

Lingua “Opening the Door to Language Learning” Project

Proforma for partners’ evaluative reports

Please use this proforma to write an evaluative report of your phase 2 activities to be sent to Paula by 10th September 2004. Where you worked with national collaborators, please remember to report on their activities as well as your own. Please attach any materials you have developed for the project (including feedback forms) and any other materials you have used and are prepared to share.

On this form, please fill in your answers in the grey fields.

1. Context

You and your collaborators? Also mention the national collaborators you have worked with.

Name	Role	Institution	Type of Institution
Francis Note	Project assistant	Lessius Hogeschool	School for higher education
Inge Lanslots	Project coordinator	Lessius Hogeschool	School for higher education
GOC Sint Andries	National Collaborator	Community Centre	

What did you do? (i.e. what model did you test?) Please indicate in the following table which model you tested. Eight models are described, please indicate with the word “**Main**” which model fits your tested model best. You might have used elements from other models, please indicate this with the word “**Elements**”. Also fill out the Learner Training, Learner support and Learning resources sections for each model.

	Models		Independent Learning		
	Home	Away	Learner training	Learner support	Learning resources
One	a. Open Space: opening up an institutional resource centre to the community, making host staff resources available to the community.	b. Create Space: setting up a resource centre in the community or using an existing community resource centre, e.g. library.			Use of community centre for showing movies
		Elements			

Two	a. Open Virtual Space: making electronic tools and materials held on an institutional server available to the community.	b. Create Virtual Space: setting up a website for, or delivering electronic materials/learning opportunities to the community.	Use of spanish documents, texts or audio that is available at Lessius.		
	Elements				
Three	a. Host Study Groups: providing staff and space for the community to meet as a group to learn together.	b. Community Study Groups: facilitating the setting up of study groups in the community.	The nature of the test itself - conversation in Spanish. Additional "homework" to be done independently	Native speakers/coaches - Non native coaches - Project assisitant - Making school's resources/resource centre available - Learners Log	Resources available in school - Resources that students chose for themselves - internet - TV - Movies - e-mail
	Main				
Four	a. Open Days: run language taster sessions, exhibitions, demonstrations etc. in the host institution.	b. Roadshows: language taster sessions, exhibitions, demonstrations etc. in the community.	The test itself: actually a 3 month taster session because no 'real' course. We tried to motivate students to do this again.		
	Elements				

What was the profile of your learners? (e.g. number, age, previous language learning experience, qualifications and identified needs including special needs).

- **Number** of Learners: 20
- **Age group** (please state the number of learners in the age groups):

18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
3	4	3	6	2	2

- **Gender** (Please state numbers)

Female	Male
15	5

- **Educational experience** (Please state numbers)

Primary Education	Secondary Education	Higher Education / University	Post-HE / Post-University (Further education)	Adult Education	Evening Classes (not only languages)
18	17	14	5	8	8

- **Language learning goals** (Please state how many times the reason was mentioned by your learners)

Goal	Number
I just like to study languages	16
I have studied the language and want to refresh my knowledge	8
I am interested in developing a greater degree of independence in my learning	11
I have been advised to improve my language skills by my employer	0
I like the country where this language is spoken	16
In order to meet other people and socialise	16
I have relatives in or from the country where this language is spoken	3
I want to be able to use this language when I'm on holiday	17
I want to be able to read books, papers and magazines in this language	19
I want to be able to use this language in letters and/or e-mails	12
I want to be able to watch TV and listen to the radio in this language	15
I want to live/work where the language is spoken	3
I am looking for a good way to use my free time	6
I have a holiday home in the country where the language is spoken	0
For professional purposes	4
Other reasons:	
"Argentine tango and Flamenco are a passion. To understand the words of a song your are dancing to, is essential for me."	1
"Because I just love the language"	1
"I want to bring in practise the technical knowledge learnt during three school years. I want to DARE and BE ABLE to use the language."	2
"I want to be able to express my opinion to spanish poets or writers whenever they come to Antwerp" (learner works in an organisation who often organizes poetry evenings and literary cafés, FN)	1
"I think it is important to learn Spanish, since a lot of people in Spain don't speak any foreign language"	1

- **Please write short summaries of the answers on the more open questions.** (Use words rather than sentences.)

Aspect	Summary
Occupation	Independent profession (consultant, psychiatrist) - analyst - controller - student (2) - employee (2) - work in restaurant/café (2) - project manager - teacher.
Previous occupation if not currently working	teacher (3) - professional soldier - project manager - accountant - shipper. 3 persons were currently unemployed; 4 persons were retired, 1 person was on a long sick leave.
Why choose this way of learning?	Question not used. Answer in our case would have been close to the answer to the "Why do you want to take part" question.
Language learning experiences and qualifications	- Have lived or / and worked in Spain. (4) - Learned through travelling a lot in Spain (1) - Evening classes / summer courses / adult education (10) - Formal education: Spanish (2) - Learned with self-study course (3) - Language learning for seniors (1)
Native/first language	Dutch, Czech (1), French (1), English (1, person has a double native language)
Target language	Spanish
What other languages known and levels?	Scale 1-6. 1= weak; 6= strong. See grid used in application form. German Level 2 -- 4 persons Level 3 -- 1 person

	<p>Level 4 -- 9 persons Level 5 -- 3 persons Level 6 -- 1 person</p> <p>Portugese Level 3 -- 1 person</p> <p>English Level 3 -- 1 person Level 4 -- 6 persons Level 5 -- 6 persons Level 6 -- 5 persons</p> <p>French Level 2 -- 1 person Level 3 -- 3 persons Level 4 -- 5 persons Level 5 -- 5 persons Level 6 -- 4 persons</p> <p>Dutch (as a foreign language) Level 5 -- 1 person Level 6 -- 2 persons</p> <p>Russian Level 2 -- 1 person</p> <p>Italian Level 3 -- 1 person</p>
Why do you want to take part?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Was looking for a intensive conversation class of Spanish - Want to improve Spanish conversation - Liked the frequency of the scheme (every fortnight) - Wanted to exercise Spanish in practice - Like the alternative approach: a very diverse group, different way of learning... - Interested in the ODLL project - Want to use Spanish because otherwise I lose my knowledge
Computing skills/experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Common MS Office applications (Word, Excel, Powerpoint were mentioned most) - WordPerfect - E-mail applications and Internet browsers - ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) - Siebel (Sales & marketing tool) - SPSS (analytical software) - Graphic applications (CorelDraw, Photoshop) - Trados (translation software) - AS 400 (server systems) <p>One person reported explicitly to have very little experience with computers and one person reported to have no computer skills at all.</p>
Where did you hear about scheme?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advertisement in local newspaper; - heard from a friend who read it in the newspaper

2. Delivery / implementation

Please use **short** answers!

- Give a brief description of your activity, i.e. what exactly did you do and where did you do it? (max 100 words)

Part 1 was a conversation club of Spanish. We selected a diverse group of 20 people to take part in this. There were 6 conversation sessions, we organized this here at Lessius Hogeschool. In each session, the group was divided in three smaller groups because this made conversation easier. All groups were coached by a native speaker of Spanish, or a fluent Belgian speaker of Spanish. In the sessions the stress was put explicitly on conversation and not so much on teaching new vocabulary or grammar.

Part 2 was a movie cycle of Spanish films. We showed three movies in a local Community Centre. The idea was to have all of these movies introduced but a teacher of Spanish who knows a lot about this but because of exams we only managed to do this for the first movie.

The atmosphere during these movie activities was already very informal, possibly because of the setting, but even more informal were two dinners we had with the group and the coaches in a Tapas bar in Antwerp. Because of the presence of the Spanish coaches the learners were forced to use Spanish a lot here, so this turned out to be an extension of the normal conversation club.

- How does your phase 2 model differ from your phase 1 model? If your phase 2 model is a refinement of another partner's phase 1 model, how does it differ from their model?

Phase one did not focus on oral/aural language at all. Phase 2 was all about this. This is the main difference!

- What were your aims and objectives and how did you set about achieving them?

Aims and objectives:

- **To get people to use and dare to use their oral language.**
- **To make them more confident about their conversation.**
- **To get a good view about the opinion and of the group on the experiment.**
- **To bring them in touch with native speakers of the language.**
- **To bring them in touch with Spanish culture**
- **To stimulate their independence**

Achieved how:

- **The approach in the groups was just fine. The groups were not too large (4-5 persons max, plus the coach) so people felt confident to speak. Also the informal subjects (holidays, home situation, hobbies and interest...) were informal so everyone could talk about it.**
- **Learner's log gave us a view about what learners thought about the sessions.**
- **Coaches were native**
- **Culture aspect was used in the movie activities, but also during the sessions, as cultural subjects were used. This was particularly interesting since the cultural subjects were chosen by the students themselves.**
- **Independence was stimulated since every time the learners got a task to do, they had to do this task independently at home and bring it forward during the next session.**

- How did you publicise your activity and recruit your learners?

Recruitment was done through an advertisement in a local - free - newspaper. The ad is attached.

This advertisement turned out to be a good choice: the paper is free and is distributed in shopping halls, bakeries, butcher's shops, on the street, in barbershops, in restaurants and cafés.... So you reach a very large and diverse audience with your advertisement.

- How did you organise and manage the activity, e.g. how many sessions and how often, who lead these sessions, what was the content?

Session 1 - Feb 19 - coaches Teresa & Elsa (nat.) + Francis

Introduction and students introduce themselves to each other. Look up a newspaper article and talk about it with your neighbour.

Session 2 - Feb 26 - coaches Carmen, Marta (nat.) & Annelies (Belg.) + Francis

Talk about picture - little interview face to face - reasons to take part in the scheme - homework: talk about your favourite Spanish region.

Session 3 - Mar 11 - coaches Maria, Carmen (nat.) & Kim (Belg.) + Francis

Travelling and vacation: roleplay, listening exercise. Homework: make top 5 of what you would do when winning the lottery. Talk about your hobbies.

Session 4 - Mar 25 - coaches Albert, Emma (nat.) & Karen (Belg.) + Francis

Going out, restaurant and bar visit. Played also a word game. Homework: talk about a tradition in Spain and/or Belgium.

Session 5 - Apr 8 - coaches Ana, Lauricella, Carmen (nat.) + Francis

Talk about traditions and Spanish or Belgian peculiarities. Prepare an advertisement campaign for a (fictitious) product.

Session 6 - May 6 - coaches Emma, Teresa, Elsa (nat.) + Francis

Prepare and play a quiz about Spain. Informal talk about the scheme.

Movie 1 - May 12

"Hable con Ella" with introduction by Lieve Behiels

Movie 2 - May 19

"Todo sobre mi madre"

Movie 3 - May 26

"Los amantes del círculo polar"

Dinner in Tapasbar - April 22

Second dinner in Tapasbar - June 3

- What learning and support resources did you use? (equipment and human!)

Equipment

Internet, newspapers, video/DVD, digital photography, audio, dictionaries

Human

Teachers of Spanish for advice (Kris Buyse & Dirk Verbeeck for the sessions, Lieve Behiels for movies); project coordinator and project assistant; Spanish Erasmus students as coaches; Belgian students as coaches.

- What was the timetable for your activity? (refer to your work plan)

See above for timetable. The timing proposed in the workplan was respected.

- How did you monitor your learners, i.e. how were you kept informed about their progress?

- They all filled out a learner's log after each session. These learner logs were read by Francis during the sessions, and at the end of the scheme they were returned to us. In the learner's log they could comment on the sessions and their progress.
- Evaluation forms at the end of the scheme.

3. Outcomes

Please use **short answers!**

- What was the attendance rate for your activity? How many people attended all sessions?

Session 1 -- 19 persons

Session 2 -- 14 persons

Session 3 -- 13 persons

Session 4 -- 12 persons

Session 5 -- 10 persons

Session 6 -- 10 persons

7 persons attended all sessions.

1 person never showed up.

- What was the retention rate, i.e. number of learners at the end compared to the number of learners at the start of the test phase? How many people gave you feedback? What reasons did learners give for dropping out?

No of completions: 19 in first session, 10 in the last session.

No of feedback forms: 11

Reasons for drop-outs:

Too much work, new job

no longer free on Thursday evening

- Please give details of any products/materials you have developed for the project and, if possible, attach examples in the original language (i.e. no need for translations).

- Advertisement

- Application form

- Learner's Log

- Written preparations of the conversation classes

- Movie file "Hable con Ella"

- Movie file "Todo sobre mi madre"

- Movie file "Los amantes del circulo polar"

- Feedback form

- How did you / will you disseminate your results?

We will contact our national Socrates agency to ask for permission to present the project on the next meeting with people involved in projects are being interested in participating in projects.

4. Evaluation

Please write a 1500 word evaluation of your phase 2 experience. This should include discussion of the following:

- *Learner feedback and what this revealed about the learners and the scheme e.g. language learning gains, response to the scheme, future plans*
- *Tutor/facilitator feedback e.g. What went well, what challenges were encountered/overcome, what was gained in study group sessions?*
- *Evaluation of model e.g. did you meet your aims and targets (refer back to section 2), what worked and why; what didn't work and why not; what changes did you make; what future revisions to the model would you make?*
- *Comparison of your phase 2 model with phase 1 e.g. What did you learn from phase 1 (from your own model and from other partners' models) that helped you in phase 2?*
- *Impact on language learning, i.e. what was the effect of learning in this way? (Base this on comments from learners and your own observations on how this programme contributed to language learning, raising awareness, equal opportunities, widening / increasing participation, etc.)*
- *Results of working with national collaborators , e.g. what have you learnt from this experience about yourself, your own institution, language learning and teaching, working with non-traditional learners, your own country and other countries? What did you/your institution gain from the experience?*
- *Continuity and sustainability: how do you see this model developing? Do you have any ideas for taking it forward?*

Please also include quotes (translated into English) from learners and tutors and other evidence in support of your evaluation.

For evaluation see file "Phase II Activity Report_part 2".

4. Phase II evaluation

1. Learner Feedback

We have summarized the learner feedback that we obtained from the evaluation forms. Eleven out of nineteen learners filled out the questionnaire ([attached](#)). We will discuss the feedback using the questions that we have used.

a) What do you feel you have gained from this experience in terms of your language learning?

Some participants said that they now *dare* to speak Spanish. This was easier “*thanks to the spontaneous environment and style and the interaction with native speakers*”. They have also practised the language again, and used their ‘passive’ knowledge actively now. At the same time, they learned a number of new words and expressions. A number of people commented that they speak Spanish more fluently now.

b) What have you particularly enjoyed and why?

The participants have enjoyed this way of language learning because “it was spontaneous and there was a good atmosphere in the group”. People got the feeling “that there were no obligations”. They also enjoyed working in new groups on every new session; there was always a new composition, a new style of coaching, ... All learners particularly liked working with the native speakers and all loved talking through games.

c) Would you say that you have made progress and in what areas?

Most participants commented that they make more fluent, faster conversation now. The practise experience also helped them to *dare* to speak. Through the conversation, some common mistakes were corrected, known vocabulary and grammar was refreshed and the participants learned some new expressions and words.

d) Have you had any particular difficulties with the language?

There seemed to be no major difficulties. Sometimes the native coaches spoke too fast; sometimes their accent was difficult to understand. One person commented that some exercises were too easy for her. Other people commented that speaking in itself turned out to be the biggest challenge.

e) Do you feel that you have met your targets?

All but one participant commented that this was indeed the case.

f) Were there certain aspects that you have found particularly useful or interesting?

“Most interesting was the fact that oral conversation was the main concern. This is difficult to find in the normal evening classes.” Also interesting was that fact that you could be playful with language: the games very appreciated very much and all enjoyed this interactive education.

g) Have you had difficulties with the subjects and the techniques that were used during the sessions?

No big difficulties here: everything was really close to everyday life. One person writes that certain subjects were too specialized (but I really do not see how any of the subjects could have been too difficult, FN).

h) Did you feel that you have had adequate support?

Most students commented that they had adequate support from the native coaches, and that they fed their self-confidence. Some said that other coaches did not always correct all mistakes. Everyone was very positive about the groups of students, there was a lot of cooperation, and that everyone was very motivated.

i) Was there anything that you would have liked to do but were unable to?

One person commented, "I would have liked it that the sessions were more frequent, and that the scheme would have run for a longer time. Also maybe longer sessions..." Currently the sessions lasted for two hours each. Another person would have liked to talk about poetry, song lyrics, and jokes.

j) What did you do during the conversation sessions? What did you particularly like/enjoy?
Most people commented that they tried to speak as much as possible. One person said, "I think that it's better to speak a lot, maybe with some mistakes, than not to speak at all". Participants listened actively and wrote down unknown words.

k) The conversation groups were mostly accompanied by a native speaker, sometimes by a Flemish speaker. What did you like most?

Most people certainly preferred to have a native speaker as a coach. One person says that he prefers having a native speaker, but one that also speaks Dutch. We had one Spanish girl that was very fluent in Dutch and she was indeed the one that all participants wanted to come back, and so she did in the last session.

l) Have you gained personally from this programme e.g. greater confidence in your abilities to speak?

Participants commented that they had gained from the experience. They are more self-confident now. The barrier of speaking in a foreign language has been broken down – at least a bit. Someone commented that there would have been more progress when the sessions would have lasted for more weeks.

m) Are you planning to continue with your language learning and in what way?

Most people plan to continue with their language learning. A number of people want to do this through 'normal' adult education or evening classes. Some of them want to use unconventional methods like CD-ROMs, CD's, a multimedia language programme, and pronunciation exercises. Some persons are going to look for a conversation club that is similar to the one in the test phase.

n) Other remarks

One person noted that the level of the groups should have been more homogenous. One person noted that a continuation would be nice, which is something we will look into.

o) Score (Grid)

The programme. Half of the respondents scored the programme as being 'Very Good', 20% even thinks it was 'excellent'. The rest judged it as 'Good'.

Your progress. 60% of the respondents found their progress 'Good' or 'sufficient'. One person thought his progress was 'Insufficient'.

The venue – Lessius School. 80% of the respondents found the venue 'excellent' or 'very good'. The others judged it as 'sufficient' or 'good'.

Infrastructure. 70% of the respondents scored the infrastructure as 'good' or 'very good'. One person said that it was 'excellent', and two said that it was 'sufficient'.

Used Techniques. 60% scored the used techniques as 'Excellent' or 'Very Good'. The others thought they were 'Good'.

Support. 30% found support 'excellent'. 20% scored it as 'very good'. The other 50% found that it was 'Good' or 'Sufficient'.

2. Coach feedback

We have asked the coaches for their feedback after each session that they had coached ([Form attached](#)). From the forms that reached us, we have picked some relevant questions.

a) Do you think you have achieved your goals for this session?

Most coaches had the feeling that they had achieved their goals. Some quotes: "Yes, sometimes I saw that people did not talk about the subject but just among themselves, a

real conversation in Spanish.” There was a lot of talking and the participants asked questions to one another. “They were able to express themselves in a comprehensible way”. “Yes, they were willing to talk and I did not allow them to talk Dutch!”

b) Do you feel the participants have enjoyed the session, and that they have learned something?

On this point, the coaches confirmed the feeling that we had during the sessions. “They enjoyed it, cooperated good and were very enthusiastic. They have practised their oral skills and learned some new vocabulary”. “They were talkative and very participative, they were joking and laughing so i think they enjoyed it”. Also for the native speaker coaches, this was a pleasant experience.

c) Suggestions for improvement?

One student makes a valuable remark. “Maybe it would have been better not to have so many coaches, I think it’s a pity that you do one class with some people and not anymore because you can’t see their improvements, and for the students maybe it’s better to know their coach a bit better so they feel more confident...” We decided to work with different coaches during each session, because most of them had a lot of work with their normal school work. Another remark: “I think that initiatives like this one are absolutely vital. There is a great need for conversation sessions. Really talking in a foreign language is still the only way to learn a language effectively.”

3. Evaluation of model e.g. did you meet your aims and targets?

We’ll repeat the aims and objectives we have talked about in the second section of this document:

- To get people to use and dare to use their oral language.
- To make them more confident about their conversation.
- To get a good view about the opinion and of the group about the experiment.
- To bring them in touch with native speakers of the language.
- To bring them in touch with Spanish culture
- To stimulate their independence

I think that, given the feedback that we received from our participants, we can say that we have achieved the goals we set for ourselves. Most participants now dare to use the language, they are more confident, more independent now.

The thing that certainly worked very well was the cooperation with the native speakers. This was mainly their own merit: they were very cooperative and open and they comforted the participants from the start of the first session. Also working in groups worked quite good: the groups had a different composition every week, but nobody seemed to bother.

One thing that we hoped to stimulate was spontaneous conversations – in Spanish – during the sessions. We did prepare a planning for the sessions, with different subjects to talk about, but this was merely a stepping stone for more spontaneous conversation: we didn’t care that they deviated from the subject, and the coaches knew that they could allow that. So that’s something we were quite happy about.

We used a Learner’s Log ([attached](#)) as a tool for some initial feedback and also for adjustments to be made. In the Log, people could write their comments about the sessions, and their suggestions for improvement. I read their comments during the sessions. One of the things we have changed was the splitting up of the large group into several smaller groups. Another thing was the shift to the end of the session of the part where they presented their “homework” to the other students, since this took up a lot of time in the session. By shifting it to the end we could limit this part a bit.

Should we go on with this conversation club in the future, we would of course make a number of revisions. First of all we would have to look for a room that's more adapted for speaking in small groups without disturbing each other. There should also be enough facilities for using video, internet and audio. Furthermore, we would keep the system with native speakers, but we would limit the number: maybe three or four native speakers, but then use the same people during the entire scheme. Also, the scheme would have to be better prepared, there should be more sessions, there should be more measuring of the progress of the participants. This would of course be solved in case of one group of three or four native speakers, where they can do a much closer follow up of the group.

Certain people came up with the suggestion of making the groups more homogenous, but that is something I would not change. Possible candidates should of course have a minimum level of Spanish, but I wouldn't bother with selecting people that are all on the same level. The fact that people are being mixed up makes it all interesting, and I am sure that all will benefit from this in the long term.

I will use this last paragraph to talk about the Spanish movie cycle we organized in the community centre in Antwerp. We organized this movie cycle because we wanted to share some Spanish culture with our learners, and we thought the best way to do this was using movies by Spanish directors. We used movies by Pedro Almodovar and Julio Medem.

We organized the cycle in a community centre, close to the school, because we wanted to open up these movie evenings for everybody, not just for the persons that were in the scheme. So we put up some posters before every movie night, so people knew what movie, when, etc. The movies were, due to booking reservations, shown on a different day than the 'normal' activities, on Wednesday instead of Thursday. This resulted in a somewhat lower attendance rate of our learners: lots of them were not available on Wednesdays. But their absence was filled up by other people, so for all movie nights we had about 20 spectators per night.

The movies were, because of the presence of non-learners, shown with subtitles. The initial plan was to have all movies introduced by one of the teachers from Lessius school, in Spanish, but due to the fact that the films were shown in the evening, and due to exams at Lessius, we only managed to do this for the first film. Also for the first film, there was a discussion about the movie afterwards.

These movie nights were maybe not the place to speak a lot, but it did add to the informal atmosphere of the conversation club. Also sitting together and having a drink afterwards were really good for the forming of a good group: 6 or 7 of our learners never missed a class and went to the activities together. I know that they also met on other opportunities, like a theme night about Gabriel Garcia Marquez here in Antwerp, which was organised by one of the learners's husband.

Another thing that helped to build a good and informal atmosphere were two dinners we had with learners and coaches in a tapas bar in Antwerp. The food was Spanish so that gave enough stuff to talk about, and also the coaches don't speak a lot of Dutch so the learners were 'forced' to talk Spanish to them.

4. Comparison of Phase II model with Phase I model

Our Phase II model was clearly different of our Phase I model. In Phase II we have been focusing on oral skills. From the Phase I evaluation of our external evaluator it became clear that there was a need for this in the Phase II test.

In the Phase II test we more or less started from scratch, using little or no elements from the Phase I test.

5. Impact on language learning

We get the impression that most participants have gained from this experience. This came forward in the evaluation forms, and they told us this on several occasions. The test we carried out seemed to be a suitable prototype for a conversation club; of course, we will have

to make some adaptations (see above). We had a good impression about the group and the way of working from the first session on.

Also, there appeared to be a clear need for this type of language learning, we knew this already before we started the scheme and this was confirmed by the fact that we received a huge response on our advertisement ([attached](#)). We filled a gap: Spanish is very popular in Adult/Evening education but a "course" that is devoted to conversation alone, that is quite unique.

We raised awareness about language learning, in the local community, by advertising in a newspaper that is distributed on non-traditional places, and of course also in the group of learners. Needless to say that they were already strongly convinced of the importance of language learning.

When composing the group, we paid special attention to the composition of the group: we did not want a homogenous group of highly skilled specialist of Spanish, just looking for an extra opportunity to speak Spanish. We selected a diverse group, with people from all different age groups, with different backgrounds and formal studies; we tried to include unemployed and retired people. On the matter of formal studies of Spanish: a few people in the group did never receive tuition in Spanish, but was autodidact: either by learning with CD's or cassettes; or by travelling or working in Spain or South America.

6. Results of working with national collaborators

We have worked with a local community centre in Antwerp. They have hosted our movie evenings. In this respect, we have not worked together with them on aspects for the conversation sessions.

Nevertheless, the cooperation with the community centre was very spontaneous and open. They were instantly OK with our somewhat special proposal, 'special' because they do not normally organize such activities.

The community centre, and the persons who normally visit the centre, were also very interested in the activity itself, the movies and the discussion afterwards, because several people asked when the new scheme would start!

All in all I think it was a good idea to "take out" the project, as you also get in touch with other people, even people that are not immediately interested in language learning show interest, because they are interested in movies! Therefore, movies are a catalyst here.

7. Continuity and sustainability

We have the feeling that the model we have tested has a strong potential for continuity. Of course, with many adaptations, there should be a larger group working on it, there should be more sessions, prepared in a more professional way, but the most important thing is that it should still all be about talking. This is what the learners enjoyed so much in this scheme and that is the reason why they applied. The fact that we managed to offer the learners what they were expecting, reassured us of the fact that we had done the right thing: talking.

Our school offers possibilities for post-graduate education. The courses that are currently being taught, do not deal with languages. Priorities lie with other subjects for the moment. However, we will certainly talk with the head of department to see what is possible, especially because so many people have asked for a new course, even persons who were not selected for the test group.

It is definitely too late to offer something in the next academic year, but we will see what we can do in the next year (2006-7).

Francis Note
August 2004