

TLC Pack unpacked

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Abstract. TLC Pack stands for Teaching Languages to Caregivers and is a course designed to support migrants working or hoping to work in the caregiving sector. The TLC Pack resources range from A2 to B2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), and will be made available online in the six project languages: Dutch, English, German, Greek, Italian and Spanish. TLC Pack will also be available as paper-based materials (PDF) and on a specially designed language learning platform (<http://language-for-caregivers.eu>). In this paper, we touch upon three challenges we faced during the development of the materials.

Keywords: language for specific purposes, less commonly taught languages, course design, TLC Pack.

1. Introduction

The EU has an ageing population, a situation which will deteriorate markedly in the coming years and beyond. In the EU, life expectancy at birth for males is expected to increase by 7.2 years over the projection period, from 77.6 in 2013 to 84.7 in 2060. For females, life expectancy at birth is projected to increase by 6.0 years, from 83.1 in 2013 to 89.1 in 2060. These figures also indicate that male and female life expectancies will eventually converge (European Commission, 2014). According to data from Eurostat (2015), those aged 65 years or over will account for 28.7% of the EU-28 population by 2080, compared to 18.5% in 2014.

The implications of Europe's ageing population are manifest. First, there could be labour shortages with regard to particular sectors and skills needs. Secondly, ageing

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could have a significant financial impact, for example on social assistance and pension systems, and this will necessitate high levels of employment. Combining immigration from third world countries with increasing participation rates among migrants and minorities within the EU may help mitigate the impact of ageing societies (OECD, 2011).

In recent years, care organisations have increasingly begun hiring staff from other countries. In Belgium, for example, 5000 people from EU countries and 7100 non-EU residents started working in the social sector between 2009 and 2013. These are increases of 44.6% and 63.3% respectively, while the number of Belgian citizens starting work in the care sector increased by only 11.5% (Vlaams ministerie van Welzijn, Volksgezondheid en Gezin, 2015). The main problems experienced by newcomers on the Belgian labour market are cultural differences and a lack of language skills (Wets & de Bruyn, 2011).

2. Method

A European team consisting of six partners aimed to tackle these issues by developing a language course, i.e. the TLC Pack, specifically designed to support the growing number of migrant caregivers working or hoping to work in the caregiving sector. The TLC Pack course not only supports the acquisition of caregiver vocabulary, but also recognises the importance of developing intercultural knowledge and insights. As a result, both aspects are included in the final resource package aimed at migrant caregivers, language teachers and senior professionals in the caregiving sector.

The TLC Pack resources range from A2 to B2 level of the CEFR and will be made available online in the six project languages: Dutch, English, German, Greek, Italian and Spanish. The University of Antwerp was responsible for designing the test unit and developing the Dutch language materials.

The TLC Pack consists of six units, each containing five chapters, which means there are a total of 30 chapters per language. The topics covered in each chapter were defined after a needs analysis conducted in the six partner countries. The topics are:

- Unit 1: Communication (e.g. with residents and their families, colleagues)
- Unit 2: Daily tasks (e.g. briefing during shift changeover)

- Unit 3: Nutrition/Feeding (e.g. assisted feeding, dietary restrictions)
- Unit 4: Mediation and health care (e.g. wound care, insulin administration)
- Unit 5: Post-hospital care (e.g. physical therapy, checking blood pressure)
- Unit 6: Free-time activities (e.g. physical exercises, personal history)

At the heart of each unit is a video of 3-8 minutes in length showing realistic tasks and situations between caregivers and residents, family members and colleagues. Using the videos, learners can complete exercises to practise the four communicative skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) as well as grammar and vocabulary. At the end of each unit there is a word list and a test.

The course not only supports the acquisition of caregiver vocabulary, but also recognises the importance of developing intercultural knowledge and insights. The intercultural unit centres around topics that were identified as challenging for migrant caregivers during the needs analysis. In Belgium, for example, these include the use of dialect versus standard Dutch and the use of the correct register and style with residents and their family members.

The TLC Pack materials will be available in two forms: a) offline, as a paper-based course (PDF) for language teachers who want to provide specific language materials in class; and b) online, on a specially designed platform for students who want to study independently – anytime and anywhere.

3. Discussion

While developing the materials we faced three key challenges:

- Maintaining a balance between the European approach to the course and country-specific expectations about caregivers' tasks. During the needs analysis at the beginning of the project it became apparent that caregivers' responsibilities differ from country to country. The tasks range from personal hygiene and grooming to support with taking medication. The requirements for entering the job market also differ from country to country. In order to make the materials relevant enough for the sector, we had to consider these differences when developing the materials. As a result, the topics are the same in all language versions of the TLC Pack, but the dialogues have been

adapted to suit national circumstances. This was done in close cooperation with experts from the care sector.

- Shooting 30 videos with appropriate actors in authentic locations on a limited budget. In Belgium we cooperated with the Antwerp International Academy for Film and Television (IAFT) in order to achieve this goal. The students filmed and edited the dialogues as part of their training, coached by professionals from the film academy. The actors in the videos were mostly residents in care centres, often aged over 75, who volunteered to help with the dialogues. This cooperation between the generations turned out to be positive for both the project and the participants. Gaining access to an authentic location for the videos was also a challenge. We cooperated with the Zorgbedrijf, the biggest care centre in the region with 16 000 residents and 3700 staff members. This organisation allowed us to film the videos on their premises free of charge.
- Developing exercises to suit the classroom and online learning. The focus in this project was to develop paper-based materials for classroom learning and to transfer these materials to the TLC Pack platform. The exercises in the paper-based version reflect the principles of the communicative language learning approach, with authentic real-life tasks that lead to interactive classroom activities. The challenge was to transfer this wide range of communicative exercise types to a platform which only allows for a limited number of exercise types, such as drag and drop, match, gap fill and ordering exercises. Transferring the materials to a CALL platform inevitably led to certain pedagogical constraints and concessions.

4. Conclusions

The TLC Pack is a language course specifically designed for caregivers who work or want to work in the care sector. The completed materials will become available free of charge at the beginning of 2016 as paper-based materials (PDF) and on the TLC Pack platform. Both the online and offline resources can be accessed via the project website: <http://language-for-caregivers.eu>.

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