D-ESL

Implementation guide

Contents

INTRODUCTORY NOTES

Here we are at the end of our long journey in the D-ESL project. The path towards self-accomplishment was filled with challenges, but the motivation and engagement to go further revealed a lot of artefacts - to be read 'knowledge' - that we collected in order to improve our skills. Creating video games for educational purposes was an act of inspiration and cooperation, as five countries joined their expertise for the benefit of younger or older learners.

If you take a look at the **contents**, you will make a first and thorough image of the present guide's purpose. Indeed, by detailing each of the three main chapters, the readership will be informed in the first chapter **Our project results in a nutshell** of the project team in each partner organisation who built a motivated and fulfilled workforce to carry out all the project assignments. As regards more institutional details, they can be derived from the web page of D-ESL. The other half of this chapter is dedicated to the project's results from whom both teachers and learners may benefit from. On the one hand, educators will improve their teaching skills and

practice by having access to innovative digital resources and pedagogically adapted material for their English classes. On the other hand, the students will increase motivation and engagement as they develop language competences through educational video games.

It is utterly important to share practical experiences especially when the protagonists are the teachers and their students.

This is what chapter II **A framework of good practices, challenges and solutions** actually reflects: a collection of inspirational stories from our partners – three schools and two institutions based on educational researc – together with ups and downs during the testing stages. The testing phase was a crucial part of our project, as it proved the quality and functionality of the products. Moreover, we presented also the challenges faced in testing by each partner institution and provided tips on overcoming them. Was it difficult? YES! But we continued until everything was validated and worked correctly.

Education is the key to evolution: if teachers do not have proper material to effectively implement the curriculum, then all effort is in vain. It would be very interesting to read all the stories presented here and the strategies used by Italian, Macedonian and Romanian schools to reach their goals. At the same time, you may be eager to find out what was the perspective given by the Belgian and French innovation centres involved in nonformal education. Trust me, all have amazing experiences to share!

Don't be afraid to start the game! This is the message of our third and last chapter. Educational video games are a multifaceted resource, as they reflect not only gaming skills: they can be bridges to language acquisition, digital competences,

history, cultural gaining, literature, science, art, creativity to name but a few. Did we mention entertainment? Read the testimonials given by educators, trainers and experts who speak about the educational purposes of game-based learning.

In a word, visit our whole guide to find inspiration and practical advice for your language classes, be they formal or non-formal activities. Test our project tools yourself and be the next to **share your experience with us!**

OUR PROJECT RESULTS IN A NUTSHELL

Our project aims to support teachers in adopting **innovative tools and practices to create and use video games** in their courses to raise the motivation, engagement and participation of all their students, including trainees with Specific Learning Disorders (SLD). The project focuses on downloadable videogames through different tools such as Genial.ly, RPG Maker MV, Flowlab, or PowerPoint so as to raise the learners' motivation through non-formal and experiential learning around specific objectives to guide them towards improvement.

As the existing language learning games are often not adapted for students with SLDs, the inclusiveness of the games developed in this project reflects innovation and fosters greater participation and success rates for these learners as well.

Practically, the expert partners LogoPsyCom and YuzuPulse created a first batch of six pilot video games for ESL students and adapted to special learning needs which underwent a testing stage and feedback from language teachers. A second batch of thirty educational games was created by all the consortium partners and submitted

to testing and feedback, too. Of course, language teachers needed guidance and training to gather video gaming skills, therefore an e-learning module was realised for them.

You can read about all our D-ESL project's results in the following pages of the current chapter, hoping to find the necessary information to understand and use our work for the benefit of your own students. Let us first introduce the wonderful teams who made all these possible!

1.1. Meet our project team!

LOGOPSYCOM

Logopsycom, based in Belgium, is an education innovation centre. We are passionate about creating engaging and accessible learning experiences for all, digital and otherwise.

Our roots lie in our initial creation as a care company, with a specialised focus on specific learning disorders (SLDs), also known as "Dys" (e.g. dyspraxia, dysphasia, dyslexia, ...). While we have diversified our areas of expertise since then, our steady commitment to accessibility and inclusion remains at the core of our values.

We are a dedicated team of about 15 individuals, bringing a diverse range of expertise and a shared passion for education.

The team members involved in D-ESL include:

Bérenger, Director: Bérenger is an experienced project manager dedicated to innovating education. He focuses on making learning more inclusive and engaging for all.

Dorian, Project Coordinator: Trained as a computational linguist, he is passionate about languages, technology and education, and how to combine these three concepts.

CTMB

"Mihai Băcescu" Technical College from Fălticeni, Romania is a representative high school in Suceava County. For our European vision in education, we received from the Ministry of Education the title of EUROPEAN SCHOOL for five times already (now preparing for the 6th nomination), a reward which equally honours and motivates us. Our mission: to help students cope with the labour market demands and successfully integrate into society as European citizens.

Our team:

Radion Palaghia, History teacher holding a doctoral degree in this domain, teacher trainer, school principal

Țuca Mariana-Silvia, doctoral degree in Industrial Engineering, teacher trainer, deputy principal

Magdalena-Simona TRUȘCAN, D-ESL project coordinator, doctoral student, teacher trainer, EFL teacher

Oprișanu Anca, coordinator of school and extracurricular projects

Suseanu Claudia, coordinator of European projects at school level, teacher trainer

Mercore Roxana, English teacher, project researcher, translator

Murărescu Simona, Computer Science and ICT teacher, teacher trainer, IT/ITC specialist

Chirilă Silvia, Physics teacher, project researcher

Strugaru Mihaela, chief accountant

SABA

Knowledge creates possibilities, provides strength, and insight, all crucial in life. Education extends beyond the curriculum, and **SABA** has embodied this principle for the past decade. SABA, symbolizing knowledge and realization, aims to help students achieve skills and self-esteem. Our mission is to foster student's progress, offering small-group education to ensure personal attention. Our rigorous academic program prepares students for further education and exposes them to the corporate world through electives and service opportunities. SABA, Macedonia's first private secondary vocational school, aims to prepare students for professional success.

Our team:

Angela Nenovska Krstevska, a leading educator at SABA, integrates innovative business and administrative principles into high school education. Her extensive background in media and project management enriches the curriculum.

Elena Zarkovska, a Project Coordinator at SABA, excels in event planning, research, and project management, ensuring successful project execution and promoting educational outcomes.

Both leaders are committed to enhancing education and preparing students for a digitalized world.

SANSI LEONARDI VOLTA

"Sansi-Leonardi-Volta" from Spoleto, Italy was born on 1st September 2013 and counts about 1000 students. It has resulted from the merger of various historic schools in our city founded since 1861. One of the main objectives promoted by the school is the enhancement of language skills, with particular reference to Italian as well as to English, besides other languages of the European Union. The development of the students' digital skills is also fundamental for us, together with the critical and conscious use of social networks and media and the creation of links with the world of work.

Our team:

Michela Befani, English teacher, coordinator of Erasmus+ School Accreditation Programme funded by the EU
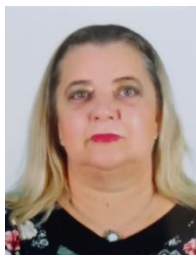
Stefania Aramini teaches Maths and Physics, is a Drama and Music expert
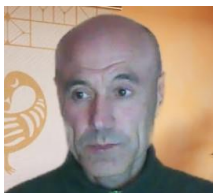
Fabio Paoletti, Maths and Physics teacher, IT facilitator

Serena Ruggeri is an English Teacher, Adjunct Professor of English Linguistics and Translation at the University of Perugia

YUZUPULSE

YuzuPulse's mission is to bring together technology, games, social and solidarity economy in Europe. We believe in the power of games and technology to actively engage anyone in the learning process, and encourage collaboration between learners. Since our creation in March 2018, we have participated as a partner or coordinator in 15 European Erasmus+ projects, to develop digital and playful tools for school education and vocational training. We support you in creating educational, training and European project management resources.

Our team:

Alice Godayol, CEO and project leader, co-founder of YuzuPulse to bring games into international projects

Pierre Ortalo, programmer and project coordinator, with a dual degree in game design and programming

Florian Carnini, project leader, managing IT projects in international groups, maker and taste for animating games

Louise Casas, project coordinator, Master's degree in European Studies, first internships in European projects

Quentin Séné, project coordinator and pedagogy expert, holder of a Master MEEF and a Master IRFA

1.2. Meet our project results!

The development of the project has been marked by gradual, consequent results:

R1: The booklet on engagement

Planned as a **guide for teachers**, it deals with the different situations of inclusive needs and their characteristics, and provides effective strategies to enhance learner involvement. Teachers can use this booklet to access various **educational approaches** and adapt their teaching methods effectively. The booklet is meant to be the basis of all the other activities proposed throughout the project, as it provides the theoretical knowledge of the approach.

R2: the Dys-friendly practice sheets

The second result of the project was represented by the creation of 30 DYS-friendly practice sheets in order to provide **targeted support for students with Specific Learning Disorders (SLDs)** in language learning environments. These sheets offer practical strategies and adaptations in educational content, making learning more accessible and effective for these students and not only. They could also contribute to empowering teachers with tools that facilitate inclusive education, thereby enhancing the learning experience for all students.

R3: Games and sequences

This was undoubtedly the most important result of the whole project, as well as the longest. It was developed into two phases:

- Firstly, the two expert partners created 3 games each so that the 3 schools involved could directly experience how an educational game should be

planned and created. At this level, the partner schools were involved in the testing phase both with teachers and students.

- Secondly, the second phase was the game-creation stage, during which 30 more games were created together with their respective pedagogical sequences and player's guides by all partners. Anyway, this part of the result creation was possible only after the fourth was completed, as follows.

R4: The creation tutorials

The R4 module offers a **comprehensive course for teachers** on creating their own educational games, covering everything from initial ideas to final game creation, including writing game scenarios. This MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) aims to enhance teachers' ability to provide a dynamic learning experience and empower them to innovate in their teaching methods. The course was positively tested by many teachers.

R5: Resources database

The Database Resources Sheets serve as a **practical complement** to our other resources, particularly our MOOC. These sheets are ideal for teachers who wish to explore the project's approach without committing to a full course. They offer a more autonomous route for those eager to test and implement new strategies. Included are **curated recommendations for useful software and platforms** to assist educators in creating engaging learning experiences.

R6: Implementation guide

The Implementation Guide is meant as a **tool** that consolidates insights from our project team alongside firsthand feedback from educators and students. We hope it can equip teachers **with actionable strategies and relatable examples**, aiming to enhance their ability to effectively integrate these new methodologies into their classrooms.

A FRAMEWORK OF GOOD PRACTICES, CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

2.1. Inspiring other teachers: practical experiences while using the project's results

It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge. - Albert Einstein [1]

What does it mean to be an inspiring teacher? Well... the question may have a bivalent understanding, knowing that the work of a teacher has a huge impact not only on students, but on other educators as well.

On the one hand, **inspirational teachers** bring magic into the classroom without carrying a wand or endorsing a cap. Their powerful gadget is education, and they

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[1] Quoted in Alice Calaprice, *The Ultimate Quotable Einstein*, p. 100.

use it to help young minds and characters develop into socially and professionally reliable citizens. Yet, no matter how hard they strive, they need additional tools to support and assist their didactic activity in order to motivate and engage young learners, who are nowadays less easy to satisfy and stimulate.

On the other hand, some teachers have the chance of being involved in designing and producing **innovatory pedagogical assets** so as to inspire their peers to use up-to-date pedagogical strategies instead of outdated and not very efficient ones. While each teaching practice is unique, the recommendations provided in the following pages are intended to inspire and spark creativity, fostering your inventiveness. We encourage readers to adopt and adapt our approaches to suit the specificities of their own teaching practices.
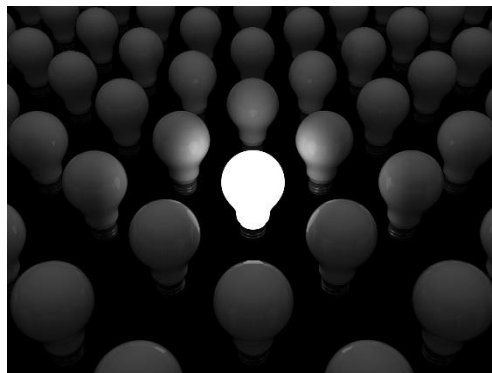
2.1.1. Practical experiences by CTMB

'Mihai Bacescu' Technical College from Falticeni, Romania, organised three testing stages for the D-ESL project results based on video games and digital course, as they had been planned in each partner institution.

Testing video games from the 1st batch

At this stage, the six pilot video games created by the expert partners were tested by **67 students** from 'Mihai Bacescu' Technical College in order to be able to make the necessary adaptations and modifications received after the feedback. The students aged between 14 and 17 years old came from either lower (e.g. 8th graders) or upper secondary school classes (e.g. 9th, 10th and 11th graders) with different specialisations from theoretical and technical profiles, which helped project analysts compare a wide range of answers. These answers had been collected by means of feedback questionnaires from both teachers and students so as to quantitatively and qualitatively determine the accomplishment of this stage.

These students had never been involved in any European project of such calibre; therefore, they were eager to participate in this activity which they considered very important for English acquisitions and entertaining. Finally, they were allowed to play video games during classes! More insight will be given in the last chapter of this guide, where a collection of testimonials and opinions is waiting for the readership. Moreover, **six students with specific learning disorders**, mainly **dyslexia and dysgraphia** were part of this testing phase. As the games created are adapted to such learners, they had no problem in ticking the class tasks while game playing. The games' text meets inclusive guidelines (sans-serif font, left alignment, 1,5 line spacing). Although the textual nature of the game will make it more

challenging for learners with reading difficulties and/or visual impairment, students can zoom in the entire page for a better view. They assimilated the lexical items before starting the gaming class and performed the tasks either individually or in groups of four members. For example, as 'Murder at the Manor' is a narrative game, the maximum number of players was two, so as to better collaborate. At the same time, the multiplayers had similar linguistic levels in order to eliminate learning frustration and pressure.

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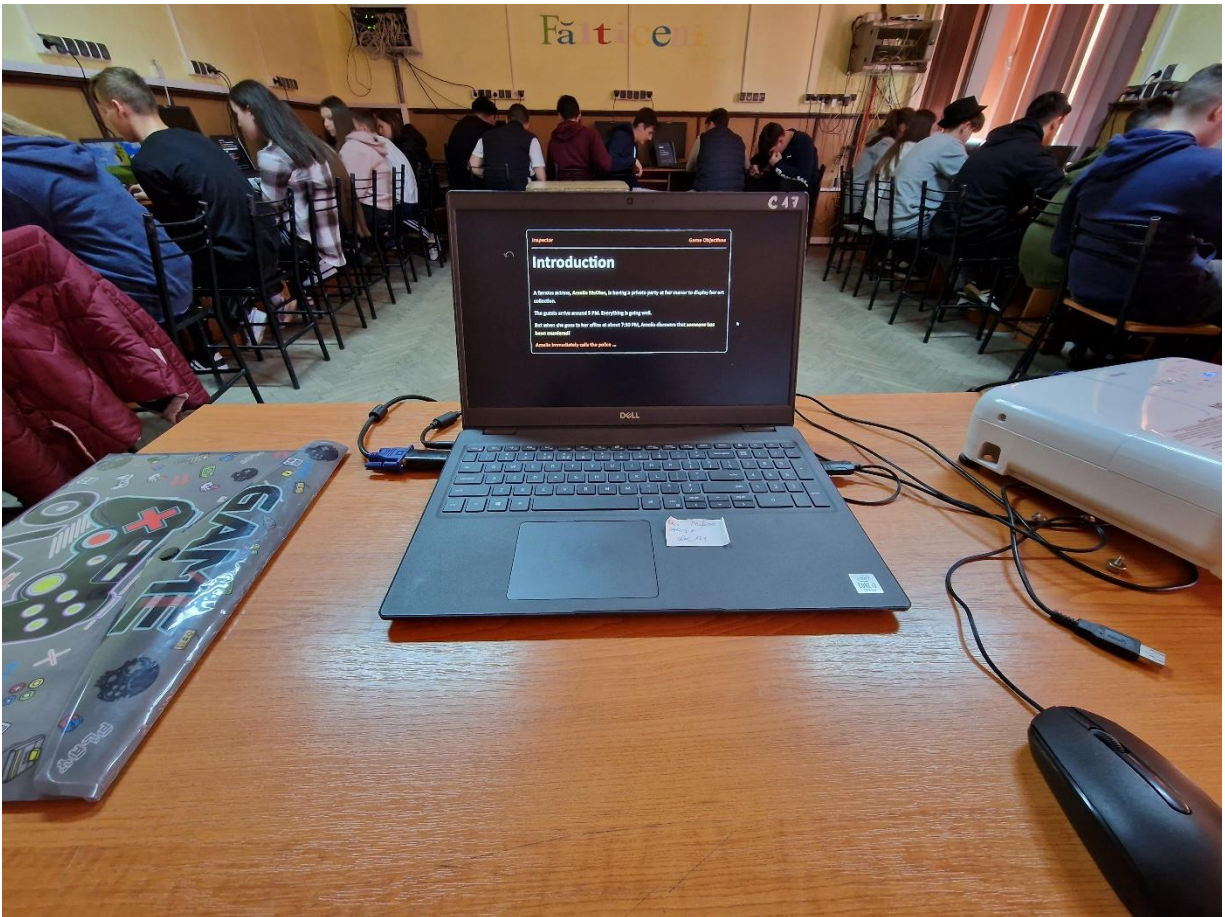
'Literator' and 'Murder in the Manor' were the tested games: 'Literator', because most English textbooks rely more heavily on functional texts rather than on literary

ones, and 'Murder in the Manor' because of the nowadays students' interest in detective stories, which foster critical thinking, inference-making and strong analytical skills. Teenagers loved playing games where they could act out different characters and explore different identities, just like preparing for the real world. The activity of testing offered a new teaching perspective and many appreciations from students, who said they would definitely want to try more games. They didn't mind having a written assignment based on the video games tested either.

Testing video games from the 2nd batch

For this phase 'Mihai Bacescu' Technical College involved **five different schools**, one from the rural area, the other four from Falticeni and Suceava. According to the feedback received, a total number of **9 teachers and 225 students** participated in this second testing activity. Of course, there were learners from the Romanian partner school who wanted to take part in the pilot video game testing as well. Consequently, **86 learners from CTMB** tested two games created by this institution for the project and one game by a partner institution. The educational video games produced by the Romanian school are: 'The Absent Minded', 'The Curse of the Sceptrum', 'Particle', 'A Tense Situation', 'Perseverance' and 'Liberation'.

Playing these games, learners will be exposed to many idiomatic expressions, informal language and colloquialism. Practically, students will linguistically step out of the classroom and try non-standard English by exploring language in its daily diversity. This is rarely realised in traditional classes, as the curriculum empowers mainly standard English and students often do not meet vernacular speech at school. In other words, the activity based on such games will be effective and successful.

Overall, it was a relaxed atmosphere during both testing stages for video games in all participating schools, as the teachers who conducted the pilot tests were highly committed and responsible. These types of activities involve several key steps which refer to class organisation, test deploying, collecting and handing over the questionnaires in due time for interpretation. Very encouraging feedback and opinions were provided by the young performers who tested the games and their teachers who used the pedagogical sequences as guiding material.

Testing the e-learning module for teachers

The third testing phase was organised to evaluate the training material presented in the fourth result of the project: the e-learning module based on **audio, visual and written material**, made for language teachers to gain skills in video game creation. This result was tested and evaluated in all partner countries and the feedback received served to improve the quality and consistency of the online course with the teachers' skills and training needs.

Indeed, 'Mihai Bacescu' Technical College disseminated this tool in various forms and locations, i.e. teachers' reunions at local, regional and national level on-site and on-line, teaching conferences, round tables, informal meetings etc. An interesting aspect was that not only English or language teachers were interested in subscribing and performing the creation tutorials course, but also teachers from different domains.

Educators in general may follow in the footsteps of the D-ESL partners and realise their own games which may be tailored for their class characteristics.

2.1.2. Inspirational testimonies coming from Logopsycom

Our participation to the project was mainly in **project coordination and content creation**. We were a co-content writers of the Booklet on engagement, coordinators and co-content writers of the Dys-Friendly practice sheets. We created 10 games for the project (with their player's guides and pedagogical sequences). We also led and co-wrote the creation tutorials. Finally, we co-wrote the sheets of the resources database.

As a non-school partner, our testimonial will be more focused on the creation and on how to best use the resources of the project, in our opinion.

R1: The booklet on engagement

The D-ESL project aims to boost ESL student engagement, including those with Specific Learning Disorders (SLDs), using gamification techniques like video games. The Booklet on engagement serves as a **guide for teachers**, outlining effective strategies to enhance learner involvement, crucial for language learning success. Teachers can utilize this booklet to access various **educational approaches** and adapt their teaching methods effectively. The booklet complements the other D-ESL results, as it provides the theoretical knowledge of the approach.

> "The creation of this guide was very stimulating and I hope that it will inspire educators to adopt and innovate with gamification strategies in their classrooms, leading to more engaging and effective language learning experiences for all students." Dorian, project coordinator at Logopsycom.

R2: the Dys-friendly practice sheets

The creation of the 30 DYS-friendly practice sheets was essential to provide **targeted support for students with Specific Learning Disorders (SLDs)** in language learning environments. These sheets offer practical strategies and adaptations in educational content, making learning more accessible and effective for these students. We hoped to empower teachers with tools that facilitate inclusive education, thereby enhancing the learning experience for all students. These practice sheets are an important resource, complementing the broader goals of the D-ESL project by promoting inclusivity and tailored educational approaches.

"I recommend that educators selectively use the DYS-friendly practice sheets that address their specific challenges. By focusing on relevant sheets first, teachers can effectively apply targeted strategies in their classrooms. This tailored use ensures the resources are maximally beneficial, enhancing educational outcomes for students with learning disorders." Dorian, project coordinator at Logopsycom.

R3: Games and sequences

Creating 10 games with the D-ESL approach was a **nourishing experience** for us. We aimed to emulate the perspective of teachers creating their own games, emphasizing that this project should empower them to do so. We chose **no-code, user-friendly game-creation software** to demonstrate the possibilities for educators. This approach not only provides ready-to-use games with guides and pedagogical sequences but also encourages teachers to experiment and create their own versions.

> "My advice to teachers: use these games as empowering tools and embrace the opportunity to experiment with the approach yourself. Let these examples inspire your own creative educational journeys. From my experience, students love having fun gaming activities to learn, make it yours!" Dorian, project coordinator at Logopsycom.

Some student's comments about some of the games:

> "Very interesting, it reminds me of the old Pokemon games."

> "Cool to have the colours to help players."

> "I find it very interesting because it makes us learn while playing. I do that with all my games in English and it's this way that I learn the most".

"It's great to offer activities like this."

R4: The creation tutorials

The R4 module, our MOOC, was a very exciting addition to our resources. It offers a **comprehensive course for teachers** on creating their own educational games, covering everything from initial ideas to final game creation, including writing game scenarios. We're pleased with the **rich content mix of text, images, and videos** that teaches no-code game creation for English learning. This MOOC aims to enhance teachers' ability to provide a dynamic learning experience and empower them to innovate in their teaching methods. The tests of the course were overly positive, which encouraged and confirmed the **usefulness of this resource**.

"Explore the MOOC content at your own pace, focusing on sections that interest you most. Unsure about which no-code game engine to use? Follow our suggestion and start with Genially or RPG Maker and see what best fits your educational goals." Dorian, project coordinator at Logopsycom.

What some teachers had to say about the Mooc:

"In my opinion, the best part of the course was the module on gamification strategies, which offered innovative ways to engage ESL learners."

"It 'demystifies' the difficulty of creating a game."

"In my opinion, the best part of the course was the point on gamification and module 4 [Creating the game with the appropriate Game Engine], which seems very clear to me even though I don't know anything about it."

R5: Resources database

The Database Resources Sheets serve as a **practical complement** to our other resources, particularly our MOOC. These sheets are ideal for teachers who wish to explore the project's approach without committing to a full course. They offer a more autonomous route for those eager to test and implement new strategies. Included are **curated recommendations for useful software and platforms** to assist educators in creating engaging learning experiences.

> "Explore our Database Resources Sheets to find the tools and inspiration you need. Harness these resources to craft your own educational games and empower your teaching journey with autonomy and creativity." Dorian, project coordinator at Logopsycom.

R6: Implementation guide

Our goal with The Implementation Guide was to create a **valuable tool** that consolidates insights from our project team alongside firsthand feedback from educators and students. We crafted this guide to equip teachers with **actionable strategies and relatable examples**, aiming to enhance their ability to effectively integrate our methodologies into their classrooms. We encourage educators to use this guide as a **roadmap**, adapting the insights and examples provided to fit their unique teaching environments and challenges.

2.1.3. Practical experiences by SABA

At SABA High School Academy for Business and Administration, the integration of interactive learning tools such as educational video games has been explored to

enhance English language learning for students, particularly those with learning challenges like dyslexia. This report details the practical aspects of the testing phases of the video games, focusing on student engagement, educational content, and the overall atmosphere during the sessions.

Games tested

First Phase: 'The Little Alchemist' with 3 students, 'Murder in the Manor' with 12 students, 'Voc's Journey-The Mission' with 1 student, 'Erasmus Integration' with 10 students, 'Fake News' with 2 students, 'Literator' with 12 students and 1 teacher.

Second Phase: 'The Cooking Adventure' with 48 students, 'The Engineering Adventure' with 48 students and 9 teachers.

Atmosphere: The testing environment was **lively and interactive**. Students were grouped into small teams to foster collaboration and communication. Teachers facilitated the sessions, guiding students through the initial setup and assisting with any technical issues. The process was characterized by **excitement and curiosity** among students. Classrooms were arranged to facilitate easy movement and interaction among students, with **teachers overseeing the activities**. The setup encouraged a collaborative atmosphere where students could discuss and solve game-related tasks together. Building on the positive reception of the first phase, the second testing phase maintained a high level of engagement. The **new games introduced more complex scenarios** that required deeper critical thinking and application of English language skills in specialized contexts.

Student Interaction: Students used provided Player Guides to **navigate through game mechanics and objectives**. The guides were especially useful for aligning the gameplay with learning objectives, ensuring that students not only played but also reflected on language use within the games.

Feedback: Before testing, students generally displayed passive attitudes towards conventional learning methods. After engaging with the games, they were notably **more animated**, discussing what they learned and how the games made understanding **grammar and vocabulary more accessible**.

Additionally, post-game discussions were held to gather student feedback on game enjoyment and learning outcomes. These discussions also helped teachers assess the games' effectiveness in real-time.Enhanced by the success of the first testing phase, the second batch of games received more structured feedback sessions. Students were more forthcoming with their insights, which were documented by teachers for further refinement of teaching strategies. Feedback sessions revealed

significant improvements in student confidence with language usage. The hands-on, practical nature of the games made them feel more capable of using English in real-life situations. Students were particularly pleased with how well the games integrated learning into enjoyable activities.

Usage of Player Guide: The Player Guide remained a crucial tool, especially as the new games featured more sophisticated vocabulary and grammar challenges. These guides helped bridge game play with learning by providing **context-specific explanations and usage examples**.

Impact on Learning

Before the test: Initially, students had varying levels of fluency in English and were generally less interested in traditional teaching methods.

Post-test: After the test, students' enthusiasm and confidence increased significantly. They were more inclined to use the new vocabulary and grammar learned during the game in regular classroom activities.

Conclusion

The testing of educational video games at SABA High School Academy for Business and Administration, aimed at enhancing English language learning, was carried out in two distinct phases. Each phase provided unique insights into how such tools can facilitate learning in a dynamic and engaging manner, especially benefiting students with **learning challenges like dyslexia**.

The practical testing phases of these educational video games at SABA have demonstrated significant potential in enhancing language learning through interactive and engaging methods. The games not only supported traditional

English language learning objectives but also introduced an **innovative approach** that was particularly accessible to students with learning difficulties. Continual refinement of these games, based on thorough feedback and observation, will further solidify their place as valuable educational tools in modern teaching environments.

Overall Impact

The transition from traditional to game-based learning created a palpable shift in the educational atmosphere at SABA. Initially, students were confused, but post-testing, they showed **increased motivation** and were more likely to **participate actively in class discussions**. The games not only enhanced specific grammatical and vocabulary knowledge but also improved overall language fluency and student confidence in using English.

2.1.4. Inspirational testimonies coming from YuzuPulse

Video game creation is first intimidating because you need to learn how to use the game engine. But when you start creating your first scenes, thanks to a tutorial, and become increasingly comfortable with the software, it becomes **a very rewarding medium of expression**.

The challenge that came back every time was to scope our game: determining the number of actions, dialogues, scenes, in short: the length of the game. Sometimes you want to tell a story but it's hard to estimate how long it will take. And you end up going over the estimated time, both game time and creation time. It can require to make cuts in your story which is frustrating, but it's better to not have a too long game. Both for students but also for you, as **a long task can be discouraging**.

For non-teachers, it's also hard to keep in mind the players' level when designing and writing the game. A general rule is to design a game that fits your audience, as a teacher you are the best suited for this task!

Another advice we can give is to focus on one game engine, it's time consuming to re-learn a new engine every time you make a game. So, make sure what you want to create and stick to it. After each game made, you will **gain experience** and be able to focus more on the pedagogical/narrative aspects since you better master the technical ones.

It is very important to **have someone else test your game**. As the game creator you will know how to play it and fail to see bugs or misleading paths the players can take. You need **fresh eyes to see the problems**.

It's normal to feel apprehensive when you see the game you've made being tested, because you're afraid it might still have bugs or not be to the players' liking. It's a part of us, a work of art that we deliver, and it's hard to listen to critics.

It's better to have someone who didn't create the game test it: it's more objective, there's less affect and they're less likely to want to influence players. On the other hand, they will be less able to help players as they didn't write the scenario. Ideally, they should have played the game or at least read the pedagogical sequence.

The person giving the tests must be prepared to **take notes on any bugs** that may appear. It's difficult to trace problems back using only student feedback. Come prepared! Players who identify a problem should be questioned about the path and actions that led them to the bug, especially if the tester is not the developer and has to explain it afterwards.

It's useful to **prepare several games for testing**, because of the difference in level between the students. Some had finished well before the others and we had to improvise: find them another game to test.

Don't hesitate to ask students who are ahead to help those who are behind. Managing the different levels yourself can be difficult.

It's especially difficult on a game that offers a little openness in exploration, as you don't really know by looking at a student's screen whether they are far into the scenario or not, unlike a linear game.

Player guides can be difficult to use in a short session, but on the other hand, they can be useful to get you back into the flow of the game. **Guides are more useful in a setting where the student is alone**.

As far as students' appreciation of games is concerned, what emerges from our tests is that **RPG Maker games and those that allow "continuous" interaction** (controlling a character), and not just moving the mouse and clicking on the screen, are the ones that **work best**.

Twine games or visual novels that are too complicated can be a turn-off. Our second-batch genially games were better illustrated, thanks to AI, and more appealing.

A little anecdote: a student played our visual novel game by installing an auto clicker! Fortunately, this always sent him to the game over, and bam!

One of the highlights of the tests was seeing a group of **students react enthusiastically** to a dialogue line resonating with their culture.

The teachers we tested with were **very enthusiastic** and it was great to see their interest. They gave us their contact details to do more tests or to follow up on our projects.

One of our tests took place during a creative industries day, and after testing the games, we showed the students behind the scenes, how to create interactive fiction on Twine. While they didn't really enjoy the Twine games, they did love the introduction to creating interactive fiction. **Video game creation is first**

2.1.5. Practical experiences by SANSI LEONARDI

"Sansi Leonardi Volta" has been trying to combine the teaching of traditional culture and content deriving from our classical educational past as a 'Liceo' with the new skills required by our continuously changing world. If most of our teachers are deeply convinced of the indisputable value of our learning deriving from the classics, we are also very well aware that we cannot avoid facing the issue of innovation in education, that is boosting English as a foreign language together with a widespread and conscious use of the IT means. It cannot be denied that the digital young generation is undergoing extremely rapid changes, requiring us to keep the pace of digital development. This said, it was not without preoccupation but also with great enthusiasm and the strong desire to accompany our students towards a bright, international future that we accepted to take part in this engaging and undoubtedly innovative project offering us the possibility of getting in step with the times. And it didn't fail!

Our students were directly involved in the testing phase as follows:

Testing video games from the 1st batch

The 1st testing phase was concentrated on the games created by the expert partners LogoPsyCom and YuzuPulse. In order to obtain an overall idea that corresponded to the variety of our students, we decided to test 3 videogames with 2 distinct groups of students.

The 1st group was made up of **16 students** between 14 and 15 years of age, led by **1 teacher**; it included 1 student with disability, 6 Dys students, 3 with economic obstacles and 2 with migrant background obstacles; we chose it because, being so varied, we considered it could offer a full view of the games impact. They tested "The Little Alchemist" and "VOC's Journey: The Mission".

The 2nd group was one class of **15 students** aged 15, that is to say year 10, including 1 student with disability and 1 Dys student with another teacher. They were engaged with "Fake News".

In both cases the **test results** were collected through the agreed questionnaires, both for students and teachers, so that everybody would give feedback on every important aspect.

Before the testing phase, all the participants were informed of the seriousness of their role; as the team had discussed in the course of the project, in fact, we didn't want them to think it wasn't serious enough simply because it was going to be fun. Therefore, we took the opportunity to explain them what an Erasmus+ partnership is, so that they could realize how valuable their role was going to be as participants of that phase. Moreover, all of them already had an idea of what SLDs are because students with such conditions were present in both groups; nevertheless, they were

more accurately informed on the topic, so as to make them aware of the relevance of the task they were charged with.

The results experienced with the two groups were very different and fully satisfied the aim of the project to innovate and make teaching more inclusive. The activity was overall greatly appreciated, but with some differences.

Having the first group less inclination for studying, they loved the new way of learning English and enjoyed completing the games, but only as long as they were very user-friendly: they didn't want to engage in games with lots of reading or with the predominance of text; they were mostly interested in the story, even more when it was presented with colourful images and appealing characters. Moreover, we noticed the importance of developing games of a length fitting to the target group: they didn't particularly like too short games, they preferred well-structured scenarios.

The second group was made up of learners with a totally different background: the fact that none of them had economic nor migrant background obstacles implied being more accustomed to articulate videogames, with good graphics and high-level interactivity. Therefore, the majority of them liked the idea of game-learning but found the games proposed too elementary and little fun. Similarly, the student with disability wasn't totally satisfied with the games, even if she enjoyed the fact that she could complete the game on her own, thus proving the educational value of the experience.

In both cases explaining the topic of the game prior playing it proved to be essential.

Testing video games from the 2nd batch

This second phase involved two different classes led by the same teacher, so as to have a larger, more homogeneous group than in the former phase, plus a very small group with another teacher.

The 1st group, **36** 14-year-old **students** in total (3 of whom Dys-students), tested **4 games**: "The Art Planet", "The Cooking Planet", "The Detective Sequence" and "Vocab is You". The 2nd group, led by another teacher, was made up of **29 students** who tested "Wanderer's Memories". They all enjoyed interacting with characters and making choices more than moves on the screen; their preference was mainly for quickly changing, lively situations they could more easily identify with. In general, students with more difficulty, even if not SLDs, had some problems in dealing with the game mechanics but they all agreed the activity was very useful to learn, review or assimilate the structures and vocabulary presented, according to the situation. In some cases, they were absolutely enthusiastic they could benefit of this activity while improving their English knowledge. The presence of images of any kind – characters, pictures, object – was for all a fundamental element to avoid the

game to become too boring. In some cases, they also commented positively on the music contained in the game.

Moreover, this 2nd testing phase involved **6 teachers** that played the games without students, to meaningfully give the **educator's point of view**. They tried 5 different games and all agreed the activity is interesting, even if they found it engaging at different levels. They generally thought that game learning can be useful in various ways according to the students' knowledge, necessities and school background, so creating the right game for each situation has resulted to be absolutely necessary. This new approach is undoubtedly considered very inclusive, so the aim of the project was fully achieved, according to them! The only problem is creating the games: even if after having subscribed to and attended the e-learning course they feel they could create some very simple games, the still don't feel very confident. But this is easily understandable, a good level of expertise always comes with time!

Testing the e-learning module for teachers

Finally, **seven different teachers** were involved in the testing phase of the e-learning module which was highly appreciated. Anyway, as this was for them the first approach to this type of leaning content, so they obviously do not feel confident enough yet and have thus expressed the wish to go deep into the subject and experiment more with game creation.

2.2. What were the challenges encountered? What were the solutions given?

When talking about challenges, one needs to consider that this is the best way to start a project: identifying the needs and problems and how to overcome them. Therefore, the first result created for the D-ESL project was a booklet called **'Engagement as a key to success for ESL learning'** which partly relied on gathering questionnaire answers from language teachers in order to analyse their class needs **before project work**. Next, the partners analysed the feedback and data on the existing challenges and what were the best solutions for language learners.

As you can see in Figure 1 and Figure 2 below, we concentrated all the needs and problems that teachers may encounter in their activity on two major directions: **intrinsic (internal) challenges** and **extrinsic (external) challenges**. Answers like 'lack of motivation', 'lack of engagement', 'learning difficulties' for internal challenges, and 'overloaded school schedule', 'lack of a rewarding system' and 'less engaging learning material' received the highest scores from the twenty-five respondents who accepted to be engaged in this quantifying process.

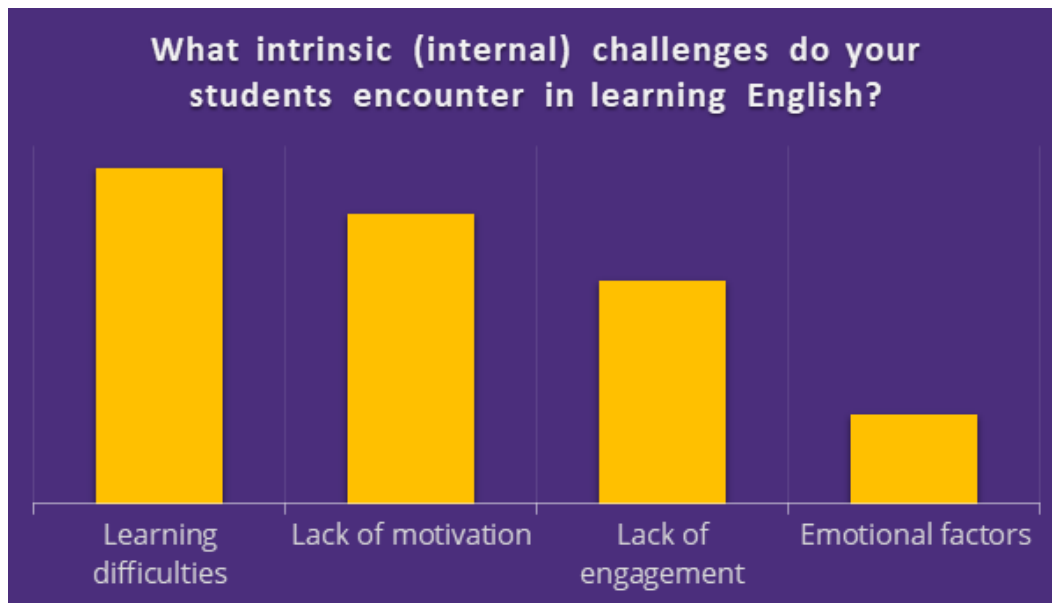**Q. What are your teaching challenges? Are they similar?**

Figure 1. Proportion of identified intrinsic challenges encountered by students learning English, as viewed by 25 English teachers across Europe
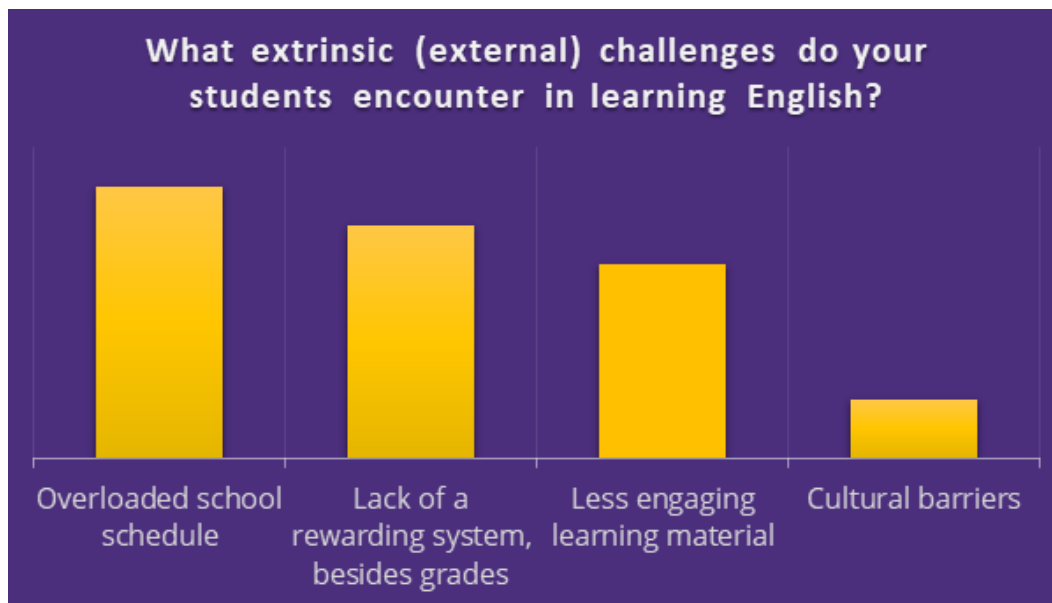

Figure 2. Proportion of identified extrinsic challenges encountered by students learning English, as viewed by 25 English teachers across Europe

The three testing stages – for video games and e-learning course - which took place **during project work** revealed either common or specific challenges which are going to be shared in the following pages by each school partner, together with the solutions found. Challenges may arise at any point in our teaching activity, but we can help resolve many of them if we have an **effective teaching tool**. Of course, not only educators are they prone to such difficult situations at school but also students. Some of their learning problems are presented in this chapter with some tips to overcome them while game playing.

Q. What are your students' most common problems? Are they similar?

Finally, the challenges encountered **after project work** were not very complex and could be easily managed with two supporting materials: the **pedagogical sequences** and the **player guides**. When using video games in the language classroom, such tools become the 'pillow books' for any teacher. Where to find them? Go to our Resources section at [www.d-esl.eu,](www.d-esl.eu) then to Games and sequences; click on the game you want to open and... voilà!

2.2.1. Challenges before, during and after project work

The facts regarding **'Mihai Bacescu' Technical College from Falticeni - Romania** are as follows. Our team consists of more than 90 teachers and we teach more than 1300 students to acquire theoretical and practical knowledge, values and attitudes which help them to adapt to a developing society. That's right, challenges occur for both teachers and students when such numbers are mentioned, and if not addressed immediately, they may affect the academic, social, or emotional status of all the school population.

We provide theoretical training for students at lower secondary education (11-14 years old) and upper secondary education for theoretical profiles (15-18 years old). At the same time, we are responsible for technological profiles training (15-18 years old) in several professional qualifications. Moreover, the school offers a wide range of vocational training and apprenticeship schooling programmes (15-17 years old).

Nevertheless, not all the students have similar access to education. We will share the **main challenges faced by our students and teachers**, and how we used the tools created by D-ESL project to support our students in overcoming these challenges. Two important categories of learners with special educational needs (SEN) have been identified, such as:

External challenges

- More than 70% of our students come from rural areas

Most of the students attending the study programmes in our school do not reside in the same town, but live in rural areas, consequently they need to commute. In addition to distance, they come to school in two learning shifts, consisting of morning and afternoon classes which last from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. It is a tiring daily

programme, as those from the morning shift need to wake up very early, while those from the after-noon shift arrive home late in the evening. Some of these students took part in project testing phases for video games, first and second batch.

- Absence of one or both parents in students' families

Unemployment and low income in rural areas force people to search for work abroad, this fact with significant consequences for many students who come from families with one or both parents working in a different country, having relatives (usually grandparents) as their tutors. These students' socio-educational life is very fragile; therefore, their formal and non-formal activities must be carefully chosen.

- Using traditional education instead of modern approaches

Believe it or not, there is still a lot of traditional teaching in Romanian schools and the causes are various. Some say it is more convenient and handier, compared to the workload of preparing the classroom for student-centred lessons and technological support. Yet, this approach lacks the variety of resources available online; in our case, the game-based tools and the game creation digital module created for students and teachers inside D-ESL.

Internal challenges

- Students with specific learning difficulties

According to the severity of their needs, students have the possibility to enroll in mainstream schooling and follow the same curriculum as the other children or they need to be individually assisted and follow specific intervention. Teachers may acknowledge the presence of the second project result '**Dys-friendly practice**

sheets' which was conceived in order to train teachers on how to create inclusive video games for the classroom in a clear, user-friendly manner.

In **conclusion,** six students with SLD, more than 50 students coming from rural areas who need to commute to school, more than 20 students facing economic difficulties in their families, 4 migrant students – these are the challenges of the students at school level involved in project testing. Teachers had to fight traditional mentality and change resistance and also cope with new technological adaptations.

2.2.2. Offering solutions for our project's beneficiaries

As society and technology change, this is inevitably happening to education. Our D-ESL project results help educators reinvent their teaching strategies and consequently solve many of the learning problems.

With regard to **external challenges**, they could be solved or alleviated via project participation. Other teachers may find inspiring problem solving which apply to own educational contexts.

For example, students coming from high-income families can afford the best devices, including Mobile Internet. On the other hand, **low-income students** or those coming from **unprivileged backgrounds** do not usually afford digital learning resources. Our school offers financial assistance through national programmes and a common environment for all students. Although we do not have a fully equipped language lab in school, the students were able to practise video gaming individually or collaborate in pairs inside the ITC and Computer science labs. The teacher used the video projector to display the lexical elements for all learners at the same time and in the same place.

The **parental absence effects** significantly impact children in various ways, therefore extreme caution when discussing sensitive game topics with your students. Due to our project specialists, such themes had been carefully planned before being launched for playing. Our **pedagogical sequences** offer necessary advice for teachers about personal, social and cultural domains. For example, 'V0c's journey' was an appreciated game by both younger and older students which addresses the problem of gender identity and being different, as the main character is an alien that accidentally landed on Earth. There are many other games waiting to be discovered and appreciated for their content and socio-cultural information.

Using **outdated teaching methods** points to **lack of motivation and engagement**. The natural fear and resistance to change is very common among teachers. The **digital course for teachers** is a ready-to-use resource created to equip educators with the necessary skills and competences to produce video games according to class needs and interests.

With regard to **internal challenges**, six learners with reading (dyslexia) and writing (dysgraphia) disorders were able to actively participate in the testing fields for the D-ESL project in the first phase. As mentioned in the above subchapter, the **dys-friendly practice sheets** thoroughly present valuable advice for lesson organization including students with learning needs. The pedagogical sequences are very helpful supporting materials designed for inclusive purposes as well.

In **summary**, many solutions to educational problems are closer than we might think. Having the right tool for your class and a bit of creativity can perform miracles, despite all the challenges. We hope that the examples and experiences we

encountered at school level and shared above will **motivate language teachers** and not only **to make good decisions** for their students.

2.2.3. Challenges before, during and after project work

The SABA High School Academy for Business and Administration is a notable educational institution committed to integrating innovative business and administrative principles into high school education. Despite its ambitious educational goals and advanced curriculum, the SABA team faced several enduring challenges regarding the effectiveness of the video games testing phases.

Challenges before video games testing

Learning Challenges: Students with mild learning problems require additional support and attention, which are often not available in real-time during the testing sessions, leading to uneven team progress and outputs.

Family Responsibilities: Several of our students are responsible for caring for younger siblings or contributing to household income through part-time jobs. Balancing these family responsibilities with their academic obligations can be challenging and may result in increased stress and fatigue.

Challenges After video games testing

Assessment Discrepancies: Post-project evaluations often do not account for the diverse input levels from students, potentially demotivating those who may have contributed more substantially or creatively.

Insufficient Feedback: Lack of detailed, constructive feedback on completed projects misses the opportunity to reinforce learning and improvement, particularly

important for students facing learning difficulties or those with less exposure to critical thinking exercises.

Technology Integration: Post-project analysis and follow-up activities often suffer from a lack of integrated technology that can provide metrics for success and areas for improvement, crucial for future project enhancements.

Implications and Recommendations

To mitigate these challenges, here are SABA's suggestions :

Resource Allocation: Investing in innovative educational tools and training teachers to adopt more interactive and engaging teaching methods would benefit all students, especially those with learning difficulties.

Technology Access: Strengthening the technological infrastructure and providing resources for students would help bridge the gap in digital access and participation.

Feedback Mechanisms: Establishing robust feedback channels that provide detailed, personalized comments on projects can help guide students' learning processes and foster an environment of continuous improvement.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Inclusive Education Practices: Develop an inclusive curriculum that accommodates the needs of all students, including those with learning disabilities, language barriers, and cultural differences. Training for teachers on inclusive education techniques is essential.

Professional Development for Teachers: Regular professional development workshops can help teachers stay updated on the latest educational technologies

and teaching methodologies. This investment in faculty development will directly benefit students by enhancing the educational offerings.

Enhanced IT Infrastructure: Invest in upgrading the school's IT infrastructure to support the increasing demand for digital tools and resources, essential for modernizing teaching methods and project work.

Conclusion

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that combines administrative support, technological enhancement, and adaptive teaching methods. By tackling these issues head-on, SABA can improve the efficacy of its project work and ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed and benefit from its innovative educational approach.

2.2.4. Offering solutions for our project's beneficiaries

Students with learning difficulty are characterized by issues with reading, writing, and spelling, unrelated to overall intelligence. Traditional text-heavy approaches to learning can be challenging for dyslexic students. Video games, with their ability to combine visual, auditory, and kinesthetic elements, present an innovative avenue to cater to the unique learning needs of these children.

By leveraging the interactive and engaging nature of video games, these tools can offer personalized, multisensory learning experiences that are tailored to the needs of dyslexic learners. The recommendations include guidelines on design, content, accessibility, and assessment strategies to ensure effective learning outcomes.

Design Solutions

Multisensory Integration: Design games that integrate visual, auditory, and tactile feedback to enhance phonemic awareness and reading skills. For example, integrating speech-to-text features and vice versa can help reinforce learning through multiple sensory inputs.

Customizable Interfaces: Develop user interfaces that allow customization such as adjustable text sizes, fonts favored by dyslexic readers (e.g., OpenDyslexic), contrasting color schemes for better visibility, and options to reduce screen clutter.

Progressive Difficulty Levels: Implement adaptive difficulty settings that adjust based on the learner's performance, ensuring that the game remains challenging but not overwhelming.

Content solutions

Phonics-based Learning: Focus on phonics to improve your skills, integrating activities that break down words into smaller phonetic pieces and matching them with corresponding sounds.

Contextual Learning: Use story-driven gameplay to create context around words and phrases, enhancing comprehension and retention.

Immediate Feedback and Rewards: Provide instant feedback for correct answers and encouraging prompts for incorrect ones to reinforce learning without discouragement. Rewards such as badges or points can motivate learners to progress.

Accessibility Solutions

Voice Navigation: Incorporate voice commands and audio navigation options to assist children who struggle with reading on-screen instructions.

Error Forgiveness: Design game mechanics that are tolerant of small mistakes, focusing on overall learning progression rather than penalization for errors.

Multi-platform Accessibility: Ensure games are accessible on various devices, including smartphones, tablets, and computers, to allow learning from home, school, or on the go.

Assessment and Monitoring Solutions

In-game Assessment Tools: Integrate assessment modules that track progress in real-time, providing educators and parents with insights into the child's learning curve and areas needing attention.

Feedback Loops: Establish mechanisms for parents and educators to provide feedback on the game's effectiveness and user-friendliness, which can guide iterative development and refinement.

Compliance with Educational Standards: Align the game content with common educational standards for English language learning to ensure they meet curricular objectives and complement traditional learning methods.

Implementation Strategy

Pilot Testing: Conduct pilot tests in diverse educational settings to gather data on usability and effectiveness. Adjust game design based on feedback from children, educators, and dyslexia specialists.

Partnerships: Collaborate with educational institutions and dyslexia organizations to gain insights and validation of the game design and learning outcomes.

Continuous Improvement: Use an agile development approach to iteratively improve the game based on user feedback and advances in dyslexia research and educational technology.

Conclusion

Video games offer a compelling medium to transform the learning experience for children with dyslexia by providing engaging, interactive, and personalized educational support. By carefully designing games with the specific needs of dyslexic learners in mind, we can significantly enhance their motivation and ability to learn English as a foreign language. The successful implementation of these games requires ongoing collaboration between developers, educators, parents, and learners themselves to ensure they are both effective and enjoyable.

2.2.5. Challenges before, during and after project work

The very essence of "Sansi Leonardi Volta" has set its own challenges. As traditionally we have been trying to combine the teaching of traditional culture and content with the new 21st century skills, we have realized the need for deep changes in our teaching practises. If, on the one side, this is valid for teachers, the students too, who are digital natives, mainly access technology for entertaining purposes and may find it difficult to use it for educational aims.

Challenges before the project

Challenges for teachers

The approach to the project has revealed multiple challenges to be faced from different points of view.

Firstly, most of the Italian teachers have weak technological competences due to different reasons. To begin with, their average age is over 50 (https://www.orizzontescuola.it/i-dati-ocse-dicono-che-leta-media-dei-docenti-italiana-e-sempre-piu-alta-anief-serve-quota-96/), which means the training they received for their job was provided without any technological device or, in rarely fortunate cases, with innovation practices that are now undoubtedly obsolete. Therefore, even if we are all perfectly aware of the many benefits of lifelong learning, combining it with everyday teaching duties can really be very challenging and the contribution of the few millennials is hardly enough.

Moreover, our State Schools are required to comply with a curriculum continuously burdened with content innovation without any changes in terms of school time, nor of expected results. This means that we have less time to teach more content and help our students acquire wider and more varied skills, so, even if some teachers would be interested in innovating their teaching techniques through the use of new technology, they often don't have the time to adequately learn what they need to realize it.

Last but not least, our assessment system includes different tests in every class during the school year; again, the teachers are in charge for their preparation, administration and assessment, which brings to spending a great amount of time on an activity bringing no direct improvement.

Challenges for students

Students are the first victims of the above-described system. Besides having to meet the many deadlines imposed by the school agenda, they have to study many different subjects which cause them to be often overloaded.

Besides, they suffer the lack of innovatory teaching tools a lot, as we now have modern devices but the Internet connections, especially in ancient buildings, are often weak; this aspect clashes with their natural tendency to love technological devices and be spontaneously attracted by them.

Anyway, even if they are digital natives and, as such, they handle digital devices with a naturalness unknown to most adult people, their understanding of the different possibilities smartphones and/or computers can offer seems shadowy. They are used to gaming, but mostly through gaming platforms such as Playstation or Xbox, which is positive, but they rarely use computers, they normally prefer tablets or smartphones, so no mouse, no need of control from the outside but touch technology mainly.

Surprisingly, some SLD students cannot use a computer properly: in fact, they learn to do that only if they can follow a specific training with specialized educators and technicians, who enable them to using specific software and exploit the many functions available. As using technological devices in everyday school activities is definitely uncommon, doing it may sometimes carry a social stigma; but fortunately, this tendency is slowly being overcome.

Challenges during the project

Being aware of the many difficulties we were going to face before the project, helped us to respond to the different challenges we had to take on. We as teachers had to learn things never seen before, which had never been necessary for our job. Of course, we had used some technology, but exclusively as users, so going to the other side, becoming creators of some content to propose in an educational activity, was totally different and unexpected.

Another demanding aspect was convincing the colleagues not directly involved in the project that the final result results would be worth the effort. This attitude made our dissemination action more difficult than expected as most colleagues are not ready to even consider gaming a possibly serious teaching technique that can reveal itself as an enriching and effective experience. Of course, the colleagues who have more SDL students are more motivated to find new solutions and tools.

Challenges after project work

After having fulfilled our tasks, we really feel satisfied of having worked at the best of our possibilities as we have realized that, even when you think that something is impossible, it may become realizable.

Of course, we cannot deny that the work was really difficult but you never get good results out of nothing! Therefore, what we strongly wish for the future is to succeed in involving more and more teachers to demonstrate that all the effort devoted was not useless.

Moreover, having experienced that many teachers still fight to identify the true nature of the Dys problem and adapt their educational action to meet the specific

learning need of each student, we hope this narrow-mindedness will finally be defeated.

2.2.6. Offering solutions for our project's beneficiaries

Coherently with the situation described and the work carried out by all project partners, we are very glad of being able to offer all teachers the possibility of testing themselves with something totally new which can provide effective teaching success even in seriously difficult cases. We must never forget, in fact, that motivation lies at the basis of every educational action, so creating a more inclusive learning environment greatly helps to reach important goals. Teachers are often alone on their road to technological innovation, so offering them an affordable course of gaming which, in the meantime, goes deep into specific learning disorders and offers practical solutions to their everyday difficulties is something extremely beneficial.

For what concerns students, greater flexibility in their learning attitude may bring them to explore digital tools not only as passive users, but more importantly, as newly aware digital learners that can make their own difference.

Moreover, a different approach to Dys problems, a wider knowledge of the many, often little-known situations surely can lead to a normalisation of the problem, a bit like wearing glasses when you cannot see well. Ultimately, this will bring to higher coping mechanisms, which is undoubtedly both educators and students' ultimate goal.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO START THE GAME!

Pieces of advice and encouragement from CTMB

Feedback from students, 1st batch

'I's a very nice game with a lot of potential.' - Claudiu Știrbu, 8th grade CTMB, 'Literator'

'I want to be a detective. Please keep this game updated. It is a very interesting game and I want to play more of these.' - Luca Rusea, 8th grade CTMB, 'Murder at the Manor'

'It was a great activity and I really enjoyed it. It took my mind off from all school works.' - Daria Pricop, 9th grade CTMB, 'Literator'

'I think the game was so helpful! I learnt a few more things in English and I also improved my reading skills.' - Roxana Badalache, 11th grade CTMB, 'Murder at the Manor'

Feedback from students, 2nd batch

'I'd like to play this game on my phone since not everyone owns a computer.' - 12th grade student, 'Vasile Lovinescu' College, Fălticeni, 'Evolution of Humanity'

'The game is hard to understand, but it's easy once you do it.' - student from 'Samuil Isopescu' Technical College, Suceava, 'Vocab is You'

'Was very fun! Good job, people!' - 8th grade student, 'Nicolae Soleru' Gymnazial School, Baia, 'A Tense Situation'

'I loved the games and the humour in them.' - a student from 'Dimitrie Cantemir' National College of Informatics, Suceava, 'The World of Grammaria', 'The Little Alchemist', 'Fake News'

'While creating this game [The Curse of the Sceptrum] I realised how difficult was to make one. At first I thought it's just dragging and dropping images on the screen, but soon after I discovered video games require a complex logic to be interesting and educational for players at the same time.' - Denis Dorneanu, 9th grade, CTMB, creator of one game in D-ESL project

Feedback from teachers

'Recently, I had the opportunity to create a different kind of activity through which the students had to compete into two different video games to fulfil a quest. The games that we used in our activity are called A tense situation and V0c's journey 2. Overall, this activity allowed me to test their tense knowledge but I was also able to see how they managed to find the clues or certain areas. In conclusion, both the students and I had something to learn from this activity. For them it was a funny

and interesting way to revise their English. And for me, it was a new and innovative way through which I could present the beauty of the English language.' - Flavia-Mihaela Hrubariu, 'Nicolae Stoleru' Gymnazial School, Baia, English teacher

'I have always wondered how difficult the game creation industry is and how much time one should invest in this activity both strenuous, and satisfactory at the same time. Soon enough I had the chance to prove it on my own while making the educational video resources [5 games] for the D-ESL project. It was a mélange of imagination, digital skills, pedagogy, RPG Maker tools and our e-learning tutorials which I had to watch over and over again. The funniest thing is that my whole family was attracted into this activity and we all contributed to games' creation. I consider the final result is a fine piece of work. Help students gain knowledge using innovatory tools! **Don't be afraid to start the game!'** - Magdalena-Simona Trușcan, D-ESL coordinator

Pieces of advice and encouragement from SABA

Introduction :

In our journey to harness the potential of educational gaming, we've gathered insights and wisdom from a diverse range of experts. From seasoned video gaming professionals to inclusive specialists and educators, their collective wisdom forms a beacon of encouragement for our endeavours.

Expert Insights:

Video gaming experts :

- "In the realm of gaming, education isn't just about imparting knowledge; it's about creating immersive experiences that engage learners on a profound level." - [Aneta Gacevska, Video Gaming Expert]
- "The interactivity of gaming provides a dynamic platform for fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration skills essential for the modern world." - [Zoran Krstevski, Video Gaming Expert]

Inclusion specialists:

- "Educational gaming holds immense potential for fostering inclusivity by providing diverse representations and adaptable learning environments." - [Silvana Jovanceva, Inclusive Specialist]
- "By designing games with accessibility in mind, we can ensure that all learners, regardless of their abilities, can participate and thrive." - [Aneta Popova, Inclusive Specialist]

Teacher Trainers:

- "Embracing educational games empowers educators to become facilitators of immersive learning experiences, sparking curiosity and igniting passion in their students." - [Zlatica Dervendji Angelovska, Teacher Trainer]
- "Through game-based learning, teachers can transcend traditional boundaries, tailoring instruction to meet the unique needs and interests of each learner." - [Nena Nenovska Gjorgjievska, Teacher Trainer]

D-ESL Project Coordinators:

- "Our project embodies the fusion of digital innovation and language education, leveraging the captivating nature of gaming to enhance ESL learning outcomes." - [Angela Nenovska Krstevska, D-ESL Project Coordinator]
- "By integrating educational games into ESL curriculum, we empower language learners to engage authentically with the language in real-world contexts." - [Elena Zarkovska, D-ESL Project Coordinator]

Written Messages from Partners:

- "The impact of educational games on education is undeniable. Through our collaborative efforts, we are reshaping the landscape of learning, one game at a time." - [Jordanka Galeva, Partner Message]

Conclusion:

As we embark on this transformative journey, let us draw strength from the words of these experts and partners. Together, we have the power to develop educational competences through the immersive world of gaming. Let's continue to innovate, collaborate, and inspire the next generation of learners.

Pieces of advice and encouragement from SANSI LEONARDI

Advice for teachers

When we began the project work, we were not fully aware of what was ahead of us: if we had been, I don't think we would have accepted to take up a role in such a partnership! Of course, it had been explained, but the type of work is so different from the usual job of a teacher, that figuring it out resulted impossible. So, we began our difficult adventure, of which we are today extremely proud: in spite of the enormous effort and all the time spent on it, it was undoubtedly worth the time!!!

It is an entirely new world, that uncovers possibilities never considered in traditional teaching as well as in teachers' personal experience.

Game learning can be unexpectedly useful and inclusive, so what we want to strongly recommend those who first approach this experience is not to give up at the first difficulty. Even if after having subscribed to and attended the e-learning course, they feel they can create some very simple games, but they are not very confident yet, it doesn't matter: improvement always comes with time.

If we did it, everybody can!!!

Advice for students

And to students we recommend to use technology for learning and get used to it: the enthusiasm and strong feeling of victory we have seen in our students when they finished the games, has no equal. A different learning experience will leave you unknown feelings and pave the way to a lifelong learning success.

Some comments coming from our students while playing D-ESL video games during English classes:

> "Very fun, but it can also be difficult to pass certain levels, like level 5 which doesn't seem to work for me. In my opinion it is really useful to learn, but you need really basic English. Its main difficulty is trying to understand what you have to do."

> "The best videogame ever!".

> "The game was so fun, even if some levels can be almost impossible!"

> "This game is very funny, but the levels can be very difficult!"

"This game is funny, but also difficult to understand; anyway, it can be useful to learn English and have fun, once you've understood what to do!"

CONCLUSION

Dear readers, we strongly consider having reached our purpose to collect the best practices and testimonials of the teachers' practical experience using the materials realised inside the project. As you remember from the introductory words, the aim of this **implementation guide** was to display the results of the project, with feedback, success stories, and challenges, to encourage language teachers to use innovative teaching solutions.

In conclusion, what does the guide offer?

Innovation

Implementation guides are often developed by the creators of pedagogical material, while in this case, it was not limited to a theoretical approach to implementation. We succeeded in spreading the voices of educators and students having used our project results. The good practices and specific advice gathered from their experience will be invaluable for future teachers to discover the content

with their students in an innovative manner, by building on the experience of their peers.

Impact

The collection of research results, experiences and testimonies allow teachers to share and learn from each other to ensure a qualitative implementation of all the project results and innovative approach. This guide is actually a launching station for all the other results created inside the D-ESL project.

Transferability

By providing content written by teachers for teachers, this guide allows for a greater understanding and better implementation of the project values, objectives, and results. It fosters good inclusive practices, exchanges of experiences, as well as free guidance in the creation and use of video games for language learning.

Cooperation and synergies

As the partners have been actively working for this mission to strengthen cooperation and creating synergies between activities, these efforts are transferred to all project results, which are the testimony of partnership and teamwork. The implementation guide brings forward both challenges encountered at different project levels and solutions offered to educators so as to help them learn from other case situations and experiences.

The above points illustrate the functionality and effectiveness of the present **guide of implementation** for the overall understanding of our work and how all the teachers, trainers and educators can benefit from it. Indeed, the resources created

by the five partner institutions coming from Belgium, France, Italy, North Macedonia and Romania are free and accessible to all at www.d-esl.eu .

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