



Express & Connect



RECIPES FOR CREATIVE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN EUROPEAN CITIZENS

Cultuur & Co - Alice van Gorp . Dineke Stam . Jenny Wesly

EXPRESS



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CONNECT



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I ntroduction

‘You cannot do it wrong, just differently.’
Jenny Wesly, teaching Tai Chi Tao

‘We communicated using hands, legs, gestures, pictures, faces. We had a great time and a lot of fun. It encouraged us to continue studying English.’ *Final evaluation by the Polish group.*

This quote from the Polish group aptly summarises what the Express & Connect project, a Grundtvig Learning Partnership, was about: inspiration for communication and language learning. Ideas and methods from all participating countries were explored. We have collected the best of them in this book. It is meant for facilitators of multilingual groups or language teachers, inside or outside the classroom. It is like a cookbook to which you can add your own ingredients and flavours. The pictures show how the participants used, shared and ‘tasted’ these recipes during the two years of the Express & Connect learning partnership.



LIFELONG LEARNING: IT'S ALL ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

Once upon a time the idea of general education was to teach children in a classroom important skills, such as languages and mathematics and how to behave in a proper and diligent manner.

The teacher talked, the children listened and repeated. Lessons were focused on transmitting information. In order to pass the final exams, pupils studied individually. Nowadays, learning never ends. Learning is all about abilities, skills and processing information; in short: learning to live in a complex and constantly changing society. Learning is a continuous process, both in formal and informal settings. People learn on the job, by talking or watching films, by travelling or surfing the internet. Some have gone through shocking experiences, suffered extreme violence or had few opportunities to even attend school. Concentrating on learning a new language is an enormous challenge for them.

In Lifelong Learning all these experiences in different contexts become part of who we are. Modern methods of learning are based on the philosophy that people have different styles and the recognition that there are multiple intelligences, as Howard Gardner showed. Cooperative learning in small, diverse groups and biographical learning are useful concepts for working with participants in Lifelong Learning programmes. The EU Grundtvig Learning Partnership offers an excellent platform for learning from each other. It is all about the participants: finding ways to share life experiences, to create awareness of influences stemming from personal, regional, national, European and other cultures. It is the cradle for communication with one another.

TO LEARN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IS TO LEARN ABOUT CULTURE

In Europe, learning foreign languages is a condition for good communication between the citizens of Europe. Language is crucial to being able to learn about culture, and culture is essential in the teaching of foreign languages. The motivation to learn a new language increases when there is a cultural exchange. If you really want to communicate with someone you have to learn words in his or her language, even if the words are strange and unfamiliar. European Learning Partnerships offer the participants a way to value one another's culture and language and improve intercultural communication.



HAVING FUN LEARNING NEW LANGUAGES

Children younger than twelve learn languages without much effort. If they hear the new language often enough, they will imitate the sounds and try to make themselves understood. They are not afraid to make mistakes, for the simple reason that they don't know what is right or wrong.

The most important goal for many second language learners is not to speak fluently and correctly but to understand the other person and to make themselves understood. Yet when speaking a new language, many adults are afraid to make mistakes. Teachers who use traditional methods increase this fear by emphasising grammatical accuracy rather than effectiveness of communication. We all know that effectiveness of communication depends not only on verbal utterances: body language and tone of voice are just as important. Drama is very useful in language learning, because it encourages the use of body language and gives students the courage to express themselves creatively. Uncertainty about the right pronunciation often prevents people from speaking in a new language, even if they already know a lot of grammar and vocabulary. Singing songs encourages adults to use the target language playfully, to

learn new words, but especially to learn about the pronunciation and intonation. They literally get the rhythm of it.

Once the students of a new language have discovered that they can communicate using body language, strange expressions, funny mistakes, songs, pictures etc, they will be more motivated to improve communication. Every effort to communicate with somebody else in a foreign language has to be rewarded. Accepting mistakes is part of that. For that reason we think the right focus is: 'You cannot do it wrong, just differently.'

THE EXPRESS & CONNECT PROJECT, A GRUNDTVIG LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

Express and Connect is Cultuur & Co's second EU Learning Partnership. The first project was published in the 2009 book Cultuur & Co and Transitions. This is the second book of a series-to-be. This time Cultuur & Co was international coordinator of



the project. We - Alice, a linguist, and Dineke, an historian - brought together our passion for expression and connection. We went to a Grundtvig contact seminar for language teachers in Antalya, Turkey, with a concept project called Sing a Language.

The project Express & Connect was born after meeting other people with ideas on language learning through interpersonal exchange, creative ideas and the internet. When we presented our ideas in Antalya, we did this by singing songs from all the countries taking part in the project. With as many as eight partners from seven countries - Turkey, Denmark (2 partners), Spain, Poland, Belgium, Norway and The Netherlands, it was a challenge to the seminar organisers to cope. Even the first meeting of the coordinators in Brussels had more than twenty participants! We want to say thank you so much to the coordinating hosts of the seminars from Spain, Norway, Turkey and Poland - Christel van de Schandevijl, Carlos Trueba, Thuy T. Pham, Wanda Jankowska, Jadwiga Weigt and Mustafa Efe - for all their efforts to welcome

sixty or more people. All the partners, including those who didn't host a seminar, have shared their specific ideas and methods in workshops. This book is a compilation of all those ideas, based on 'best practices' from everyone's experience. We are happy that Jenny Wesly joined our project team as a trainer, a Tai Chi teacher and as one of the photographers and editors of this book. Every participant from each country has contributed in his or her own way to the success of the project. More than 500 people have directly been part of the process in one way or another.

THE EXPRESS & CONNECT WEBSITE

A major contribution was made by Carlos Trueba, the coordinator for Spain. As one of the founding fathers of the project in Antalya his focus was on ICT and language learning. Right from the start he made a working website, to tell participants about the project and programmes. The website is still up, with a lot of contributions in pictures, films, PowerPoint presentations, reports and other material. For all those interested in learning more about the project itself and about the participants, please have a look at the site: <https://sites.google.com/site/expressandconnect/home>. You can find lots of presentations for many of the workshops described in this book. Or check out the Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Express-and-Connect/151256214914675>

A photograph of two women sitting at a table, looking at a laptop. The woman on the left has blonde curly hair and is wearing red-rimmed sunglasses and a black top. The woman on the right has brown hair and is wearing dark sunglasses and a red and black patterned top. They are both smiling and appear to be engaged in a collaborative activity. The background shows a bright room with large windows and a balcony railing. The text is overlaid on the top right of the image.

Exploring and sharing creative ideas on language learning is very relevant in every EU project.

That's why we chose to write this book, as an inspiration for both facilitators of multilingual groups and language teachers.

*Alice van Gorp & Dineke Stam
Coordinators Express & Connect project*



The Express & Connect project is about inspiring communication and language learning. This book is meant for training facilitators of multilingual groups or language teachers, inside or outside the classroom. It is like a cookbook; feel free to follow it to the letter or use it as an inspiration, adding your own ingredients and flavours.