaluation

Teachers understand the institutional context of their teaching and have a clear view of what their responsibilities to the learners are. They are informed about the institution's offer of language courses and can place their activity within this context. They are familiar with the levels of competence defined by the Common European Framework of Reference and can place their courses within this framework. They are familiar with the European Language Portfolio. They are informed about the main examinations offered in the language(s) they teach and can situate them in the European Framework level system.

## 6/ Self-assessment

Teachers are able to reflect on and evaluate their own performance in the classroom, to make use of feedback and draw conclusions for their teaching. They are able to identify resources to support them in their further professional development.

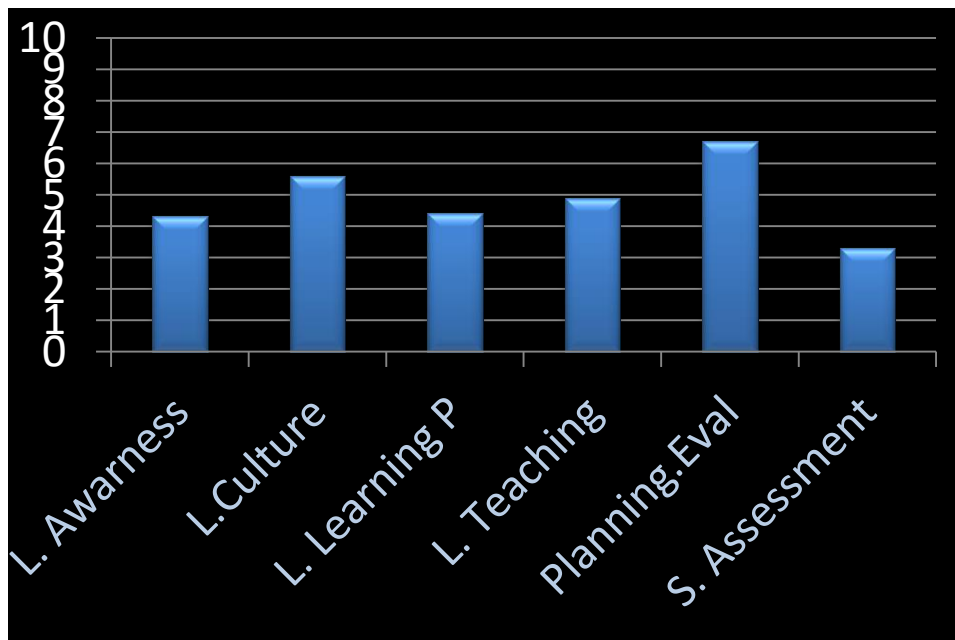
In summary, the trainees experienced the following benefits during their training process:

- Practical and flexible training related to the trainee's own teaching context
- A qualification was opened to teachers of all languages.
- Portfolio-based assessment.
- Programs that are based on the principles of the Common European Framework of reference for Languages (Council of Europe).
- A learner-centered methodology based on reflection on one's own practice.
- An internationally recognized and monitored qualification.
- Training and a qualification for teachers of languages without any other locally available scheme.
- Internationally validated quality assurance with regard to teacher qualification.

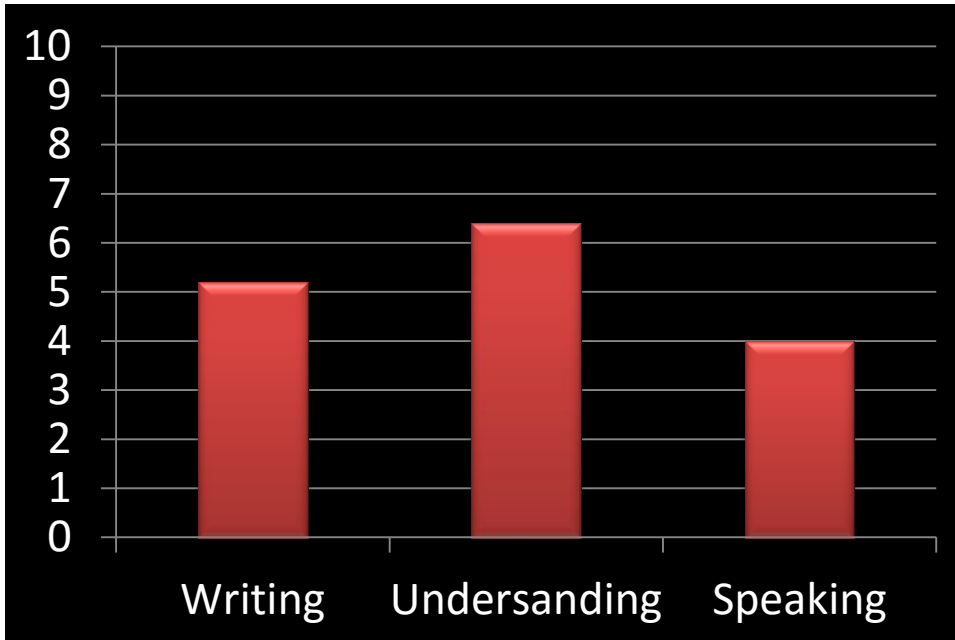
## Results and recommendations

A diagnosis was applied to 430 university teachers and 255 language instructors for companies. These trainees teach English, French and Spanish. The methodology applies to any language taught. The following results show the application of the methodology at the beginning of the training and the results obtained after a year of its application with students.

Professors and instructors: Use of content areas before the training.

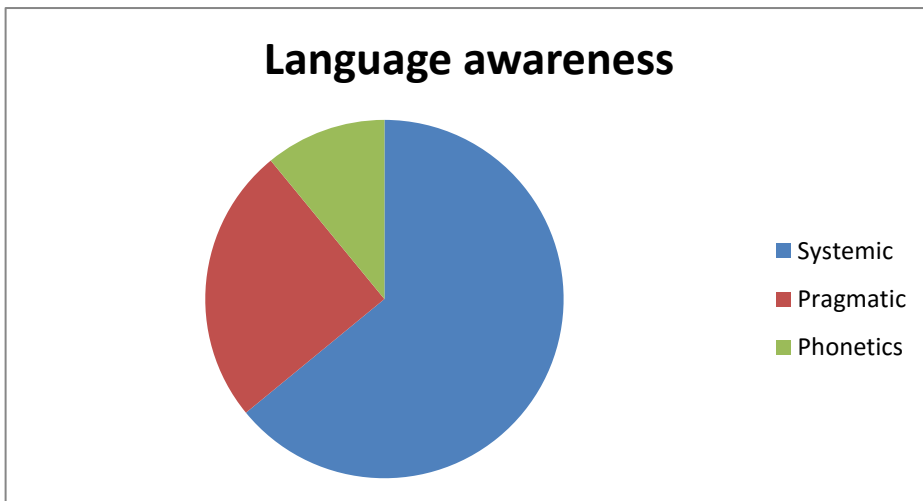


Impact on students using the traditional methodology:  
(Competencies CEF: Common European Framework of References for Languages)

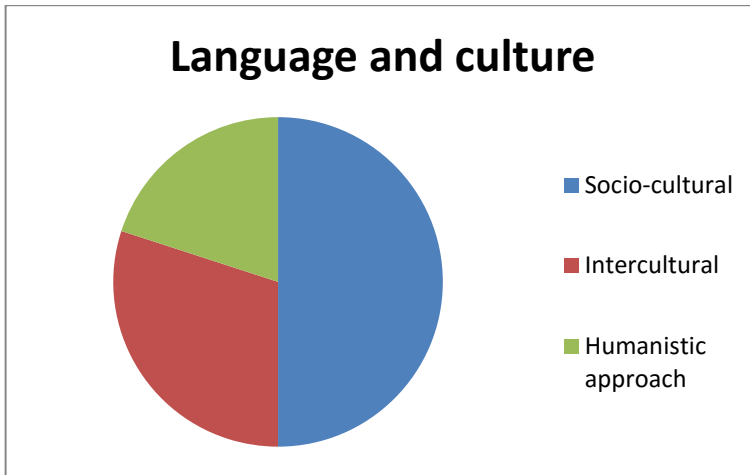


**Diagnostic general results:**

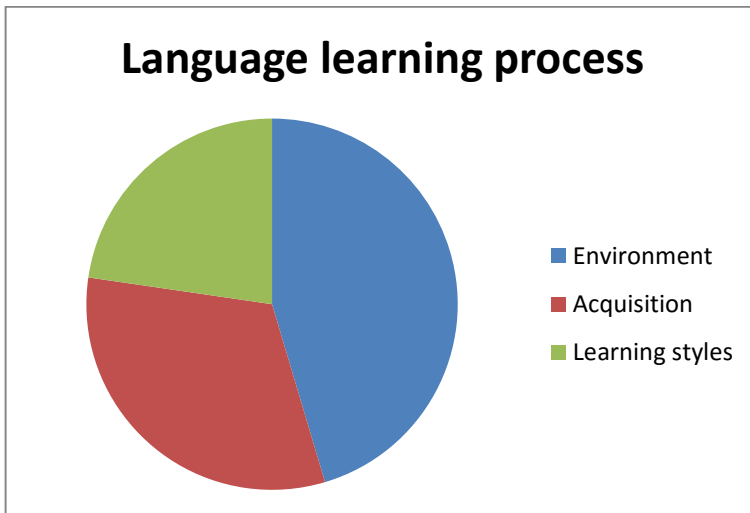
1/ Language awareness



## 2/ Language and culture

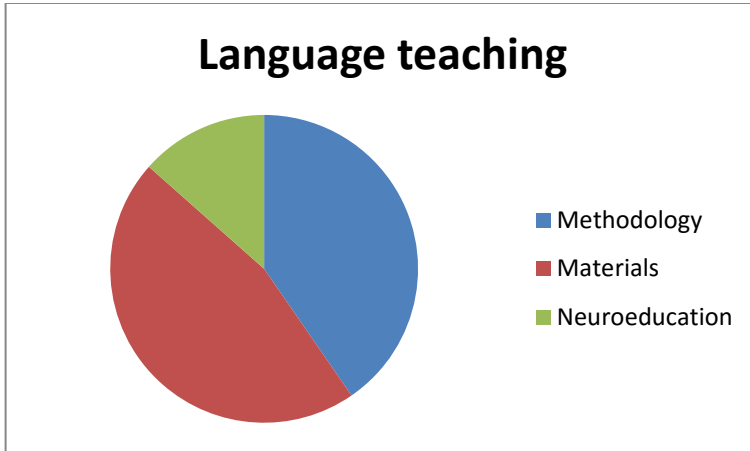


## 3/ Language learning processes

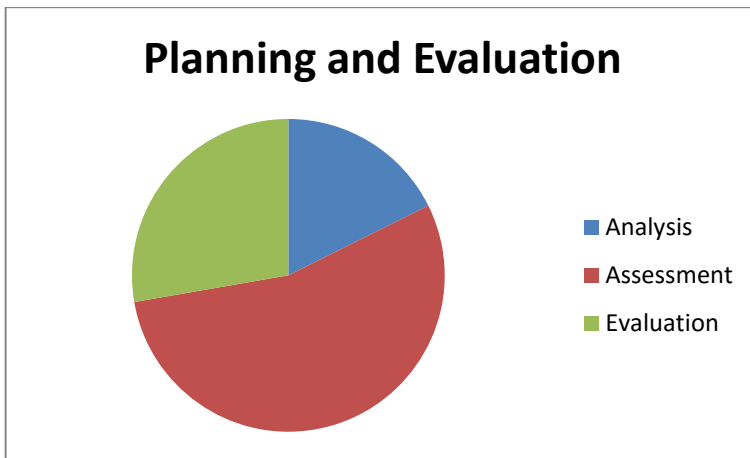




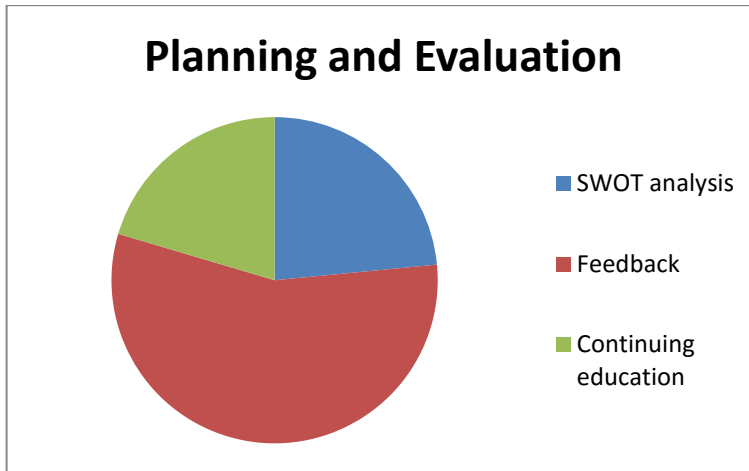
#### 4/ Language teaching



#### 5/ Planning and evaluation



## 6/ Self-assessment



General overview of the results:

- There was a general motivation among teachers who have heard about this methodology.
- They generally thought they knew more about the topic.
- Teachers seldom take part in continuing education trainings that last more than a week.
- Only very few teachers knew how to handle neuroscience activities and work with them.
- The CEF is not known as widely spread as is generally assumed.
- Apart from the existence of the 3 levels of competencies for learners, the teachers do not know a lot about methodology in content areas.
- Many teachers were not able to work with the 3 levels of competencies, because they were not able to assess their own course or their course participants.
- Some language teachers had heard about the CEF and Content Areas. The practical implementation will still need some time.
- The concept of self-assessment is difficult to handle.
- We have found that it is difficult for teachers to accept the implications of learners' autonomy, which is essential when working with certain parts of the ELP (European Language Portfolio).
- We have found that many teachers know little about how to implement different learning strategies in their own course work in order to accommodate their course participants accordingly.

## Recommendations

- It is necessary to train teachers about the method that is behind any ELP, CEF and Content Areas. The aim of the teacher training should be that the trainers know how to use the ELP in their particular settings and courses.
- Teachers need to know in very practical terms what they can do to involve the method in their course work.
- They need to get guidance in when and how they can do it. “Practical exercises” means that the teachers develop something or get something in hand that they could use in their courses more or less right away.
- That would mean that all your “sessions” –apart from an introduction - should be structured in such a way that they could stand alone or could be used in any combination.
- That would allow for using your newly developed training also by others after the end of the project and in different settings with different specifications (e.g. target group, time available, ELP available, etc.).
- It is recommended to create a data bank with exercises based on neuroeducation to improve students’ cognitive process.
- Teachers should collaborate as an academy and revise the material developed during training and update this material

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