



# **The Thinking Approach to Language Teaching and Learning**

**(Portfolio of possible educational projects)**

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## Introduction

This portfolio presents sample projects we would like to develop on the basis of the Thinking Approach to language teaching and learning. All descriptions are intentionally brief and are aimed to give you a general idea about what could be done together. If some of the projects appear interesting to you, please get in touch with us and we will be able to provide you with more information and adjust the design of the project to meet specific requirements of your context.

The problem solving methodology behind all the projects we offer is OTSM-TRIZ (the General Theory of Powerful Thinking based on the Theory of Inventive Problem Solving). OTSM-TRIZ provides us with tools for solving problems when typical solutions are not available. At present, the OTSM-TRIZ approach is integrated in educational programmes for various subjects in the framework of an international project Jonathan Livingston ([www.ilproj.org](http://www.ilproj.org)).

## **Background Information**

The need to develop learners' problem solving and thinking skills is widely recognised. Researchers also agree that it is better to do it within disciplines rather than in a separate course. Language instruction takes a large proportion of school curriculum. At the same time, programmes for the systematic development of learners' language and problem solving skills are virtually absent. This is equally true for primary, secondary and tertiary levels. The aim of the projects presented here is to help learners improve their language and problem solving skills at the same time.

## Evaluation Plan

The detailed evaluation plan for each project will be written at the beginning of the project and agreed upon by the key members of the project team and, possibly, the external evaluator. The plan will define the following aspects of evaluation:

- reasons and purpose (background, aims and objectives, relevance of the project rationale and its activities to the priorities of project members and stakeholders);
- uses (materials, activities, outputs and results);
- focus (methodological aspects, project priorities, focus on specific areas);
- data (qualitative data analysis);
- audience (direct target groups and wider audience);
- timing (follow-up of the work plan and respect of the time schedule) and
- people in charge (project management, partnership and overall organization of the project).

Both summative and formative evaluation will be used. The former will include the reports on the products of the project developed by the partner institutions and submitted fully or in part to the funding agency and other project stakeholders (e.g., co-financing agencies in partner countries, educational authorities in partner countries, publications, etc). The latter will include peer feedback of the partners on each other's work in the process of development and piloting the products of the projects with the target groups. The target groups will also evaluate the products by means of questionnaires.

Efficiency and success measures at each stage of the project will be defined at the beginning of the project and allocated task managers will report to the project manager on progress and results. The coordinating team will be adjusting the design of the project according to the actual progress and feedback from the external evaluator.

## Project 1. Language Puzzland

### Summary

The aim of this project is to create the curriculum for an integrated development of language and problem solving skills at the primary level. The curriculum will have a modular structure, and could thus be used either as an alternative to the existing curricula or in addition to it, integrating those modules which appear appropriate for a given context. The materials developed will be available electronically for all the teachers wishing to use them. In addition, a group of trainers ready to work with new materials and train others to do so will be prepared.

The materials can be developed for one or several languages.

### Aims and objectives

#### *Aim*

Develop problem solving skills of young learners to help them face the challenges of life-long learning in the knowledge society.

#### *Objectives*

- A set of materials aimed to simultaneously develop language and problem solving skills of young learners.
- A group of teachers ready and wishing to use the developed materials in their work and train other teachers to do so.
- Online support for teachers using the developed materials in their work.

### Envisaged outputs

- A bank of texts for young learners and tasks accompanying them aimed to simultaneously develop language and problem solving skills of learners.
- A set of materials for a 'discovery' approach to grammar.
- A collection of games to develop language and thinking skills of learners.
- Materials for the development of learning skills of young learners.
- A database of the materials available online with update management access for all teachers participating in the project.
- Online collaboration tools for the teachers involved in the project with a possibility to involve new teachers.
- A network of teachers using the new materials and wishing to develop new projects on the basis of this one.

### Action plan

- Conduct a baseline study on the peculiarities of teaching young learners in the countries involved in the project.
- Train teachers involved in the project in the Thinking Approach methodology.
- Organise a series of materials development workshops for project participants.
- Pilot the materials in several schools.
- Train key people involved in the project as trainer trainers.
- Disseminate the results.

## Project 2. Thinking through Language

### Summary

The aim of this project is to create the curriculum for an integrated development of language and problem solving skills at the secondary level. The curriculum will have a modular structure, and could thus be used either as an alternative to the existing curricula or in addition to it, integrating those modules which appear appropriate for a given context. The materials developed will be available electronically for all the teachers wishing to use them. In addition, a group of trainers ready to work with new materials and train others to do so will be prepared.

The materials can be developed for one or several languages.

### Aims and objectives

#### *Aim*

Develop problem solving skills of secondary school learners to help them face the challenges of life-long learning in the knowledge society.

#### *Objectives*

- A set of materials to simultaneously develop language and problem solving skills of secondary school learners.
- A group of teachers ready and wishing to use the developed materials in their work and train other teachers to do so.
- Online support for teachers using the developed materials in their work.

### Envisaged outputs

- A bank of texts for secondary school learners and related tasks to simultaneously develop learners' language and problem solving skills.
- A set of materials for a 'discovery' approach to grammar.
- A set of materials for the development of learning skills of secondary school learners.
- Materials for the development of elementary research skills of secondary school learners.
- A database of the materials available online with update management access for all the teachers participating in the project.
- Online collaboration tools for the teachers participating in the project with the possibility of involving new teachers.
- A network of teachers using the new materials and wishing to develop new projects on the basis of this one.

### Action plan

- Conduct a baseline study on the peculiarities of teaching secondary school learners in the countries involved in the project.
- Train teachers involved in the project in the Thinking Approach methodology.
- Organise a series of materials development workshops for project participants.
- Pilot the materials in several schools.
- Train key people involved in the project as teacher trainers.
- Disseminate the results.

## Project 3. Thinking through Language. A Step Further

### Summary

The aim of this project is to create the curriculum for an integrated development of language and problem solving skills at the upper secondary level. The curriculum will have a modular structure, and could thus be used either as an alternative to the existing curricula or in addition to it, integrating those modules which appear appropriate for a given context. The materials developed will be available electronically for all the teachers wishing to use them. In addition, a group of trainers ready to work with new materials and train others to do so will be prepared.

The materials can be developed for one or several languages.

### Aims and objectives

#### *Aim*

Develop problem solving skills of upper secondary school learners to help them face the challenges of life-long learning in the knowledge society.

#### *Objectives*

- A set of materials to simultaneously develop language and problem solving skills of upper-secondary school learners.
- A group of teachers ready and wishing to use the developed materials in their work and train other teachers to do so.
- Online support for teachers using the developed materials in their work.

### Envisaged outputs

- A bank of texts for upper-secondary school learners and related tasks to simultaneously develop learners' language and problem solving skills.
- A set of materials for a 'discovery' approach to grammar.
- A set of materials for the development of learning skills of upper-secondary school learners.
- Materials for the development of elementary research skills of upper-secondary school learners.
- A database of the materials available online with update management access to all teachers participating in the project.
- Online collaboration tools for the teachers participating in the project with the possibility of involving new teachers.
- A network of teachers using the new materials and wishing to develop new projects on the basis of this one.

### Action plan

- Conduct a baseline study on the peculiarities of teaching upper-secondary school learners in the countries involved in the project.
- Train teachers involved in the project in the Thinking Approach methodology.
- Organise a series of materials development workshops for project participants.
- Pilot the materials in several schools.
- Train key people involved in the project as teacher trainers.
- Disseminate the results.

## Project 4. General Skills for Specific Purposes

### Summary

This project deals with the development of the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curriculum for an integrated development of language and problem solving skills at the tertiary. The curriculum will have a modular structure, thus allowing to use it either as an alternative to the existing curricula or an addition to it, integrating those modules which appear appropriate for a given context. The materials developed will be available electronically for all the teachers wishing to use them. In addition, a group of trainers ready to work with new materials and train others to do so, will be prepared.

The materials can be developed either for one or several languages. Various subject areas can be specified.

### Aims and objectives

#### *Aim*

Develop problem solving skills of ESP students to make them more competitive on the labour market.

#### *Objectives*

- A set of materials to simultaneously develop language and problem solving skills of ESP students.
- A group of teachers ready and wishing to use the developed materials in their work and train other teachers to do so.
- Online support for teachers using the developed materials in their work.

### Envisaged outputs

- A bank of texts for ESP students and related tasks to simultaneously develop language and learners' problem solving skills.
- A set of materials for a 'discovery' approach to grammar.
- A set of materials for the development of learning skills of ESP students.
- Materials for the development of research skills of ESP students.
- A database of the materials available online with update management access to all teachers participating in the project.
- Online collaboration tools for the teachers participating in the project with the possibility of involving new teachers.
- A network of teachers using the new materials and wishing to develop new projects on the basis of this one.

### Action plan

- Conduct a baseline study on the peculiarities of teaching ESP students in the countries and institutions involved in the project.
- Train the teachers involved in the project in the Thinking Approach methodology.
- Organise a series of materials development workshops for project participants.
- Pilot the materials in several universities / institutes.
- Train key people involved in the project as teacher trainers.
- Disseminate the results.

## Project 5. Language and Thinking Online

### Summary

The project deals with the development of online learning tools for foreign languages along with improving problem solving skills. The tools were initially developed in the framework of the project *New Learners in the New Europe* supported by the European Commission ([www.thinking-approach.eu](http://www.thinking-approach.eu)). In the new project, the tools will be adapted to the peculiarities of the new languages and new learning materials for the target languages will be developed.

### Aims and objectives

#### *Aim*

Enhance students' problem-solving skills to help them face the challenge of life-long learning.

#### *Objectives*

- Sets of foreign language study materials for learning ... <languages to be specified by project partners> to foster students' problem-solving skills.
- On-line teaching modules for learning ... <languages to be specified by project partners> and developing problem-solving skills on the basis of the new materials.
- A group of foreign language teachers in each participating country who are able to use the new materials and on-line modules in their professional practice, disseminate them among colleagues and propose new national and international projects based on the results of the given one.

### Envisaged outputs

- Software for the development of materials for online learning.
- Study materials developed by project members with the help of the new software.
- Online modules for helping learners plan, implement and evaluate their work
- Online collaboration tools for the teachers participating in the project with the possibility of involving new teachers.
- Online monitoring tools for researchers involved in the project.
- A network of teachers using the new materials and wishing to develop new projects on the basis of this one.

### Action plan

- Conduct a baseline study on the peculiarities of teaching specified languages in the countries involved in the project.
- Adapt the software for materials writing to the peculiarities of the specified languages.
- Train the people involved in the project in the Thinking Approach methodology.
- Organise a series of materials development workshops for project participants.
- Pilot the developed online modules with target groups in partner countries.
- Train key people involved in the project as teacher trainers.
- Disseminate the results.

## Project 6. Thinking Approach to Learning...

### Summary

The project will produce new study materials for a certain language or a group of languages to develop learners' problem solving skills along with language skills. Materials will be developed for various groups and levels of learners. This will not only provide teachers and learners with additional materials but also enable them to integrate a systematic training in problem solving skills in language instruction.

### Aims and objectives

#### *Aim*

Improve the quality of teaching and learning a foreign language <language to be specified> through producing complimentary study materials for the development of problem solving skills along with language skills.

#### *Objectives*

- A set of supplementary study materials for the development of learners' problem solving skills along with language skills when learning ... <language to be specified>.
- Guidelines for using new materials in various teaching contexts.
- A website hosting a database of the new materials and providing the tools for communication among the teachers using the materials in their work.

### Envisaged outputs

- A bank of texts and related tasks to simultaneously develop language and problem solving skills of learners when studying ... <language to be specified>.
- A set of materials for a 'discovery' approach to the grammar of ... <language to be specified>.
- A set of materials for the development of learning skills of learners.
- Materials for the development of elementary research skills of learners.
- Guidelines for teachers on the use of the newly developed materials.
- A database of the materials available online with update management access for all teachers participating in the project.
- Online collaboration tools for the teachers participating in the project with the possibility of involving new teachers.

### Action plan

- Conduct a baseline study on the peculiarities of learning ... <language to be specified>.
- Train the teachers involved in the project in the Thinking Approach methodology and adaptation of the methodology to the peculiarities of the target language.
- Organise a series of materials development workshops for project participants.
- Pilot the materials in several schools / universities.
- Train key people involved in the project as teacher trainers for further dissemination of materials.
- Disseminate the results.

## Project 7. A New Module for Teacher Training

### Summary

The project deals with the development and implementation of a new module for teacher training programmes in language education. The module will be dedicated to the development of learners' problem solving skills along with language skills. In the course of the project, a package of training materials will be developed and the module will be integrated in the existing teacher training programmes run by project participants.

### Aims and objectives

#### *Aim*

Increase the quality of teacher training programmes in foreign language education by preparing a group of trainers who are ready and wish to introduce elements of the Thinking Approach in the teacher training programmes they run.

#### *Objectives*

- A group of trainers who have included one or several modules on the Thinking Approach in teacher training programmes they run.
- A set of training materials on the Thinking Approach to be included in teacher training programmes for foreign language teachers.
- A programme to prepare Thinking Approach teacher trainers for further dissemination of project results.

### Envisaged outputs

- A network of trainers who regularly use the Thinking Approach as a part of their teacher training programmes.
- Online collaborative support tools for trainers using the Thinking Approach.
- A set of materials for trainee teachers to be included as a part of a teacher training programme on the Thinking Approach.
- A set of materials for Thinking Approach trainer training.
- Guidelines for trainers on the organisation of the Thinking Approach training sessions.

### Action plan

- Select teacher trainers for further work on the project.
- Train the group in the Thinking Approach methodology.
- Launch online tools for supporting project participants and dissemination of project results.
- Organise materials writing workshops for the development of the framework for the new module and training materials supporting it.
- Pilot the new module in teacher training programmes run by project participants.
- Organise a workshop on the finalisation of the new modules for teacher training programmes and prepare the guidelines for trainers.
- Integrate the newly developed module in teacher training programmes run by project participants.
- Disseminate the project results.

## Project 8. Thinking Skills for Philology/Linguistics Programmes

### Summary

The aim of the project is to introduce systematic training in thinking skills for learners of undergraduate and graduate programmes of philology / linguistics by integrating a thinking skills component in the programme curriculum. The project will result in the development and delivery of a new course that will not only develop necessary subject matter skills but also contribute to the students' training in thinking.

### Aims and objectives

#### *Aim*

Introduce systematic training in thinking skills for learners of philology/linguistic programmes.

#### *Objectives*

- A new syllabus for one or several subjects on the curriculum that integrate the development of thinking skills and skills specific to the course(s).
- Course materials to be used during the delivery of the newly developed course(s)
- A group of instructors ready to deliver a new course and further develop it.

### Envisaged outputs

- A set of assignments to be given to students taking the course.
- A set of handouts to be given to students taking the course.
- A set of supplementary materials for the students taking the course.
- Guidelines for instructors who will deliver a new course.
- A training package to prepare course instructors.

### Action plan

- Conduct a baseline study investigating the current syllabus of the course and its delivery modes.
- Develop a framework for a new syllabus.
- Organise materials writing workshop for course instructors.
- Pilot the course with sample groups of target students.
- Finalise the course materials.
- Prepare a training package for instructors.
- Train the instructors.
- Deliver the course in partner institutions.
- Disseminate the results.

## **Other Projects**

We always welcome ideas for other projects related to the development of thinking skills in language education. We would love to share our experience in the development and application of the Thinking Approach to language teaching and learning, as well as learn from your experience in the area.