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## **The Language Emergency Doctor (*Sprach-Not-Arzt*) for Migrants An Innovative Teaching Method for *Deutsch als Fremdsprache (DaF)* and Other Languages with Linguistically Heterogeneous Beginners**

### Abstract

The article presents a new efficient method of teaching basic communicative skills and all relevant grammatical structures in German as a foreign language to migrants (and refugees) with no or very little knowledge of the language: the *Sprach-Not-Arzt* ('Language Emergency Doctor' or 'First-Aid Language Doctor'). Experiments with adult learners have led to the creation of a three-day block course; learners between 10 and 15 of age can master the program in a few half-days. The concept tries to transfer the benefit of the use of the mother-tongue in the Language Workout Method to a linguistically heterogeneous group. This is achieved by the use of pictures for both words and grammatical information, a well-reflected lexical and grammatical progression, and a mixture of pictures-to-sentence "translations", scripted dialogs, and non-scripted dialogs. The article shows how words and structures should be introduced and practiced, including error-correction. It also describes the first experiments with teenagers and children and the potential of the method for teaching other European languages.

### Sommaire

L'article présente une nouvelle méthode d'enseigner les compétences linguistiques de base et toutes les structures de la grammaire rélevante en allemand comme langage étrangère aux migrants (et réfugiés), qui ne connaissent pas ou guère la langue: le *Sprach-Not-Arzt* ('médecin d'urgence linguistique'). Des expériences avec des apprenants adultes ont mené à la création d'un cours de trois jours en bloc; des apprenants âgés 10-15 peuvent maîtriser le contenu pendant peu de demi-jours. Le concept essaie de transposer le bénéfice de l'usage de la langue maternelle de la méthode Sprachworkout, ou bien Language Workout, à un groupe linguistiquement hétérogène. Cela est achevé par l'usage d'images autant pour des mots que pour des informations grammaticales, par des progressions lexicale et grammaticales bien réfléchies ainsi que par un mélange de "traductions" images-en-phrase, dialogues préfabriqués et dialogues non-préfabriqués. L'article montre comment mots et structures sont présentés et entraînés, y comprise la correction de fautes. Il décrit aussi les premiers expériences avec des adolescents et des enfants et le potentiel de la méthode pour enseigner d'autres langues européennes.

### Zusammenfassung

Der Artikel stellt eine neue effiziente Methode vor, mit der grundlegende kommunikative Fähigkeiten und alle relevanten grammatischen Strukturen in Deutsch als Fremdsprache an Migranten (und Flüchtlinge) mit fehlenden oder sehr geringen Sprachkenntnissen vermittelt werden kann: den Sprach-Not-Arzt. Experimente mit erwachsenen Lernern haben zur Erstellung eines dreitägigen Blockkurses geführt; Lerner der Altersgruppe 10-15 können die Inhalte innerhalb weniger Halbtage erarbeiten. Das Konzept versucht den Nutzen des Gebrauchs der Muttersprache aus der Sprachworkout-Methode auf eine sprachliche heterogene Gruppe zu übertragen. Erreicht wird dies durch den Gebrauch von Bildern sowohl für Wörter als auch für grammatische Informationen, eine wohlüberlegte Abfolge der lexikalischen und grammatischen Progression sowie einer Mischung aus "Bilder-zu-Satz-Übersetzungen", vorgefertigten Dialogen und nicht-vorgefertigten Dialogen. Der Artikel zeigt, wie Wörter und Strukturen vorgestellt und geübt werden, einschließlich der Korrektur von Fehlern. Er beschreibt auch die ersten Experimente mit Jugendlichen und Kindern und das Potenzial der Methode zur Vermittlung anderer europäischer Sprachen.

### Preliminary Remarks

Due to the work on Basic Global English (BGE) (cf., e.g., Grzega 2006, 2012, in press, Grzega/Stenzenberger 2011) and the Language Workout Method (LWO) (cf. Grzega 2013), the Europäisches Haus Pappenheim (EHP) and its academic management have earned reputation as expert in teaching languages to beginners. Due to this, several people from the Pappenheim area in

Southern Germany independently from one another approached the EHP in 2013 to ask for a new concept in teaching German to migrants and refugees with no or hardly any knowledge in the language. These people included teachers from primary schools (some of them with a degree in teaching German as a foreign language, some without), teachers from secondary schools (some of them with a degree in teaching German as a foreign language, some without), teachers for adults (some of them with a degree in teaching German as a foreign language, some without), a social worker, and relatives of migrants who have already lived in Germany for some time and who know German at least to some degree. They got along well with people who had already acquired a certain command of the language. But they were all not very happy with the currently used concepts and materials in teaching German to beginners with no or almost no prior knowledge. At best, people felt that the material was not efficient enough; some things were even considered ineffective. This included the concepts and materials for all age-groups, those for children at primary and secondary school as well as the concept for adults by the Bundesamt für Migrations- und Flüchtlingshilfe (BAMF). In many teaching materials, looking at the first unit is enough to see that this cannot work. Very frequently, first units give the learner explanations on the use of the informal address pronoun *du* and the formal address pronoun *Sie*. The explanations are given in German—precisely the language that the learners cannot understand yet. The teachers are quite left alone and not provided with systematic guidelines to explain words and structures of German to people who cannot understand the language except for a few words. This shows how well composed the material for beginners has to be, it shows that the authors of the material have to know what they are doing, that they have observed how others have used their material and that they themselves have taught with their material. The complexity also explains why so few applied linguists, foreign-language teaching researchers and second-language teaching researchers have wanted to specialize in developing models for teaching a foreign language to beginners. And if they do, they mostly concentrate on some individual aspects, but do not dedicate their time to an encompassing, holistic model that makes the start of teaching and learning a new language as smooth as possible. In addition, most concepts are based on 45-minute or 90-minute lessons one to three times a week; they start at certain points in the year and end a few months later. However, migrants and refugees do not and cannot respect such dates. In larger cities, there may be the means to have a new course started every other week or every month, but in small-town and rural areas, there are not. In sum, there were several aspects that made people ask for an efficient crash course so that newly arrived migrants would master the first phases of their new life in Germany.

With its expertise in BGE and LWO, the EHP offered the Bundesamt für Migrations- und Flüchtlingshilfe as well as the Bavarian ministry for Social Affairs its expertise and support in developing an improved concept for the beginner's level. Both used a concept that comprehends 300 to 500 45-minute lessons (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, s.a.). The system is structured in modules. The introductory module, getting to know each other, consists of ten 45-minute lessons. This appears didactically (and financially) uneconomically extended. Unfortunately, both authorities declined the offer, denying that any additional expertise from our part would be necessary. Since the number of people asking for an efficient language course was growing, though, the EHP nevertheless started creating a new concept for teaching German to beginners so that migrants and refugees can master essential bricks for everyday and emergency situations in their new life and are provided with the means to consolidate and enlarge their knowledge of German on their own; the efficiency aspects should also respect economic/financial constraints. The name that the concept was given is *Sprach-Not-Arzt* (SNA), 'Language Emergency Doctor' or 'First Aid Language Doctor'. According to our first experience, it is a concept that, if the goal is to provide learners with the basic communicative tools for elementary (basically oral) situations in their lives and a large set of generally useful linguistic structures, is several times more efficient than central traditional concepts. The team that has been developing it consists of Joachim

Grzega (Director of the EHP), Claudia Sand (Vice-Director of the EHP) and Sandra Schweihofer (External Project Appointee at the EHP).

## Theoretical Background

Setting up an encompassing, effective and efficient teaching model requires from the creators of a new model that they should be free from any empirically unfounded ideologies. One such empirically unfounded ideology current in foreign-language teaching in Germany is that foreign-language lessons have to exclude the mother-tongue of the learners. It is a principle that is solidly entrenched in many curricula although our and other's experience shows that this principle's efficiency and even effectiveness for mastering bricks of a foreign language is doubtful (cf., e.g., Butzkamm/Caldwell 2009, Grzega/Stenzenberger 2011: 56, Grzega 2014). It is as if goal and path were not kept apart. The goal of being capable of communicating entirely in the foreign language does not necessarily have to be the path trodden. As a matter of fact, the efficiency of Basic Global English and the Language Workout method lies precisely in the well reflected inclusion and exclusion of the learner's mother-tongue. The challenge of our task, however, was that learners and teacher do not share a common language. The rule was rather that the learners have different mother-tongues and cannot even be expected to master English as a comfortably applicable *lingua franca*, even if many do know quite a lot of single English words. We are also aware of the great potential that lies in the model *Lernen durch Lehren*, i.e. to delegate as many teaching tasks as possible to the learners (e.g. Martin 1985, Grzega/Klüsener 2012). However, with a group that does not share the same meta-language and with participants whose experience with learning/teaching settings may be many years back this seemed hardly applicable in a crash course.

What still counts, however, is that learners need to experience very quickly that they can produce quite complex sentences after a relatively short amount of time; in other words, they quickly should experience flow effects (cf. Csikszentmihalyi 1990). We assume that due to their new life in Germany, learners automatically have a certain amount of intrinsic motivation, but they also need to be given space for learning vocabulary and structures that they consider particularly vital for their life (cf., e.g., Ryan/Deci 2000).

We are also aware of differences between children, teenagers and adults as learners. We are aware of some of the myths, but we also know that some findings may not necessarily be true for the specific groups of migrants and refugees. One of the myths is that children learn faster than adults. However, children were shown to neither acquire their mother tongue, nor a second language as easily and quickly as often believed. Adults acquire foreign languages in institutional settings, at least at an early stage, more rapidly than children, even though less clearly for pronunciation and morphological-syntactical items. As far as vocabulary and pragmatics are concerned, adult learners benefit from their developed cognitive resources and their higher linguistic and encyclopaedic knowledge (cf. Grotjahn 2003: 33, Quetz 2007: 464f.). But even concerning pronunciation, it could be shown that adult learners can reach a near-native level in pronunciation with the appropriate support in institutional or even natural learning settings (cf. Grotjahn 2003: 34). Further, studies show that the speed and success of language learning varies more among adults than among children. According to Grotjahn, this is because variables such as quality of input, cognitive competences or personality are more relevant for adults (cf. Grotjahn 2003: 34). All in all, these findings do not support the frequently quoted critical period hypothesis which claims that there is a fixed biological phase for acquiring a second language (cf. also Edmondson/House 2006: 181). Nevertheless, there seem sensitive periods particularly apt for acquiring certain aspects of a foreign language such as pronunciation and lexis (cf. Grotjahn 2003: 34, Quetz 2007: 465f., Edmondson/House 2006: 179).

There are various hypotheses on the differences between young and old language learners, connected to neurological development, cognitive development, innate language acquisition mechanism, and psychological factors (cf. Grotjahn 2003: 34-36, also for the following explanations). Studies on neurological developments highlight that the plasticity of the human brain diminishes over the years. Resorting to Lenneberg, who advocated the idea of a critical period for language acquisition during the 1960's (cf. Grotjahn 2003: 34 and Edmondson/House 2006: 181f.), studies also claim that natural language acquisition is not possible after puberty due to the lateralisation of the left hemisphere. However, both hypotheses have met with criticism. Concerning the reduction of cerebral plasticity, it has been shown that neuronal structures can still be built until old age if stimuli are appropriate. Moreover, lateralisation was detected as present already from birth onwards. Models founded on cognitive developments rest on the assumption that children and adults acquire languages by using different mechanisms, children mostly through implicit, inductive processes, adults rather through explicit problem solving strategies. Only implicit learning mechanisms are said to enable the acquisition of near-native language competence (cf. also Edmondson/House 2006: 183). It can be observed, though, that adults that are very skilled in verbal analysis can acquire the same linguistic skills as children. Models supporting an innate language acquisition mechanism, too, are based on the idea that adults learn a foreign language through an explicit process, while children learn through an implicit process, which is linked to an innate language acquisition mechanism, or "language acquisition device (LAD)" in Chomsky's terms (cf. also Edmondson/House 2006: 134f. et passim). The LAD is often believed to be restricted to a critical biological period. Critics say that this position explains neither interpersonal variation in first-language acquisition well enough nor inductive input-oriented language acquisition connected to general learning mechanisms. Psychology-oriented studies on language learning cite Piaget's developmental theory, particularly the formal operational stage, said to last until the end of puberty. Afterwards, learners, according to the theory, prefer abstract problem-solving methods. Furthermore, children are characterized as more empathetic toward foreign cultures. Grotjahn (2003: 35) and Edmondson/House (2006: 183f.) point out that these arguments largely lack empirical evidence, however. Apart from these four types of theories, others have said that adults are less effective in acquiring foreign languages due to differences in the quality and quantity of input or due to negative transfer from their first language. Experience suggests, however, that adults rather benefit from their profound semantic knowledge in their mother-tongue. In retrospect, there seems to be a general lack of clear empirical data for all four types of explanations. The only thing that seems to be sure is that multidimensional explanations seem more powerful than unidimensional explanations. What has definitely been shown, however, is that adults with very good metalinguistic knowledge can achieve the same skills in a foreign language as children; adults should not be considered second-rate language learners (cf. also Grotjahn 2003: 36, Edmondson/House 2006: 186).

Adults can be said to differ considerably from each other regarding their motivation, their learning biography and their expectations of the course. Within one group of adult language learners, there might be, for example, professionally motivated as well as socially or culturally motivated students; participants who are working, others who are not working any more or are unemployed; some might have had more language lessons at school than the rest of the group, some may have spent time abroad, etc. (cf. Raasch 2007: 219). Heterogeneity is often believed to be significantly higher within adults' learner groups than within children's learner groups. However, especially with migrants and refugees, this description seems much less clear.

Groups of learners above age 60 show larger heterogeneity than groups of younger adults. This is due to the very different learning biographies, cognitive strategies, motivations and personalities of

the learners (cf. Berndt 2007: 471). Physical constraints due to age can be overcome if the teacher pays attention to this (cf. Berndt 2007: 471f., Grotjahn 2003: 36f.). We are also aware that teaching a language to children at primary school and kindergarten needs methodological adaptations (cf., e.g., Fröhlich-Ward 2007). What we will present in the following sections addresses predominantly teaching to adults and older teenagers.

## Selection of Language Elements

### Lexis

At the beginning, we based the selection of the words on the principles of the Basic Global English vocabulary (cf., e.g., Grzega 2005: 79-81, Grzega/Stenzenberger 2011: 50-52) and the textbook *Profil Deutsch* (Glaboniat et al. 2005), whose selection is in turn based on the levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. After the first experiments, this turned out to be too large for a such short course. We decided to respect the words for the following communicative tasks:

- giving information on oneself (name, spelling, phone number, address, date and place of birth, information on family)
- facilitating communication (indication of communicative difficulties, spelling)
- going shopping (requesting goods, asking for prices, paying for goods)
- going to authorities (municipal administration, bank, accommodation management, asking for and understanding appointments)
- asking for the way
- handling emergency situations (accident, illness, robbery, problems with accommodation)

In addition, there was to be a chance to study the vocabulary for personally important situations (e.g. factory worker vs. service worker vs. non-working mother of a baby). The selection is done in a self-section study at home or at the EHP (with a bilingual dictionary or a picture dictionary). With blank cards, the learner prepares the upper half of a word-card. The German equivalent and the necessary grammatical forms are given by the teacher in the last meeting.

### Grammar

The concept aims to provide learners with active mastering of the following grammar items:

- all persons in present and perfect tense, in active voice
- construction with modal auxiliaries
- nominative, accusative, dative, singular and plural – nouns (incl. indefinite and definite articles) and adjectives
- personal pronouns – nominative, accusative, dative
- prepositions
- comparative
- some conjunctions

At least passive mastering should be achieved for the following chapters:

- subordinate clauses
- relative clauses

## Presentation of New Items

As already said, one of the powerful tools from BGE and the Language Workout method cannot be used with SNA, a common bridge language. Without a common bridge language also the power of morpheme-boundary dots used in BGE and LWO is questioned. What can be used, though, is body-language, hand-puppets and pictures. However, one must not think that body-language and pictures are always unequivocally clear. If gestures and pictures may already be interpretable among Germans, so they are if people from different cultures and different L1 vocabulary and grammar systems come together. Therefore, body-language and pictures must be used in small contrastive steps. The course begins with the teacher saying the following words very slowly with small pauses between words:

Teacher: “Hallo [hand wave]. Ich [pointing at oneself], ich bin XY [points at name tag]. Mein Name ist XY. Mein Familienname ist Y, mein Vorname X.”

‘Hello. I, I am XY. My name is XY. My family-name is Y, my given-name is X.’

Teacher takes hand-puppet and talks to it.

Teacher: “Hallo [hand wave]. Ich bin XY. Und Sie [pointing at puppet]?”

‘Hello. I am XY. And you?’

Puppet: “Ich bin Paul Meier.”

Teacher: “Wer? [mimicking not understanding] Sie sind wer? Wer sind Sie?”

‘Who? You are who? Who are you?’

Puppet: “Ich bin Paul Meier.”

Teacher: “Ah! Sie, Sie sind Paul Meier.”

Puppet: “Ja. Mein Familienname ist Meier, mein Vorname ist Paul.”

Teacher: “Und das? [pointing at another puppet, but not looking at the puppet when talking to Paul]. Wer ist das?”

‘And that? Who is that?’

Puppet: “Das ist Maria.”

Teacher: “Ah! Ich bin X. Sie sind Paul. Das ist Maria.”

Teacher: “Hallo! Ich bin X [pointing at oneself]. Und Sie? [asking each learner]”

The dialog may seem unnatural, but this way learners understand what is said. Learners have a higher chance to understand that *ich* means ‘speaker; I’ and *Sie* means ‘addressee; you’ and that there are additional forms to be combined with them if you ask for the name even if their languages lack a copula verb here (e.g. Russian). Then the dialog is presented in written form and the words are also provided with symbols. The forms *bin* ‘am’ and *sind* ‘are’, for instance, are represented by an equal sign. (Adult learners will normally be provided with basic mathematical skills, but with teenagers we use the symbol of a finger pointing left words to the symbol before).

In the next unit, the pattern *ich bin* is enlarged *ich bin aus [Deutschland]* and supplemented by the synonymic phrase *ich komm-e aus [Deutschland]*. The morpheme dot marks the morpheme boundary in the written text, but also indicates a little pause or ritardando in speaking, so that the morphemes are also audible when they are presented. Later on, a more natural talk is used, of course, as with the use of the mother-tongue in BGE and LWO. The symbols, gestures and artificial speaking are thus the SNA transformation of the native (or bridge) language roles in BGE and LWO under the specific conditions of working in a group without a common bridge language. The learners, however, are encouraged to add literal translations (interlinear glosses) in their mother-tongue above the morphemes. The teacher shows this by doing an example in English.

The difference between *Sie* and *du* is also introduced by pantomiming: “Woher kommen Sie, Paul? -- Woher kommst Du, Paul? Sie, du. Sie, Präsident, Doktor, Professor (with a gesture indicating distance, holding the hand-puppet in the extended arm). Ah, Du” (embracing hand-puppet, close to the body). Woher komm-en Sie, Präsident, Doktor, Professor? (with a gesture indicating distance, holding the hand-puppet in the extended arm). Woher komm-st Du?”. We use Präsident, Doktor, Professor, because these are good international words, in the sense that they are well known all over the world. The introduction of *Sie* can also be accompanied by a bow, but the bow should be quite small, as otherwise the learner is more likely to think that the *Sie/Du* can be non-reciprocal and indicates the use of a person lower in rank to a person higher in rank (e.g. if the learner is from East Asia). In our two-dimensional symbols the *Sie* and the *du* symbol are the same except for the size, which is to indicate distance. The *Sie* symbol is smaller and accompanied by an arrow indicating the size so that it can also be distinguished from the *Du* symbol when the two are not directly contrasted.

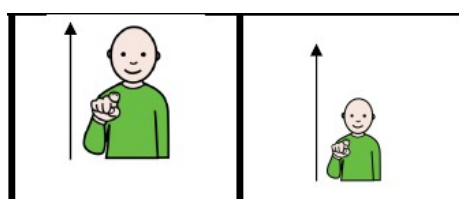


Fig. 1: The symbols for Du and Sie

Also of note, the morphemic boundaries are clarified by building the words. The learner meets the words in this row: *Name* > *Familiennamen* ‘family name’ > *Vorname* ‘given name, first name’. *Familiennamen* is consciously introduced before *Vorname*, as *Familie* sounds closer to the international *family*. Even if learners do not know much English, a high percentage of them may know *family* from some slogan or proper name found in global pop culture.

The pictures we use are really only static symbols. And not every picture is clear, not even when it is a concrete object like dog. When a word is introduced, it needs to be introduced with acting, with few, but unhectic and clear body language. The new word is here also embedded in a sentence where all other elements are clear. No other new words must be used in the presentation. The word is also contrasted with a neighboring concept. *kaufen* ‘buy’ always includes money, *nehmen* ‘take’ is more general. Particularly if the word is not present in the learner’s native language, it is helpful if the new word is presented in 3 contexts. Such an un-international words is, for instance, *brauchen*, which the teacher can present like this:

“[pantomimes pain] Ah, Doktor! Ich brauche Sie, Doktor. -- [pantomimes thirst]: Wasser! Ich brauche Wasser! -- [pantomimes interest in object in front; pantomimes look at a price tag]: Oh, 2 Euro! [searches pocket!] 2 Euro! Ich brauche 2 Euro!”  
 ‘Ah, Doctor! I need you, Doctor. -- Water! I need water! -- Oh, 2 Euros! 2 Euros! I need 2 Euros!’

Each vocabulary card consists of a picture in the upper half and the lexeme in the lower one. As an additional aid, verbs are given a double frame. Other word-classes are given a single frame. Adjectives are mostly represented as scalar pictures (e.g. ‘loud’) or where two contrastive picture are combined and the one in question is highlighted by a frame, e.g. (‘simple’).

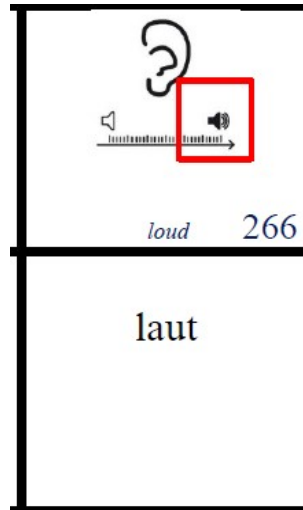


Fig. 2: The cards for 'loud' and 'simple' (index numbers show position in vocabulary section)

The picture for 'good' includes a thumb-up gesture, typical in Germany. A few years ago, these would not have become ideal pictures, as the thumb-up gesture was not global as a positive gesture; as a matter of fact, it was quite a rude gesture in many countries. Due to Facebook the gesture has become more known as a sign for 'likeable, positive, good, ok'. Nevertheless, our current version of the materials accompanies the thumb-up gesture with a smiling face.



Fig. 3: The symbol for 'good/well'

If pictures could not include something well international, it was tried to use the picture of something that learners were likely to come across in their new life in Germany, e.g. the picture of a couple just marrying or married.



Fig. 4: The symbol for 'married'

A few pictures include numbers, for example the pictures for 'sure', 'probable', 'possible', 'simple', and 'difficult'. Some are used next to another picture, for instance those for 'hot' and 'cold'.

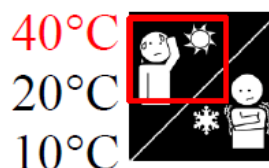


Fig. 5: The symbol for 'hot'

As already said, learners of this age (in contrast to teenagers) mostly have some basic knowledge of mathematical figures and signs. In general, though, such use is kept to a minimum. Since quite a number of learners do have some knowledge of English, we have now also created a version where



the pictures are supplemented by (potentially easy) English words. In addition, we encourage learners to add the equivalent in their mother-tongue in the picture-part of the card.

Whenever a new vocabulary item is introduced, it shows the picture in the upper half and the German word in the lower half. Later, after one to three sentences of practice, the lower half is folded back so that only the picture is visible. Sometimes we have a whole list of new words. Here, we give learners time to look at the cards and try to memorize them.

To our knowledge, although some concepts use pictures, this specifically reflected selection and presentation of pictures is new. Entirely new, as far as we know, is also the use of pictures to render grammatical information, particularly case, plural, definiteness, and tense. The following figure shows the sentence *Haben Sie den Unfall gesehen* ‘Did you see the accident’ with the grammatical symbols in the upper line: for nominative, past, accusative and definiteness.

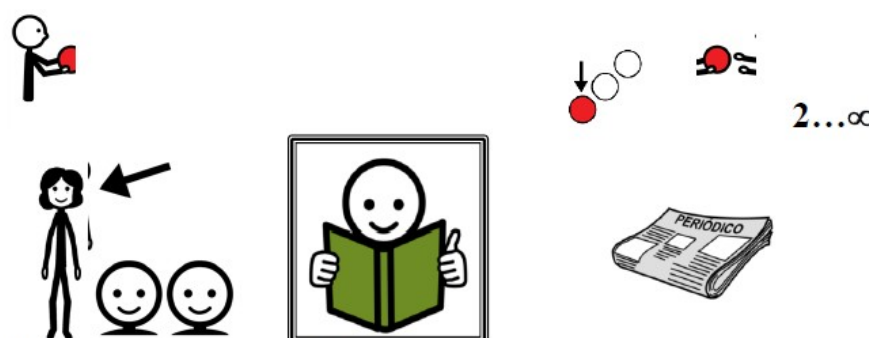


Fig. 6: The sentence for ‘she is reading the newspapers’ in SNA word-cards and grammar-cards

Here, too, all these categories are far from being universal, and they must therefore be introduced in well-reflected steps. The case system, for instance, should be presented with a verb that typically includes an agent, an object and a beneficiary, e.g. giving or buying. At first sight, introducing the accusative with *haben* ‘have’ may seem useful, as *have* is such a frequent verb. However, many languages do not have an equivalent of E. *have* ~ G. *haben* (they express possession with ‘be’, e.g. a literal translation of *To me is a car* instead of *I have a car*). This would put additional cognitive strain on the learner, which the concept should avoid. To make the case system clear, we use a prototypical agent-object-beneficient verb with a masculine definite noun: *Der Lehrer gibt dem Arzt den Ball*. We do not use a feminine or a neuter word, because nominative and accusative forms of the definite article are the same, which would represent an obstacle in captivating the differentiation in the German case system at first sight. If the case system is to be introduced, there is no need in veiling the nominative-accusative distinction first by choosing a feminine or neuter noun. What we rather do is showing a sentence with nominative and accusative as a first step and then using a sentence that also integrates the dative case. After the three genders in the singular and plural are presented step-by-step (in slow-motion pronunciation, with an exaggerated lengthening of the endings), we then also give a table that encompasses the case and gender forms of the definite article, the indefinite article and the possessive determiner of the first person. At this point we also give learners time to look at the table and try to memorize the first forms. In our SNA concept we abstain from those noun classes that still show suffixes in the dative and accusative, e.g. *Präsident* (*der Präsident, dem Präsidenten, den Präsidenten*) and *Junge* (*der Junge, dem Jungen, den Jungen*); in both cases, Germans have to a large degree given up using these endings—even in elaborated oral contexts and even in many written contexts. For similar reasons, we have decided to ignore the genitive case at the beginner’s level.

The cases are first referred to as *Wer-Form* ‘Who form’, *Wen-Form* ‘Whom form’ and *Wem-Form* ‘To-Whom form’; if the learners are comfortable with it, we also use *Nominativ*, *Akkusativ*, and *Dativ*. Also other technical terms are first avoided as far as possible. For the infinitive, for example, we say *Basis-Form* and, after the word for dictionary is introduced, *Wörterbuch-Form*. For the first person singular, we say *Ich-Form*.

Whenever we introduce a grammar unit, we try to present some of regular pattern, which we label *normal*, as this is a good international word. To introduce the present tense forms, we first use words that do not show ablaut in the 2nd and 3rd person. To introduce past tense (*Perfekt*), we first present the first-person pattern “ich habe ge-BASE-t”. With the plural, we present the suffix *-en* as (highly) “normal” for feminine nouns and *-e* for masculine and neuter nouns. Everything else is unnormal. Normal comparatives end in *-er*. To see where the abnormalities can be, it becomes clear to the learner why each noun card shows two lines (article + noun; plural form), each verb card three lines (infinitive; 3rd person singular present tense; 3rd person singular past tense) and an adjective card potentially two lines (the second line for irregular). In its current version, the plural of nouns as well as the 3rd persons of present and past tense are also noted down even if the forms are regular, just for the sake of practising forms.

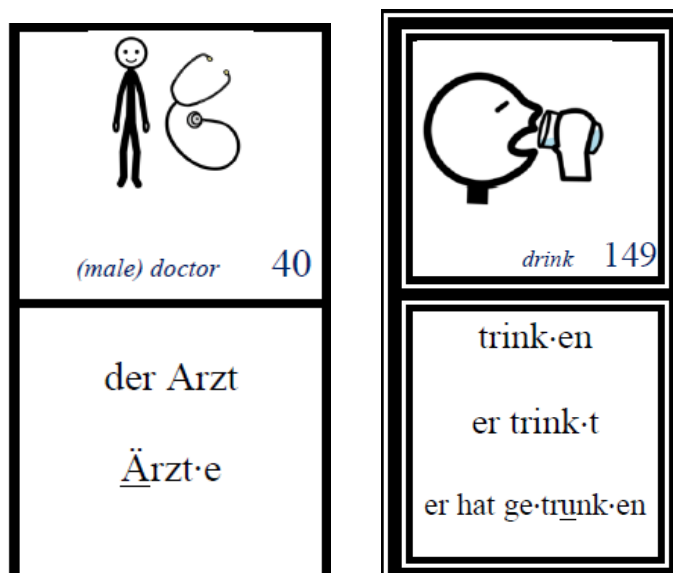


Fig. 7: The word-cards for the noun for ‘doctor, physician’ and the verb for ‘drink’

A challenging chapter is the difference between the indefinite and the definite article. We try to visualize the indefinite article as “categorizing” and the definite article as “referring to categorized and known element”. Other chapters that might cause confusion are the position of *nicht* and the modal auxiliaries. Depending on the strength of the learner group, we decide on the depth of dealing with these topics. At any rate, some forms of the modal auxiliaries have to be mastered for communicative competence, which means that there must be a successful semanticization.

With many grammar items, learners will be confronted with non-standard uses, especially as far as the case system and pronunciation is concerned. The learners are made aware of that with the label “Standard” und “Non-Standard/Nicht-Standard/Dialekt”.

Another element that had turned very useful in the Language Workout method was the abundant use of memory hooks. Here, extensive use of puns with the native language of the learners was used. Again, this is not possible with heterogeneous learner groups. Here, the only way is to work with

gestures and special writing, with voice modulation (e.g. saying *langsam* ‘slow’ very slowly and *schnell* ‘quick’ very quickly, *laut* ‘loud’ very loudly and *leise* ‘soft’ very softly), and—not to be underestimated—internationally known words and names. The word *Arzt* ‘doctor, physician’ can be introduced with the help of *artist*: “Ein Arzt ist ein Artist, ART-I-ST > ARTST > ARZT.” The word *Anwalt* ‘lawyer’ can be introduced like this: “Mein Anwalt ist Walt Disney’s Mickey Mouse”. The word *teuer* ‘expensive’ is presented like this: “teuer: Euro > teuro > teuer.” Of course, the memory hooks may also include German words already known.

Toward the end of the materials there are several dialogs with language bricks we consider frequent or basic in these types of situations. Here again, the teacher needs to make sure that all morphemes are semanticized and that the learners master the relevant patterns actively.

## How the Language Elements are Trained

There are several ways to train the words. The first is that people should practice the dialogues and sentences in the material. The teacher reads them out, the learners following the printed words. When the learners themselves speak the phrases, they should, however, look up from the text. The teacher needs to explain this by pantomiming the technique.

The translation exercises used in LWO are replaced by pictures-to-sentence “translations”, or pictures-to-sentence transformations, through picture sequences as the one in Fig. 6. The picture sequences are only minimally changed for the next sentence in order to strengthen the habitualisation process. One item is exchanged or the sentence is rendered structurally slightly more complex. As with LWO, it is important that all learners focus on the pictures at all time. This is why it is important that the teacher does not call one of the learners too quickly. The pictures are presented first such as in Fig. 6, then some time is given, then a learner is randomly selected. Everybody must be prepared to be selected, and therefore there is a higher chance that everybody has produced a sentence in their head. At first, though, the teacher may need to make clear that everyone should think on the correct sentence as soon as the pictures are shown. If a learner is selected, the learner is given enough time to formulate the sentence under as little stress as possible, e.g. by not looking into the learner’s eyes.; at this exercise point, however, others should not shout out the right solution. Another challenge is to bridle extroverted participants that keep shouting out solutions, impeding others in finding solutions on their own. If learners who have understood something want to tell this to slower learners with a common language, this is only fine when a new task is presented (and corresponds with LdL [Grzega/Klüsener 2012]). If a learner commits a lexical error, the teacher may point at the respective picture and say *Das ist nicht [basic form]* ‘This is not [basic form]’. The learner is then given the chance for self-correction. If the grammatical form is incorrect (e.g. *er hat getrinkt* instead of *er hat getrunken* ‘he drank’), the teacher says *Das Wort ist korrekt, aber die Form ist nicht korrekt* ‘The word is correct, but the form is not correct’. If only the grammatical category is wrong (e.g. singular instead of plural), the teacher quickly shows which good sentence the learner produced, but changing the grammatical line in his picture sequence, saying *Das ist [repeating the learner’s sentence]. Und das ist ... [showing original picture sequence]?* ‘This is [repeating the learner’s sentence]. And this is ... [showing original picture sequence]?’ Each correct solution is echoed by the teacher.

The pictures-to-sentence task also allows the introduction of new words. At first, the lower half is still visible. After one to three sentences, the lower half is folded back. The picture-to-sentence tasks are central in our concept, as these allow to practice building complete sentences. Our first informants have confirmed that, while vocabulary training can be well done on one’s own, training linguistic structures is more effective with a teacher, who can give help for finding the right structure

and who can give further explanations for discriminating different structures. Keeping in mind that not all grammatical forms (cases of determiners and pronouns) can be learned at once, learners are allowed to look at the grammatical tables. Some need to learn to work with a table of rows and columns any way. In the evaluation process, we also treat mistakes from higher developmental stages of the learning process (cf., e.g., Pienemann 1986 as well as Diehl et al. 2000, and summarized in Roche 2005: 110ff.) as less serious than mistakes on lower stages. After all, the main goal is to provide the learners an understanding of how German works structurally. Of course, the communicative competence shall still be in the fore.

The picture cards can also be used to create drills of useful patterns or lexico-grammatical chunks in the sense of Lewis's (1997) lexical approach or in Butzkamm's (2002: 209ff.) illustrations—or constructions in the sense of construction grammar (e.g. Ellis 2013). A pattern drill for explaining the way is the use of three lines: (1) The bottom line varies between *gehen* 'go' and *fahren* 'drive', (2) the middle line between varies buildings or objects in the street, (3) the top line between links 'left', rechts 'right', geradeaus 'straight on'. The learners are then presented pictures to form sentences

'You go to the church and then you turn left',  
 'You go to the church and then you turn right',  
 'You go to the town-hall and then you turn right',  
 etc.

The sentences may be formed by the group collectively or through rapid random selection of single learners by the teacher. Each correct solution is echoed by the teacher. Pattern drills should not end up in parroting, though. They must be structured in a way that learners have to think about the correct form.

After all grammar chapters there is a series of more or less long dialogs for central situations (such as reporting an accident, reporting a theft, opening an account, paying, talking to the municipal administration). The dialogs also include some more new words and structures. At this point, learners cannot expect to memorize everything. But the teacher needs to make sure that every brick and every rule is understood.

Moreover, as in LWO and BGE, there are, every now and then and particularly at the end, brief dialogic phases where some information is given to the learners, now solely through pictures, and a learner has to ask questions on fictitious people presented in a table or, at a later stage, lead a dialog with the teacher (or another learner), for instance reporting pain in the stomach to the doctor. An example of a picture-driven dialog is Fig. 8, where one learner has to go to the doctor to report how the leg got broken.

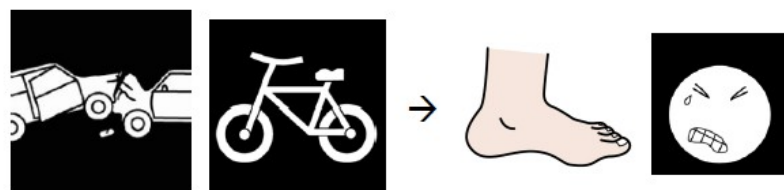


Fig. 8: Instructions for a learner who has to play a patient

If there is a doctor among the learners, the learner can play the doctor; otherwise, the role is played by the teacher. In such sections, the teacher may also use unknown words so that the the

learners train to find their way through such communicative obstacles. Here, the teacher does not correct directly. Only at the end of a dialog may some central errors be practiced with intelligent pattern drills. If a complex construction turns out problematic for the learner, then the teacher guides the learner to the construction through simpler intermediate constructions that are trained like pattern drills. If the learner, for instance, says “Erst ich muss gehen zur Bank.” instead of “Erst muss ich zur Bank gehen.” ‘I have to go to the bank first; literally: First must I to-the bank go’, the pattern can be trained like this:

Teacher: “Ich muss zur Bank gehen.”

Learner: “Ich muss zur Bank gehen.”

Teacher: “Erst muss ich zur Bank gehen.”

Learner: “Erst muss ich zur Bank gehen.”

Teacher: “Erst muss ich zur Bank gehen, dann kann ich zahlen.” [‘..., then I can pay.’]

Learner: “Erst muss ich zur Bank gehen, dann kann ich zahlen.”

Teacher: “Erst muss ich zur Bank gehen, dann kann ich Bier kaufen.” [‘... buy beer’]

Learner: “Erst muss ich zur Bank gehen, dann kann ich Bier kaufen.”

Teacher: “Wasser.” [‘water’]

Learner: “Erst muss ich zur Bank gehen, dann kann ich Wasser kaufen.”

Teacher: “Erst muss ich zur Bank gehen, dann kann ich Wasser kaufen.”

Teacher: “Saft.” [‘juice’]

Learner: “Erst muss ich zur Bank gehen, dann kann ich Saft kaufen.”

Teacher: “Erst muss ich zur Bank gehen, dann kann ich Saft kaufen.”

Teacher: “Erst muss ich zur Apotheke gehen, dann kann ich Saft kaufen.” [‘...to the pharmacy...’]

Learner: “Erst muss ich zur Apotheke gehen, dann kann ich Saft kaufen.”

Teacher: “Post” [‘post-office’]

Learner: “Erst muss ich zur Post gehen, dann kann ich Saft kaufen.”

Teacher: “Bahnhof” [‘train-station’; gender change without indication = intelligent pattern drill]

Learner: “Erst muss ich zum Bahnhof gehen, dann kann ich Saft kaufen.”

This, as mentioned above, is done after a dialog. Otherwise, in the dialog, the teacher understands intelligible and does not understand unintelligible utterances. Dialogic exercises which require training in listening comprehension should not be underestimated either.

With pronunciation errors, it will not suffice that the teacher simply gives the model pronunciation. Learners are often not aware of the difference and is thus often not aware where the error is. The teacher needs to imitate what the learner said and juxtapose it to the correct pronunciation. After contrasting words, it may be necessary to isolate the sounds first. While wrong lip position and tongue position between the teeth are quite easily demonstratable, the use of the speech organs and places behind the teeth can be less easily shown. Here, the teacher needs to work with gestures again. The hand may be used to show the form of the tongue. To show the vibration of the vocal chords, the hand can be placed at the throat and vibrate. An additional difficulty comes with assimilations and unstressed syllables: learners must be aware of slow distinct speech and fast slightly slurred speech. A particular problem is the difference between the variants of [ə] (in South Germany normally [ɛ]) and [ɐ] (with and without a /r/-sound in distinct lento speech). Most learners will understand that in writing the second set of variants is represented by <-er>, the first by <-e>. Another difficulty is the middle sound of words such as *gehen*, which may be realized as [ge:hən], [ge:jən] or [ge:n]. Also because of this, a lot of teacher input is necessary, easily provided by the teacher echo. Sometimes, the right pronunciation of a German sound may be by way of another sound in the foreign learner’s system (if the teacher is familiar with the respective phonemic inventory of the learner’s mother-tongue). For example, some Slavic people use [u] instead of [y].

Here, the way to the correct pronunciation may be via [i:]. “Es ist wie [i:]. Aber so: ...” ‘It is like [i:] But this way: ...’. “[rounding lips]: [y:]. [i:] [y:]. [i:y:]”. Alternatively, learners may be encouraged to go from [u:] to [i:] in slow-motion; there will normally a fraction of a second where there will be [y:]. This is the moment where the learner should be encouraged to “freeze” his speech-organs.

In dialog exercises (role-plays), several learners do immediately very well, but many learners put themselves under stress and fall back into telegraphic style first (even if they proved a high command of the language in picture-to-sentence translations). As long as the words are correct and the sense gets clear, the teacher values this as successful. In addition, the learners should be reminded that they have already practice a lot of bricks that they “simply” need to use. A selection of these structures may be practiced again after the role-play situation. And the learner may get another situation where s/he can try to apply these bricks again.

## Organization of Contact Time and Self-Study

We have experimented with different contact time models with adult learners: five 4-hour meetings (with 3-day or 4-day intervals), three 4-hour meetings with larger intervals (for self-studying), three 7-hour days in a row without a self-study part, six 4-hour days in a row (except the weekend), three 7-hour days in a row with a self-study half-day in the morning of Day 3, three 7-hour days in a row without a self-study half-day in the morning of Day 3. The fewer the contact hours, the more financially realisable the concept. But financial efficiency must nevertheless also meet with educational effectiveness. Therefore, the last version seems the most possible minimum of contact hours. For further self-study we have created vocabulary-lists (including audio files) and additional pictures-to-sentence exercises. As with LWO, we have had the experience that there is a considerably high percentage of learners who do not complete their self-study tasks or do not work with the freely downloadable audio files the way they are supposed to work with. This seems particular frequent among participants who do shift-work. Therefore, we consider the block variant the best one. In addition, we have given learners advice to gradual practice the language in real life, e.g. by asking a question to which the learners already know the answer so that they can fully concentrate on pronunciation or by making initially telegraph-like answers systematically more and more complex. Since the memorization of single words is less problematic, the contact times should predominantly be used for building sentences. Grammatical adequateness is also the most difficult area for error spotting – the formulation of complete sentences is also what learners lacked most. This is also what our first learners gave us as feedback. The material therefore consists of the following three parts: (1) chapters for the contact phases (with scripted dialogs, ideas for non-scripted dialogs, and grammar chapters), (2) chapters for self-study (either the first part of Day 3 and/or after the last contact phase) and tips for training in real life, (3) the vocabulary items.

## Feedback

From the very start we received positive feedback from participants, simply because they could quickly formulate German sentences. We still tried to further improve the concept and consider the last three courses as minimal variants of SNA as it should be (three 7-hour days or six 4-hour days). Together there were 25 people. Two couples from Serbia quit because they received the message that they had to leave Germany, one woman from Turkey fell ill during the course, one man from Macedonia quit after the first day because he already had too much prior knowledge. The remaining 19 participants unanimously gave positive feedback on the teaching concept. Some even explicitly contrasted the experiences with the SNA concept to other language teaching experience they had had in their life. They all would have loved to continue lessons according to this method.

There have by now also been a number of non-participant observers who also teach German to foreigners. All of them have given positive feedback, too, and acknowledged the high efficiency of the concept. Meanwhile some of them have adopted the concept in their teaching; others plan to do it.

## Experiments with Younger Learners

We also worked with teenagers aged 10 to 15 with three-hour sections twice a week and have developed an adapted version for this age-group. Here, we had to take into consideration that the attention span is shorter than with adults. Nevertheless, we have again had the feeling that it would be better to have SNA lessons on a daily basis and not just twice a week. With youth in general, it turned out that it is more difficult to get and keep attention. Explanations before exercises are not necessarily listened closely before the first pictures-to-sentence exercises. They need to be made more aware than adult learners that it is necessary that the lower half of a picture has to be memorized in full. Tutoring is necessary, too, when teenagers are supposed to cut out the word-cards and study them. Some do not know that a text is normally read one line after the other. Some need help in working with the grammatical tables (but this may also be the case with adults). Further, it seems necessary to introduce other tasks in order to get more varied teaching. However, each additional type of task that the teacher integrates must not lead away from efficient treatment of linguistic forms. If more physical elements are used, then moving around in the classroom for example must not take away too much time, which would be lost for dealing with the language. Also of note, if a word is presented in three different contexts, younger teenagers often focus too much on the last context, which may lead to a misinterpretation of the word. Here a quick repetition of the three contexts is required. Moreover, using numbers may be a problem. Some children have not even dealt with basic mathematics yet and may be taught this as well; similarly, this holds true for telling the time. All these things have been respected in the SNA material for the age-group 10-15. The relative effectiveness of the concept has also been acknowledged by two teachers who have visited parts of our experiments. Both considered the method highly useful, both for teaching German in general and the specific situations of integrating newly arrived migrants/refugees in a rapid way.

In addition, we have carried out first experiments with children at kindergarten, who do not know reading yet. While the principle of pictures for both lexical and grammatical information can be kept, the selection of words and the sequence of grammatical items and also the presentation of grammatical items will require some changes. Naturally, the steps must be much smaller. Some things are still debated among us. For instance, if so many masculine and neuter nouns in the children's vocabulary deviate from the basic plural "attach -e", does it make sense at all to introduce such a rule? Or: where are the cognitive capacities sufficient to understand (metalinguistically) the structures of the German language, where are they not sufficient? Due to the experiences with BGE, we know that metalinguistic skills are far higher among children than traditionally thought. But where are the limits, also in relation to fine age differences? Can what we need still be considered a variant of SNA or is it something new?

## Conclusion and Outlook

The model we have presented for adults and teenagers requires, of course, that the learners are literate. If they are not, an alphabetization module needs to precede the actual SNA course. Some are literate, but only on an elementary level; they still need a lot of time to decipher letters. We have also observed that sometimes pictures and the accompanying explanations were immediately clear to refugees from Armenia, Georgia and the Ukraine, but not to those from Syria—we still need to

sort out why this is and how it can be avoided. Thus we shy away from any concrete statements on the efficiency of SNA at this stage. But according to our first experiments with SNA, the concept in its block model version could be several times as efficient as the concept that is used by the Bundesamt for Migrations- und Flüchtlingshilfe and the Bavarian Ministry for Social Affairs if the intended effect is the command of basic communicative competence in central situations of the learners' new lives.

The SNA concept has also turned out to be an effective supplement at school. Even if schools offer particular school classes for refugees and migrants, this is not an optimal tool to integrate children who come to a school during the school year (or even those who come to a school at the start of a school-year, but hardly a command of the language). Class-teachers cannot optimally take care of the newcomer. The SNA concept is a helpful efficient concept in such contexts.

The material provided by the Bundesamt for Migration and Flüchtlingshilfe and many other books for teenagers and adults are very good advanced resources to consolidate and enhance the skills acquired through the SNA material. Once again, it should be underlined that both tasks the pictures-to-sentence task and the dialogic task are important for acquiring active and passive language skills. With the role-plays on Day 3 we enter a more task-based learning approach. Depending on the learner group, acquired skills will also allow to use more elements of the LdL teaching concept. LdL can also be integrated in the sense that the teacher allows learners to explain something to other learners in a common bridge language (which they sometimes do automatically anyway). LdL should also be used in further lessons where the skills are trained and enlarged.

Finally, we are also convinced that most basic SNA principles are well applicable to teaching other European languages. Although the order of the items presented may have to change, the exchange of "lexical" concepts by others may make sense and the use of other "grammatical" concepts with symbols may be necessary (e.g. for the category of aspect), the central types of tasks (pictures-to-sentence, picture-driven dialogs) and the teaching techniques will form a solid basis in helping migrants and refugees of different mother-tongues to acquire a working knowledge in a European language.

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