



# **LASLLIAM TOOLS FOR LITERACY AND SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING**

**PILOT TOOLS BASED ON LASLLIAM DESCRIPTORS**

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# I. QUALITATIVE REPORT ON MULTILINGUAL LASLLIAM PILOTING

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**Abstract:** In this paper, we report on the piloting phase of the project *Literacy and Second Language Learning for the Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants (LASLLIAM)* of the Council of Europe. Based on the LASLLIAM reference guide, materials developers in different European countries produced tools for teaching and cooperated with teachers who used them in actual learning environments in order to improve these tools for publication on the Council of Europe's website. In this qualitative research report, we present findings from a focus group study involving teams of tool developers and teachers in eight languages. To give a voice to practitioners in the field of second language teaching to non- and low-literate learners, we analyzed transcripts in the original languages from four teams and reports in English from four other teams according to emerging themes. Our exploratory study summarizes the emic perspectives of these practitioners and illustrates them with quotations. Overall, the results show a high degree of acceptance of the LASLLIAM scales by tool developers and of the piloted tools by teachers.

## 1. Goals of the piloting research phase of the LASLLIAM project

After the development of the LASLLIAM reference guide in 2018-2021 (Minuz et al. 2022), an extensive piloting phase was conducted in fourteen different European languages in 2022. It consisted of two phases: (1) a phase of producing teaching and assessment tools for non- and low-literate second language learners at LASLLIAM levels 1-4 and in mixed groups in the first half of 2022 and (2) a phase of actual use of these newly developed tools in learning environments and institutions across Europe in the second half of 2022. These tools were aimed at providing examples of how the LASLLIAM scales could be used in developing teaching tools for future users of the reference guide.

In this paper, we report on a qualitative, exploratory evaluation study based on tool development, classroom piloting and group interviews with both materials developers and teachers of non- and low-literacy second language learners. Our research questions focus on the emic perspective of practitioners' acceptance of the LASLLIAM-based tools in various European contexts characterized by different languages and orthographies as well as different methodological and curricular traditions of teaching literacy in a second language:

1. What challenges do interviewees experience in teaching LASLLIAM learners in their contexts?
2. How do materials developers perceive the usefulness of LASLLIAM for developing teaching tools?

### 3. How do teachers perceive the tools developed?

The focus groups also served the purpose of evaluating and improving the various tools which were updated in light of the second phase outcomes. Teachers' impressions, notes and suggestions reported in the focus group interviews were used in each of the countries to finalize the tools.

In order to answer the three research questions, we briefly present the research design of our study in section 2 by giving an overview of the material development and classroom piloting (section 2.1) and by explaining the focus group study (section 2.2). In section 3, we explore the major themes that emerged from the data corpus. These were learner orientation (section 3.1), strategies and social autonomy (section 3.2), understanding the goals of LASLLIAM (section 3.3), and using LASLLIAM for the development of teaching materials (section 3.4), in particular balancing technical with functional literacy, use of scenarios, digital tools, a portfolio, and assessment tools. Extensive quotations are used to illustrate the emic perspectives prominently discussed in the focus groups and to give practitioners a voice in this report. A brief conclusion summarizes the major findings and underlines the high degree of acceptance of LASLLIAM as a reference guide for material production and of the piloted tools.

## 2. Research design

### Tool development and piloting in actual learning environments

Experienced materials developers from eight different countries were contracted by the Council of Europe to produce tools for non- and low-literate second language learners focusing on different learning goals (e.g., oral and written competences, strategies, and digital skills) as well as assessment (e.g. a portfolio). Additionally, 18 ALTE-LAMI members from 12 ALTE institutions representing 12 languages<sup>1</sup>, volunteered to develop four assessment tools within a framework aimed at improving connections between learning, teaching and assessment.

*Table 1: Overview of piloting*

Development teams	Focus of tools	# of learning environments
Dutch team	portfolio	9 learning environments
English team	digital skills	3 learning environments
French team	reading comprehension	3 learning environments
German team	strategies diagnostic test	still ongoing 1 learning environment

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<sup>1</sup> Czech, Dutch, English, Esperanto, German, Greek, Italian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovenian and Spanish.

Greek team	writing	8 teachers (with some of them using the materials in more than one learning environment)
Italian team	language activities involving digital skills	25 teachers (with some of them using the materials in more than one learning environment)
Spanish team	speaking	4 learning environments
Turkish team	listening comprehension	3 learning environments
ALTE-LAMI team	assessment	101 learning environments (1,135 learners)

In a next step, these materials were piloted in actual learning environments. Tool developers invited voluntary teachers to use some of the tools and make notes on what worked (less) well in their learning environments. They were asked to report on their piloting experience in a focus group<sup>2</sup> so that material developers were able to make changes to the LASLLIAM tools accordingly.<sup>3</sup> Table 1 gives an overview of the national teams involved and the tools produced in the various languages (for more details on the tools, see appendix 1).

### Focus group study

As highlighted by Small and Calarco (2022: 2), “over the past two decades qualitative scholarship has dramatically shaped how scientists, policy makers, and the public think about inequality, poverty, race, ethnicity, gender, education, health, organizations, immigration, neighbourhoods, and families“. It is also well established that an emic perspective is fundamental when researching perspectives, opinions and attitudes in second language research (Mackey & Gass, 2021) and in teacher research (Xerri, 2018).

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<sup>2</sup> For illustration, we use the Italian focus groups, which were conducted with a particularly high number of 25 teachers. Italian teachers’ answers to the question about the adequacy, usefulness and appropriateness of the tools were nearly unanimously positive. All of them appreciated the teacher guideline, which they found clear, easy to follow, and very detailed but also open to leaving space to adapt them to the actual contexts and teaching approaches. They indicate “a precise track” but also allow users to approach the content “in a way more congenial to us” (Italian teacher Interview 2). However, a team of teachers from a voluntary organisation found the scenario format too schematic and geared towards objectives, not really suitable for a participatory approach in lesson planning, although they appreciated the proposed activities. More than one teacher indicated that the tool opened to further themes, activities and scenarios. For example, the tool on the kitchen led to organize an outing to discover the local differentiated waste collection (interview 1). The proposed activities have been appreciated and mostly described as “motivating”, “interesting”, “amusing”, “adequate”, “very useful”, “enjoyable”. They were used successfully in heterogeneous classes (see above 4.2). Criticisms were expressed mostly as improvement suggestions. They regarded some activities that learners found difficult to understand and that should be presented more gradually or more concretely. For example, one teacher pointed out that diagrams and histograms, although useful, were too demanding for their learners and suggested steps to arrive at the same objective. Some learner groups had difficulties understanding what they had to do in the role-play activities. One teacher reported that their group found some lexical exercises so repetitive that they become confusing and boring. Further comments concerned the quality of the audio recordings and the opportunity to replace them with videos. Audio recordings resulted in some cases being inadequate because the oral competence of the actual learners was lower than the intended level. Some teachers suggested small changes in the images, for example replacing the image of a computer with that of a mobile phone due to coherence with the activity, or in visualisations. A few teachers complained about lack of equipment: a colour printer, and adequate sound reproduction devices.

<sup>3</sup> The Greek report suggests to translate instructions into learners’ first languages and to include more visual material).



Pointing out the importance of linking the aim of the task to the selection of data collection technique, Small and Calarco (2022) state that in-depth interviews are commonly used to elicit explicitly how people understand themselves and their circumstances. Taking into consideration that the main aim of the piloting phase was to explore whether the use of the LASLLIAM reference guide works in reality at all levels, therefore, it was important to collect the views of the stakeholders involved. At this stage of the project, the stakeholders were the materials developers of the tools and the teachers using the tools with their learners.<sup>4</sup>

To answer the research questions, data was collected in focus group interviews conducted either by LASLLIAM team members (in the case of Dutch, English, German, Italian teams and ALTE-LAMI tools) or by contracted partners (in the case of French, Greek, Spanish and Turkish). Unfortunately (CoE decisions), the teachers could not be paid for piloting or participating in the interviews. But many of them agreed to participate on a voluntary basis. It is thus important to point out that the sample of research participants is composed of particularly experienced tool developers recruited by the Council of Europe and exceptionally highly motivated teachers volunteering to take part in the study.

In most cases, one group interview was organized per language team in which material developers and teachers discussed LASLLIAM either in presence or in a videoconference in a time slot that was scheduled for approximately 60 minutes. In some cases, more than one interview was conducted by one language team because of group size (Italian) or for organisational reasons (French, English, Turkish). Table 2 provides details on the interview sessions and their actual length.

*Table 2: Data corpus of piloting study*

Language	Length	Participants of focus group interview	Processed data
Dutch	100 min.	➤ interview with three material developers and four teachers	1 Dutch transcript (12058 words)
English	39 min 8 min	➤ Interview 1 with one material developer and one teacher ➤ interview 2 with one teacher	2 English transcripts (8775 words)
German	69 min.	➤ interview with two material developers	1 German transcript (13178 words)
Italian	120 min. 180 min.	➤ interview 1 with two material developers and twelve teachers	2 Italian transcripts (29351 words)

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<sup>4</sup> It was not possible within the scope of the project to collect data from learners as the LASLLIAM target is LESLLA learners who are beginning to learn the language of the host country. This means that interpreters are needed in all the different L1s of the learners to collect reliable and valid data.

		➤ interview 2 with one material developer and thirteen teachers	
French	73 min. 43 min. 46 min.	➤ interview 1 with one material developer and three teachers ➤ interview 2 with one material developer ➤ interview 3 with one material developer	3 written summaries in English (6408 words)
Greek	60 min. 60 min.	➤ interview 1 with two teachers ➤ interview 2 with six teachers	1 written summary in English (1879 words)
Spanish	19 & 34 min. 44 & 55 min.	➤ 2 interviews with two material developers ➤ 2 interviews with seven teachers	1 written summary in English (2378 words)
Turkish	3 x 30 min	➤ 3 interviews with one teacher each	1 written summary in English (1419 words)

Interviewers used a guideline that covered five sections: (1) a warm-up section focusing on the participants' role in the piloting phase and their previous experience in the field, (2) a section focusing on experiences while using the LASLLIAM reference guide for material development,<sup>5</sup> (3) a section focusing on experiences while using these materials in actual learning environments, (4) a section for making suggestions for improvement of the materials and (5) a closing/debriefing section. The interview guideline was organized in main focus questions supported by notes on a horizon of expectation in terms of topics to be used by the interviewers as prompts for follow-up questions. For transparency, we provide this guideline in appendix 2.

Interviewers were given the guideline in English, but interviews were conducted in the various languages of material developers and teachers. Interviewers participated in a preparatory meeting in which they familiarized themselves with the guideline and the focus group procedures (Dörnyei 2007, Helfferich 2011) and were encouraged to translate the guideline for their interview. However, in line with the concept of focus groups, they were discouraged from sharing the interview guideline with their participants in advance. Numbers of participants varied between 1 and 13 in the sixteen interviews finally conducted.

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<sup>5</sup> In the Dutch interview phase 2 and 3 were exchanged because one of the teachers had to leave the group earlier.

Participants had been informed about the study and gave their informed consent either in written or videorecorded form. On this basis, the focus group interviews were video- or audio recorded. In a next step, a two-fold data corpus was built from these video-recordings consisting of a set of interviews that were transcribed in the respective language and another set of interviews that were summarized by the interviewer in English:

- The first set of data consisted of transcripts of the interviews on Dutch, English, German and Italian materials (marked in grey in table 2). These transcripts were produced using automatic speech processing (such as Amberscript, Transcribe in Word, Videoindexer) to produce a rough transcript. After sampling procedures, relevant quotations were carefully corrected by the native speakers of these languages who had conducted the interviews (and who are the authoring team of the LASLLIAM guide as well as of this paper) according to simple HIAT conventions (see table 3).
- The second set of data consisted of summaries of the interviews conducted on French, Greek, Spanish and Turkish materials. These summaries were written by the native speakers of these languages who had conducted the interviews; these reports were produced in English.

The resulting corpus consisted of interview transcripts of more than 8 hours (516 minutes) and 63.362 words as well as interview summaries of more than 8 hours (524 minutes) and 12.084 words (see table 2 for details).

*Table 3: Simple HIAT<sup>6</sup> conventions used for presenting quotations*

	Repair	Abortion of utterance	Repetition	Pauses	Not understandable	Replacements or deletions
Symbol	/	...	,	((xs))	(xxxx)	[ ]
Example	So I was/ could look at it and think.	I think there is too much you can't quite ...	You had a, a sort of separate college device .	((1s)), ((2s))	(are) - for best guess of what was said, ( ) - for	[city], [name] ] - to protect identity, [...] - for parts

<sup>6</sup> HIAT is an acronym for *Halbinterpretative Arbeitstranskriptionen* (for details, see Rehbein et al. 2004).



					unintelligible parts of utterances	of speech has been deleted
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For the interpretive analysis of emerging themes loosely inspired by qualitative content analysis (e.g., Schreier 2014), the transcripts were used as the primary source. A multilingual team member sampled and thematically grouped quotations from the English, German and Italian transcripts and - due to her limited understanding of Dutch - a translation of the Dutch transcript into English. In a next step, other authors as native speakers of each respective language checked the sample and added more quotations from the transcripts if considered relevant. The aim was to provide a range of views prominently discussed in the focus groups. For their language and transcript(s), the authors also decided which quotations to use in this report (with an English translation where needed) and which ones to paraphrase or summarize. The written reports from four other countries (i.e. France, Greece, Spain, Turkey) in English were analysed in a second step and were used as secondary sources.

In the next section, we will discuss in detail the themes that emerged from this exploratory interpretive analysis. The aim in presenting the results of this interpretive analysis is to explore the emic perspectives on LASLLIAM of tool developers and teachers. We have not conducted a fine-grained content analysis, but instead in this report have striven to give a voice to practitioners across Europe, by collecting and presenting their testimonials.

### 3. Results of the interpretive analysis

#### 3.1 Learner orientation as a starting point for planning

Learner orientation was one of the major themes, which emerged from the interviews. Both the tool developers and the teachers extensively focused on particular characteristics of the target group that, from their point of view, make learner orientation highly important. Teachers discussed how adaptation and own production of learning materials is an often challenging part of their teaching and how much importance they place on building a close relationship with their students in order to actually be able to work as closely as possible to their everyday needs. In this section, we look into these aspects in more detail, summarizing recurring ideas and illustrating them by quotations from our research partners.

In their description of working with the target group, the interviewees particularly stressed the

- students' challenge of learning a second language without being able to rely on writing in this process,
- the heterogeneity of students in their learning environments in terms of

- written and oral competences (i.e. very diverging learner profiles), length-of-stay in the host country and as well differences in their immigration status,
- age groups, professional aspirations and motivation,
- linguistic, cultural and educational backgrounds

and the resulting need to adapt or produce materials on their own which are specifically geared towards their specific learners;

- their resource-orientation as teachers towards the individual learners,
- the social isolation and the insecurity of many learners;
- the irregular attendance patterns often found in these groups that need to be taken into account in material development.

One of the reports summarizes several of these aspects nicely:

All interviewees insist on the heterogeneity found in adult migrant groups. Almost all teachers point to irregular attendance as one of the biggest problems, as well as significant differences in levels within a group. Most point to the need for constant repetition because progress is very slow. (Spanish report)

While some teachers referred to available syllabi, most of them described how they usually use textbooks or schemes, i.e. lesson plans, as a rough guide of orientation for a course from which they choose relevant parts and which they then complement with self-made materials.

So it starts with a look at the schema work. What should be taught or what the outcomes for this week (are). Then on the schema work we sometimes have... If it's like book numbers or there's this worksheet from a certain place. So you can have a look at those resources. And then normally I plan sort of three lessons that week for that class. I have a look (at) what do I want them to achieve by the end of the lesson. And then I'll plan my lessons using that and then normally go into 101 [= resources room] have a look at the resources. What can I use? Have a look at the book and choose the parts that I think will work best for my students. (English interview 1)

While many teachers use similar procedures of using the textbook as a rough guide and choosing or adapting materials from it, some teachers also reported more independent material production. Some of them emphasized authentic documents more than textbooks:

I find it difficult to work with textbooks, because I feel that they are not adapted to the needs of the learners, or to their heterogeneous nature in terms of skills and knowledge. I would rather work with authentic documents that I have developed myself, choosing subjects according to the interests of the learners and to the cultural knowledge that I would like to pass on to them; again, this varies from case to case. (French report 1)

Others underlined the importance of real-life classroom activities such as cooking together and excursions as valuable sources for learning and material production:

And then outings. They are also very important to really get in touch with the territory, with this world of unknown signs that surround us. And then we go and search for them a little bit

in the, in the reality. We go and search for them ((1s)) in the street also by photographing and then bringing them back to class to be able to comment on them and reuse them as material that is then self-produced by the students. (translated from Italian interview 1)<sup>7</sup>

In a similar spirit, some teachers complemented the LASLLIAM piloting materials with authentic, contextualized texts. In two interviews, participants also discussed the importance of extending literacy classes to encompass more elements of basic education and especially numeracy.

Another teacher is proud to have produced a book in the form of an easy reader about the life of a low-literate student since his arrival in Italy which s/he based on video recordings of him at work in a flower shop and which s/he plans to publish and add an indication of the CEFR or LASLLIAM level on the book cover. Yet, another one says that in her institution, teachers work without a textbook, but try to find a match between offers they make and wishes their learners express:

Activities that we don't actually create on the basis of specific materials. That is, we don't rely on books, but rather we ask the participants what they would actually like to deepen. That is, it is a match between what we would like to propose which we think might be useful and what they actually ask us to address. So we don't actually rely on specific books, but rather we try ahm to find materials or take inspiration. But that certainly we do take inspiration and then propose activities. (translated from Italian interview 2)<sup>8</sup>

The degree to which teachers rely on prefabricated and self-made materials thus varies, but teacher production seems to be inspired, in most cases, by an interplay of existing materials and students' needs. There are also several indications of how time-consuming and straining material production is for the teachers as these two quotations illustrate:

I think it's that/ I think there is too much you can't quite... And then it's the time pressures and the amount of time you're expected to, to be in the classroom. But actually, I think everybody feels that they're not doing it quite well enough. (English interview 1)

One of the teachers says that, given the heterogeneity and irregularity of attendance, the classes are designed as one-day capsules. Another teacher says that she comes to class with a lot of materials to adapt during the teaching session. She has several lesson plans and chooses one. (Spanish report)

In two language teams, teachers deplored the rather limited amount of teaching materials available for teaching the target group of non- and low-literate learners. For

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<sup>7</sup> Original: E poi la/ le uscite sul territorio. Queste sono molto importanti anche per prendere contatto veramente con, con il territorio, con questo mondo di segni sconosciuti che ci circondano. E quindi gli andiamo a cercare un po' nella, nella realtà. Andiamo a cercare in strada e ((1s)) anche fotografando e poi riportando in classe per poterli commentare riusare quello come materiale che poi è un materiale autoprodotta dagli studenti. (Italian interview 1)

<sup>8</sup> Original: Attività che in realtà ahm non creiamo sulla base di materiali specifici. Cioè non ci affidiamo a libri quanto più appunto chiediamo all'utenza cosa vorrebbero effettivamente approfondire. Cioè è un incontro tra quello che magari noi vorremmo proporre che pensiamo possa essere utile e quello che effettivamente loro ci chiedono che di affrontare. Quindi non ci affidiamo effettivamente a dei libri specifici quanto cerchiamo ahm di/ noi stesse di trovare dei materiali o prendere spunto. Ma a quello sicuramente prendere spunto e proporre poi delle delle attività. (Italian interview 2)

example, a Turkish teacher stated that there were less materials for teaching Turkish than, for example, English. Therefore, these teachers also engage in material production and share them on websites.

Despite that the teachers appear to rely heavily on coursebooks, they also use various web-sites (İstanbul Türkçe) to which individual teachers also contribute in terms of developing extra teaching materials. (Turkish report)

When sharing such self-produced materials, it is important to keep in mind the wish of other teachers to adapt them to their learner groups. Using a Creative-Commons-license seems to be a good option to allow for such contextual adaptation. Referring to the piloting of the portfolio, for example, teachers pointed out that they adapted the prefabricated material to their specific learner groups:

We definitely took advantage of the fact that it's a Word document. Thank you, because we (left out) some parts. I can't quite remember off the top of my head what we selected and what we didn't select to really put in right away in our broad intake phase, the first six months or so. But we didn't ehm enlarge those subjects or anything at the time. We just copied it on A4 sheets, but as we went along, we found out that that box wasn't always big enough then. And people who are just becoming literate don't write very small either, so they often need space to write their name. And then a child's name, or they have 9, can't fit. Well, then you just add a new sheet of paper. So that's how we solved it. (translated from Dutch interview)<sup>9</sup>

It is impressive how the adaptation and creation of materials in many cases starts from needs analyses of the learners as expressed by this teacher:

I usually start by assessing the linguistic and cultural needs of my learners. I analyse beforehand the skills and knowledge that they already have; I set objectives and contents that would enable me to move forward, and then I search for appropriate authentic documents to use in developing all the skills in written, oral production and comprehension in my sequences. (French report 1)

Several teachers emphasize the importance of building a close relationship with their students as a starting point for material production. One teacher reports how s/he understood in the first months of her teaching experience with the target group that the learners are the central resource and that if teachers are highly flexible and emphatic, students will express themselves.

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<sup>9</sup> Original: We hebben zeker gebruik van gemaakt van het feit dat het een Word document is. Dankjewel, want we hebben een aantal onderdelen (eruit gelaten). Ik weet even uit mijn hoofd niet meer helemaal precies wat we wel en niet geselecteerd hebben om echt meteen in te zetten in onze brede ja intakefase, het eerste halfjaar ongeveer. Maar we hebben toen ja niet die vakken vergroot of zo. We hebben het gewoon op A4-tjes gekopieerd, maar gaandeweg kwamen we erachter dat dat vak dan niet altijd groot genoeg is. En mensen die net aan het alfabetiseren zijn schrijven ook niet zo heel klein, dus die hebben vaak ruimte nodig om hun naam te schrijven. En dan kan de naam van een kind, of ze hebben er negen, niet meer bij. Nou ja, dan voeg je gewoon een nieuw vel papier toe. Dus op die manier hebben we het opgelost.

But in my first few months of work, I realised that the greatest resource is the students in the sense that we have to be as flexible as possible empathic and then they eh express. Thus the relationship with the students is fundamental. (translated from Italian interview 2)<sup>10</sup>

Another teacher refers to the relationship with learners as the starting point for adaptation of materials to her/his learners:

We start above all from the relationship from what they say to each other what comes out... Mostly from their present, what they say, what they want. Eh and from there after an initial conversation in which they talk and talk to each other ((1s)), we divide the groups and then one alternately takes care of the alphabet group where they do specifically... (translated from Italian interview 2)<sup>11</sup>

Real-life goals and previous experiences of their learners thus play a vital role for the interviewed teachers' planning and teaching (see also section 3.4.5 on the portfolio):

- Similar to what many others say, one of the interviewees emphasizes that it is very often the students who ask the teacher to address a certain problem of their everyday life.
- Another teacher uses the example of a LASLLIAM tool on emergencies and emergency numbers. S/he reports that her students "were just so engaged and interested and wanted to learn because it relates to their life rather than just any random topic that they're learning" (English interview 1).
- One of the interviewees refers to how s/he starts the first lesson of a course with a needs analysis and stresses the fact that learners' encompassing real-life goals like helping children, getting a job or getting a driver's licence need to be broken down to smaller, realistic steps in the learning process.
- One of the reports mentioned that a material developer tries to start from documents with which the students are already familiar.

One of the many telling quotations is the following one by a material developer who explained how s/he based the production of LASLLIAM piloting materials on everyday needs s/he had experienced in her/his teaching:

People often don't want to teach the lower levels, so scared of the lower levels. Uh don't know how to do it. So I think we waste some students' time a lot. And because of the way, you know, the way people... You know the resources that are available and the teaching styles. So in my mind, I think ((1s)) for me an ESOL group, and certainly at the lower levels, you need to look at the group of learners that you have so it is very really important to meet those individual needs. Writing skills is obviously the thing that really affects and, and I think sometimes in life we confuse, you know what, when you think somebody is intelligent or not intelligent. However, we see learners that can speak so well. And for me that is an amazing level of

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<sup>10</sup> Original: Eh però eh per la/ per i primi mesi di lavoro ho capito che la risorsa maggiore sono gli studenti nel senso che noi dobbiamo essere flessibili al massimo, empatici e poi loro eh esprimono. Quindi il rapporto con gli studenti è fondamentale. (Italian interview 2)

<sup>11</sup> Original: Partiamo soprattutto da/ dalla relazione da cosa si dicono da cosa viene fuori da... Soprattutto dal loro presente da cosa che cosa dicono da cosa desiderano. Eh e da qui dopo dopo una prima conversazione in cui loro parlano e si parlano ((1s)) dividiamo i gruppi e allora uno si/ alternativamente si occupa del gruppo alfabeto dove si fa/ si fanno specificamente... (Italian interview 2)

intelligence when they don't have any reading or writing skills because when I'm learning a language, I need to write it down. I need to read it. I need to look at it so to be able to, to develop the grammatical knowledge that some students have without the writing skills. It shows that... So, so it's always for me... Is that meeting those needs and really giving... So with the work that I've sort (have) done, I suppose it is wanting to create materials that allowed people to use their knowledge because they live in this country and use things that they're familiar with in this country, such as the NHS, such as the Job Centre. And that was my starting point for my ideas. For each of the levels that I looked at was... What? What do our students need to do? And what then? And then, sort of it grew from there. (English interview 1)

As a side note, it is interesting that some teachers also refer to the dichotomy of real life and play. While many teachers insisted on the relevance of games and amusement provided especially by digital games, others point out that games are not always appreciated by learners and that in some cases there is a resistance against games like memory. In their view, it is important to explain the learning goals of a game. For example, referring to computer games produced with *Learning Apps*, a teacher states:

I think you have to kind of make sure that they understand why they're doing it, that it's not just a game for the fun of it. (Yeah) so I had to kind of sit with some people and explain: "You know this is to help you with the mouse skills." (English interview 2)

To summarize this section, learner orientation was a major theme of the focus groups. Material developers as well as teachers highlighted the heterogeneity of learner groups and the importance of needs analyses. Both aspects call for internal differentiation of materials and challenge teachers to adapt pre-fabricated or even create new materials for their individual learners.

### 3.2 Strategies and social autonomy

Strategies and social autonomy were topics only rarely addressed in the focus groups, but three central points emerged: cooperation of learners, usefulness of strategy scales and empowerment by and ownership of the portfolio.

In the interviews, several teachers expressed their observations on - and their satisfaction with - learners' cooperation during the piloting lessons. The following quotation even shows amazement at the level of cooperation and its success:

Surprisingly even though none of the students had a vocabulary eh in Italian ah to do the reordering they reordered. Eh I don't know how ((laughs)). Eh I don't know how they did it, but they did it. I would say that in the written production s/ the st/ a group was formed/ actually two groups of different levels ((1s)) those who managed to reorder the syllables and those who managed to reorder the sentence. Em. They helped each other so much. And I would say that we stopped ((1s)) at the production of the reply e-mail. (translated from Italian interview 2)<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Original: Sorprendentemente anche se nessuna studentessa aveva un lessico eh in italiano ah che consentisse di fare il riordino hanno riordinato. Eh non so come [ride]. Eh non so come abbiano fatto ma ce l'hanno fatta. Eh direi che nella produzione scritta s/ le st ... si è formato un gruppo/ si sono formati in realtà due gruppi di diverso livello ((1s)) quelle che sono riuscite a fare il riordino delle sillabe eh quelle che invece sono riuscite a fare il riordino della frase. Ehm. Si



Not only during practice phases, but even in complex activities like mini-projects learners were able to help each other:

E mh as a general comment I can say that we had a lot of fun using this material. The guys mh in my group/ the group in which I tested it have different competences. This is clear. There are those who are better at oral expression those who are better at the, the written text and thus ((1s)) have more time to reflect those who are better at using technology. And so this facilitated the help, didn't it? The help between peers... And mh and it was very, very interesting working with ehm the photographs to, to take in the classroom when they had to photograph things beginning either with a /c/ or with a /k/. Eh because after a moment of embarrassment because they didn't expect to have to get up and walk around so I had to push them a lot ((1s)) to make them move from their benches then they got, got active and did this ehm vocabulary in quotes also helping each other. So there were those who took the picture those who wrote the name of the word directly on the picture with the Gallery app those who recorded the audio. So there was a nice cooperation. I found the material adequate ehm given the different skills of those who were stronger in one aspect or another. It was, was able in short hm to push those who were a little bit more in difficulty but without too big a gap that they couldn't put, put themselves out there. So ((1s)) some did it with a lot of ease, others had to try a bit harder. They... I was very happy to have done this. It was very educational even for me as a new teacher. Thank you.” (translated from Italian interview 2)<sup>13</sup>

Interviewees also appreciated the fact that LASLLIAM provides scales of language use strategies. A material developer stressed the importance of the fact that LASLLIAM modelled the strategies in much more detail than previous curricula and research articles that s/he was aware of had done it:

In principle, the teachers have no idea at all/ no idea how to model learning autonomy in any progression related to 400 hours for example um... So, and that's what LASLLIAM has done by the way. I think so, right? Yes, because first of all um that this was put on paper at all, regardless of how well or how, how, uh/ where this did not or did succeed. Just the fact that it is now on the plan, this is something that is uh very important. (German interview)<sup>14</sup>

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sono aiutate tantissimo le une con le altre. Eh direi che ci siamo ((1s)) bloccate alla produzione della mail di risposta. (Italian interview 2)

<sup>13</sup> Original: E mh come commento generale posso dire che ci siamo divertiti proprio tantissimo a usare questo materiale. I ragazzi mh del mio gruppo/ del gruppo nel quale l'ho sperimentato hanno delle abilità diverse fra loro. Chiaramente questo. C'è chi è più abile nell'oralità chi è più abile invece se ha davanti il, il testo scritto e quindi un ((1s)) tempo maggiore per riflettere chi è più abile nell'utilizzo della tecnologia. E quindi questo ha favorito il/ l'aiuto no? Il/ l'aiuto fra pari...E mh è stato molto, molto interessante il lavoro con ehm le fotografie da, da fare in aula quando dovevano fotografare le cose che iniziavano o con la /c/ o con la /k/. Eh perché dopo un attimo di imbarazzo perché non si aspettavano di doversi alzare e andare in giro quindi li ho dovuti spronare molto ((1s)) perché si muovessero dal loro banco dopo si sono, si sono attivati e hanno fatto questo hm vocabolario fra virgolette anche aiutandosi. Quindi c'era chi ha fatto la foto chi sulla foto direttamente con la funzione della, dell'applicazione Galleria ha scritto il nome della parola chi ha registrato l'audio. Per cui insomma c'è stata proprio una, una bella collaborazione. Il materiale l'ho trovato adeguato hm chiaramente viste le diverse abilità ehm su chi era più forte in un aspetto o in un altro. Ha, ha potuto hm insomma hm spronare chi era un pochino più in difficoltà ma senza un gap troppo elevato da non riuscire a, a mettersi in gioco. Quindi ((1s)) qualcuno l'ha fatto con, con molto agio altri hanno dovuto impegnarsi un po di più. Lor... sono stata molto contenta di aver fatto questa cosa. È stata molto formativa anche per me che sono nuova. Grazie. (Italian interview 2)

<sup>14</sup> Original: Im Prinzip haben die Lehrkräfte überhaupt keinen/ keine Ahnung, wie sie Lernautonomie in irgendeiner Progression bezogen auf 400 Stunden beispielsweise ähm... So, und das ist das, was übrigens das LASLLIAM geleistet hat. Äh also, also finde ich, ne? Ja, weil das zunächst einmal ähm, dass man das überhaupt aufs Papier gebracht hat, unabhängig davon, wie, wie gut oder wie, wie äh/ wo das nicht gelungen ist oder gelungen ist. Überhaupt, dass es dann auf dem Plan steht, ist etwas was, was äh sehr wichtig ist. (German interview)

One of the teachers said that her/his team of colleagues extremely like the attention given to strategies; because they had often asked themselves how low-literate learners manage to do certain tasks, they were pleased to learn about the LASLLIAM scales on strategies.

I/ we also found the focus on strategies extremely interesting. Because we know that non-literate people... Very often we wonder how a person who can't read or write can cope with certain tasks. Very often we are surprised. In sum, this often strikes us. So here are the scales. There is this attention to the strategies. (translated from Italian interview 2)<sup>15</sup>

The interview group focusing on the piloting of the portfolio highlighted the power it had in making everyone on the group participate in class discussions:

Perhaps what we were talking about at the beginning, with the different levels, is that that (portfolio) works so strongly in your class that everyone can participate. Maybe that could be emphasized even more in the manual, but that's also self-explanatory. But that is something if you read the manual very briefly to assess what you are going to do. That's really a selling point in that you see a use for that and you think: "Oh yes, that's handy, that might [...] also work". (translated from Dutch interview)<sup>16</sup>

Overall, interviewees in the various focus groups did not discuss strategies and social autonomy to a large extent, but when these topics came up, our research partners expressed their appreciation of learner cooperation, strategy instruction and portfolio use in order to foster individual as well as social autonomy.

### 3.3 Understanding the goals of LASLLIAM

During the group interviews, several statements were made which showed how deeply interviewees had understood essential goals of the LASLLIAM reference guide. Our research partners referred to language policy issues, the usefulness of the specific scales and particularly the domain examples as well as to LASLLIAM's theoretical foundations.

One material developer expressed her/his understanding of the political goal of LASLLIAM to draw more attention to this vulnerable learner group with these words:

And mh I am extremely content with this initiative because I really hope that there will also be a chance to begin to give the right role to the courses of/ for, for low-schooled illiterate persons within the adult schools. Because now those courses are extremely marginal and mh

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<sup>15</sup> Original: Ho/ abbiamo trovato anche estremamente interessante l'attenzione nei confronti delle strategie. Perché lo sappiamo che le persone analfabete... Molto spesso ce lo chiediamo come fa una persona che non sa leggere scrivere ad affrontare alcuni compiti. Molto spesso ci stupisce. Insomma questa cosa ci colpisce spesso. Ecco qui le scale. C'è comunque questa attenzione alla/ alle strategie. (Italian interview 2)

<sup>16</sup> Original: Misschien dat waar we het in het begin over hadden, die verschillende niveaus dat dat zo sterk werkt in je klas, dat iedereen mee kan doen. Misschien ook wel goed dat dat in de handleiding misschien nog meer (benadrukt kan worden), maar goed nog dat wijst zichzelf dus ook. Maar dat is wel iets als je heel kort de handleiding leest om te beoordelen of je iets zult gaan doen. Dat is wel echt een selling point is dus dat je daar een handvat voor ziet staan dat je dan denkt: "Oh ja, dat is handig, dan werkt [...] misschien ook mee."

let's say can only be activated if there is a great deal of attention from the school directors because unfortunately they are part of the extension of the educational offer. (translated from Italian interview 2)<sup>17</sup>

S/he followed up on this thought later in the discussion:

First of all, I repeat a let's say political motivation in the sense that there is a great attention to, to the theme of the vulnerable persons/ of vulnerability. And therefore I hope that this will be translated into concrete actions and into the activities that the schools will have to carry out. And well, the element that struck me most but this was a bit like the philosophy that had already guided us in the Syllabus and descriptors ((1s)) is certainly the strong link with the Common European Framework and with the Companion Volume. The structure is the same. In short, there is this great attention to the action perspective eh that is fundamental thus. And the other thing the attention to plurilingualism. And, and I think this can really offer the possibility of linking literacy to language, language teaching and above all of freeing from the idea that literacy courses are only instrumental. (translated from Italian interview 2)<sup>18</sup>

One of the reports made mention of how helpful the specific scales and the domain examples were not only for material development, but also for syllabus and curriculum design as well as lesson planning:

What proved to be very supportive for the development of the materials was the specific scales and descriptors with the examples in each domain. This is considered as a very important tool for an educator and it can be really helpful not only for the material development, but also for syllabus and curriculum design and lesson planning especially in tailor-made courses or inexperienced teachers. The context of the language use and the communicative situations are there through the examples of the domains. It makes the progression of the difficulty of the scales and descriptors/scaling progression clearer and more comprehensible. (Greek report)

In a similar vein, one of the material developers referred to the examples as being particularly relevant for her/his inspiration in tool development:

I first read the scales proposed by LASLIAM several times and internalised them very well in relation to the reading comprehension skill that I needed to develop (reading). The small examples in brackets in the LASLIAM scales are useful in giving ideas about the topics to be covered, while providing leeway to choose documents or develop new approaches. Based on these small examples from LASSLIAM, I asked myself the question: "What can I choose as a

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<sup>17</sup> Original: E mh sono contentissimo di questa iniziativa perché spero davvero che ci sia anche la possibilità di iniziare anche a dare il giusto ruolo ai corsi di/ per analfabeti scarsamente scolarizzati all'interno delle scuole per adulti. Perché adesso sono estremamente marginali e mh diciamo possono essere attivati solo se c'è una grande attenzione da parte dei dirigenti scolastici perché purtroppo rientrano nell'ampliamento dell'offerta formativa. (Italian interview 2)

<sup>18</sup> Original: Intanto ripeto una motivazione chiamiamola politica nel senso che c'è questa grande attenzione al, al tema dei vulnerabili/ della vulnerabilità. E quindi questo io spero che si si traduca diciamo in azioni concrete e proprio nelle attività che le scuole dovranno poi portare avanti. E allora l'elemento che mi ha colpito maggiormente ma questo era un po' diciamo la filosofia che ci aveva già accompagnato nel Sillabo e descrittori ((1s)) è sicuramente questo grande legame con il Quadro comune europeo e con il Volume complementare. L'impianto è lo stesso. Insomma c'è questa grande attenzione alla prospettiva d'azione quindi eh che è fondamentale. E l'altra cosa il/ l'attenzione al plurilinguismo. E, e questo io penso che veramente possa dare la, la possibilità di legare l'alfabetizzazione all'insegnamento della lingua, della lingua e soprattutto di svincolarci dalla/ dall'idea che i corsi di alfabetizzazione siano solo strumentali. (Italian interview 2)

subject that can also convey cultural principles relating to the French-speaking world?“ (French report 1)

The same person explains how she used the LASLLIAM guide in the different phases in the process of designing activities:

The reference guide was my bedside book: before designing activities it allowed me to peruse the relevant documents that would form the bedrock of my work in the creation of the activities and tasks for the learners. During the design of the material, the guide was also especially valuable in the technical literacy section which deals with the development of general language literacy, i.e. the mechanisms which the learner has to develop in general with regard to new language learning whatever the language might be. After designing the activities, it allowed me to check whether my exercises and tasks were indeed adapted to the chosen level and to the development of the established competence. (French report 1, underlining in the original)

Another research participant expressed her/his appreciation of the European character of the document, emphasizing a sense of belonging to a wider community of European educators as well as taking into consideration the migration journey of learners across several countries to provide continuity:

So, so, yeah, I think they've felt relevant. I don't see anything which is difficult to use about LASS/ LASLLIAM guide. I like the focus. I like the, the fact that it's European as well. That extra... There's the extra sort of interest and thought that ((2s)) other countries in Europe are facing the same struggles as we are. And what is interesting I think now is the number of students that have lived in another European country for a while. [...] So, yeah, and so, like Germany for three or four years before they've reached here. And that's different to how it used to be. I think so. So, yeah, so I think. (English interview 1)

Other statements were made concerning the theoretical foundations of the LASLLIAM reference guide. Here, we summarize them briefly:

- One expert reflected on its consensual, non-empirical nature which s/he called “cooperative”, and s/he pointed out that like the CFER, LASLLIAM is neither (intended to be) normative, nor is it descriptive, but rather the result of consensus among experts from different European countries.
- Another expert asked about the relationship of a national to the supranational LASLLIAM levels, thus demonstrating the intention of building a coherent mental model of curricula at different levels.
- Interviewees recognized and appreciated action-orientation as a theoretical concept, and they highlighted the decisive role of functional actions as the starting point for the backward planning recommended in the LASLLIAM reference guide. One person elaborated on its functional approach, and argued that the central tenet of LASLLIAM, its action-orientation and functional approach, could have even been taken a step further.
- The fact that LASLLIAM presents the first encompassing model of second language literacy acquisition by adults is perceived as being helpful for teacher professional development programmes. One expert describes that s/he had had to refer to models of child acquisition in courses on diagnostics of second language literacy of adult migrants before LASLLIAM was published.

The LASLLIAM guide and its system of scales and descriptors was clearly perceived to be complex by both material developers and teachers, but worth the effort of close study because it helped interviewees to see and work with the notion of profiles as the following quotation vividly demonstrates:

Well then. It is clear that this is an extremely complex structure. So we will need to take the right amount of time as we did for the descriptors. It takes a really long/ a lot/ a right amount of time in sum to get into them, to take them in, to read them, to experiment with them. So certainly this is something that can be frightening. But at the same time it was challenging for us and eh interesting the idea of... Ehm. That is in short, it gives us the chance to work on more profiles. Because the idea is a bit like this. That is otherwise we always stick to the level and instead this th/ testing of these materials has given us the possibility to think of materials that for us is referred to an Alfa 1. And thus a person who really has to start the path but has oral skills maybe more advanced or vice versa. And this is certainly in line with the reality of the classes. Because we really have these, these classes where each student has peculiar characteristics and this type of scale certainly helps us. (translated from Italian interview 2)<sup>19</sup>

It also became apparent that research participants realized the challenges involved in transferring a supranational, i.e. language-unspecific curriculum like LASLLIAM to a specific language and its orthography. For example, one of the experts reported on how s/he tried to link the scales with theoretical knowledge on literacy development of children when translating - or rather transferring - the examples in the scales of technical literacy into her language.

We conclude from the statements summarized and quoted in this section that interviewees deeply grasped the underlying theoretical foundations of the LASLLIAM reference guide so that they were able to integrate them into their curricular and theoretical knowledge bases as well as their beliefs concerning language policy and classroom practice.

### **3.4 Using LASLLIAM for the development of teaching materials**

In this section, we portray our research partners' perceptions of working with the LASLLIAM scales (section 3.4.1), of balancing technical with functional literacy (section 3.4.2), of using scenarios (section 3.4.3), of using digital tools and developing digital

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<sup>19</sup> Original: Allora. E' chiaro che si tratta di un/ di una struttura molto molto complessa quella del LASLLIAM. Quindi bisognerà prendersi il giusto tempo come è stato fatto per i descrittori. Ci vuole veramente lunga/ un bel/ un tempo giusto insomma per entrarci dentro riprenderli leggerli sperimentarli. Quindi sicuramente questo è un elemento che può spaventare. Però nello stesso tempo per noi è stato sfidante e eh interessante l'idea del... Ehm. Cioè ci dà la possibilità di lavorare su più, su più profili insomma. Perché poi l'idea un po' questa cioè se no ci leghiamo sempre al livello e invece questa co/ la sperimentazione di questi materiali ci ha dato la possibilità di pensare a un materiale che per noi è riferito ha un Alfa 1. E quindi una persona che veramente deve iniziare il percorso però ha delle competenze orali magari più sostenute o viceversa insomma. E questo è sicuramente rispondente alla realtà delle classi. Perché veramente abbiamo queste, queste classi dove ogni studente ha delle caratteristiche peculiari eh e questo tipo di scale sicuramente ci, ci aiuta. (Italian interview 2)



skills (section 3.4.4), of using LASLLIAM for the development of portfolio (section 3.4.5) and for the development of assessment skills (section 3.4.6).

### 3.4.1 Working with the LASLLIAM scales

Material developers intensely discussed the question of how useful they found LASLLIAM as a reference guide to work within the production of the tools. The picture that emerges from the various focus groups is that they found it a highly challenging and stimulating resource. The following quotation shows both of these aspects:

I share both the sense of challenge and, and inspiration. So I find in the LASLLIAM guide a great deal of usefulness ((1s)) and the clarity of each descriptor ((1s)). Many are ve/ very meticulous. And this perhaps makes it a lot to digest in that sense, in the sense that it is a lot. Eh but I have to say that every descriptor eh once read ((1s)) managed/ pushed me at the moment I was reading to go exactly on the kind of activity that could lead to exercise that part. Eh I found it very interesting eh the fact that each descriptor described in such a practical sense and so cast in its context in its domain was assigned to a level. Four ((1s)) pre-literacy scales are however many and in general scaling levels of illiteracy is very difficult eh for everyone. And the fact that there is this tension really allows us to channel/ to, to find depending on the students in front of us... Illiterate people do different things. They experience different things. So they are able of doing the things they have encountered. And the wide range of these, of these descriptors helps to put low-literate people into the levels while we struggled to arrange them into the descriptors that we had so far because they were less detailed. So I find it extremely detailed, extremely practical, and therefore extremely complete. In being so detailed extremely stimulating, as [name] said. Because really every time I read: „Gee! Sure so here they have to read numbers in a known context. Perfect!“ We can ask them to do this thing within a whole series of documents and life experiences that you really find in reading the descriptor ((1s)) you find a lot. So it's really everyday stuff. (translated from Italian interview 1)<sup>20</sup>

The same person continues her/his testimonial with thoughts on how the LASLLIAM reference guide addresses up-to-date issues such as digital skills and how it has inspired her/him to integrate aspects into the learning environments that were long overdue. Another person describes the experience of using the LASLLIAM reference guide as an enthusiastic one as her/his team of colleagues “rediscovered themselves” in this

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<sup>20</sup> Original: Condivido sia il senso di sfida che, che di stimolo. Allora io nella guida LASLLIAM trovo una grandissima praticità ((1s)) eh la chiarezza di ogni descrittore ((1s)). Eh mol/ sono molto minuziosi. E questo forse rende/ la rende un bel malloppo da digerire in quel senso nel senso che è tanta. Eh ma devo dire che ogni descrittore eh una volta letto ((1s)) è riuscito/ riesce in me nel momento in cui leggevo ad andare esattamente sul tipo di attività che poteva portare ad esercitare questo/ questa parte. Eh ho trovato molto interessante eh il fatto che ogni descrittore descritto in senso così pratico e così calato nel suo contesto nel suo dominio fosse assegnato ad un livello. Quattro scale di ((1s)) pre-alfabetizzazione sono, sono comunque tante e in generale molto difficili eh per tutti da, da scalare i livelli di analfabetismo. E il fatto che ci sia questa tensione permette davvero di incanalare/ di, di trovare a seconda degli studenti che abbiamo davanti... Gli analfabeti fanno cose diverse vivono esperienze diverse quindi sono capaci di fare delle cose che hanno incontrato. E la grande varietà di questi, di questi descrittori aiuta a mettere nei livelli persone poco alfabetizzate che prima si faceva fatica a sistemare nei descrittori che finora avevamo perché erano meno dettagliati. Per cui lo trovo estremamente dettagliato estremamente pratico e quindi estremamente completo. Nell'essere così tanto dettagliato ((1s)) estremamente stimolante come diceva [nome] perché veramente ogni volta che leggevo: „Cavoli! Certo quindi qui deve leggere numeri in un contesto conosciuto. Perfetto!“ Possiamo chiedergli di fare questa cosa dentro a tutta una serie di documenti ed esperienze di vita che andando a leggere il descrittore ritrovi ((1s)) ritrovi molto. Quindi è veramente quotidiano. (Italian interview 1)



reference guide<sup>21</sup> and found “comfort” in this experience<sup>22</sup>. Similarly, another interviewee said that s/he found them “very clear actually”, “easy to work with” and “not difficult to understand” so that she felt she could recognize them from her/his practical experience and naturally use them as learning goals in her material development:

When I think about it, I think it really did come from what I've seen. I guess what I've experienced, what I've seen in other courses and, and the needs that I saw that needed to be met. But everything that I saw in these/ in the reference guide... So I was/ could look at it and think: “Yes, I can do that. We can practice that from that. And that's useful.” So I guess that was the, the process. (English interview 1)

The theme of recognizing concepts known from practice or previous research in the LASLLIAM reference guide recurs in several statements such as this one:

Having been an L2 language teacher (Italian and French) for more than twenty years, I did not find it difficult to understand the LASLLIAM scales, since, among other things, I had received specific training on the CERCL descriptors in Italian and French. Furthermore, the LASLLIAM scales use the same language and the development of the same language skills. Working, as I then was, with a migrant and a refugee population, there was of course a lack of scales for below A1 level, so when I learned that LASLLIAM had developed four more levels, I was very appreciative indeed. (French report 1)

Also, the report from Spain summarizes that materials developers “did not find it difficult” to understand the LASLLIAM scales and that descriptors were perceived as helpful:

The descriptors fit the needs of any migrant learner regardless of where they are; they are general enough to cover all the communicative needs of migrants at these lower levels. (Spanish report)

Descriptors help a lot. One of the authors states that they helped him, starting from a general objective, to specify more concrete learning objectives. (Spanish report)

LASLLIAM scales were very helpful in understanding the scaling of progression and to integrate the functional and technical aspects (French report 3)

A similar experience is reported in the following quotation on how working with LASLLIAM allowed the material developer to be more precise in her/his work. S/he points out that she found this preciseness not limiting, but stimulating:

Let's say I found it... Creating material by relying on LASLLIAM eh helped me to be more careful, more attentive, more attentive to the method itself, more precise in choosing the type of

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<sup>21</sup> Original: “E però sicuramente una guida in cui ci siamo ritrovati e ci siamo ritrovati subito.” (Italian interview 1).

<sup>22</sup> Original: “Ecco ci conforta perché comunque ci dà il il ritrovarsi in tante situazioni che noi viviamo nella classe e nella quotidianità.” (Italian interview 1).

activities in graduating them precisely because I had a tool that allowed me to check for each choice I made whether I was within the correct parameters etc. It's not that we didn't have the method before I hope ((laughs)). We did have a bit of a method before too. But certainly now we have a tool that is also very precise and which however as we were saying before paradoxically is not limiting, but on the contrary ehm, ehm is stimulating. No because precisely one says: "But this thing here that I'm doing, but/ where ahm ahm is found in what? ((1s)) In what parameter? In what descriptor? In what level am I?" And then in this search you then discover eh many other stimuli. Very useful, yes, also for those who produce materials. Certainly extremely useful. (translated from Italian interview 1)<sup>23</sup>

In a similar vein, a material developer underlined how the LASLLIAM descriptors gave her a "clear focus" (English interview 1) and how it helped her/him in her/his thinking process:

Yes, yes, because it just gave you that kind of/ it really made me think. And it really in a way... I kind of... Because I am involved with lots of the computer sessions here ((2s)) I wanted to put them/ just those on the wall in the room for all of the teachers. I think is, is a kind of useful. Just to sort of make... It makes you think: "Yes, that's what our students need to be able to do these days, you know." So in this modern era of you know phones and everything is... Yeah, so definitely gave me more focus and made me think about things that I wouldn't have thought about if it had just been me. Thinking around a topic. (English interview 1)

The data corpus includes several statements that combine feelings of excitement, stimulation, and creativity with feelings of being challenged:

So ehm how did we welcome it? I would say with great enthusiasm. Eh ((2s)) when I spoke with [name] and [name] we were very/ immediately very enthusiastic and very excited ((1s)) to take on this challenge because we had to deal with a new instrument ((1s)). And I say challenge which already contains perhaps a bit of a judgement in the sense that the instrument in my opinion is not so immediate ((1s)). It's not so easy if only because it's new and therefore you have eh eh to digest it ((1s)) project it. In short, mastering it is not such an immediate thing. But I repeat extremely stimulating and challenging. And it was with this spirit that we embarked on the production of the materials. And let's say it somehow stimulated a great deal of creativity ((1s)) in this sense because exactly/ I mean ((1s))... I don't know ((1s)) in the case of [name] and myself we trimmed down because in reality the materials were even more. Well ((1s)) our tools are already quite long and complex, but I can assure you that we discarded a lot more things and more eh exercises activities precisely because the, the instrument stimulated us to create to produce in this sense. This is my first impression. (translated from Italian interview 1)<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Original: Diciamo che l'ho trovato... Creare materiale appoggiandomi a LASLLIAM eh mi ha aiutato a essere più attenta, più attenta al metodo nel senso più precisa nel scegliere il tipo di attività nel graduarle proprio perché avevo uno strumento che mi permetteva di verificare per ogni scelta fatta ehm se ero dentro un parametro corretto ecc. Non che prima non avessimo il metodo spero insomma ((ride)). Un po' di metodo ce l'avevamo anche prima. Però certo adesso abbiamo uno strumento che è anche molto preciso e che però appunto come dicevamo prima paradossalmente non è limitante ma al contrario ehm ehm è stimolante. No perché appunto poi uno dice: "Ma sta cosa qui che sto facendo ma/ in che, che cosa si ahm ehm si riscontra? ((1s)) In che in che parametro? In che descrittore? In che livello sono?" E allora in questa ricerca poi appunto scopri eh tanti altri stimoli. Molto utile sì anche per chi produce materiali. Sicuramente estremamente utile. (Italian interview 1)

<sup>24</sup> Original: Allora ehm come l'abbiamo accolto? Mi vien da dire con grande entusiasmo. Eh ((2s)) quando ci siamo sentite insomma appunto con [nome] e [nome] ah molto subito molto entusiasti e molto carichi ((1s)) nell'affrontare questa sfida ((1s)) insomma perché ci dovevamo comunque confrontare con uno strumento nuovo. ((1s)) E dico sfida che già contiene forse un po' un, un giudizio nel senso che lo strumento a mio parere non è immediatissimo ((1s)) non è

Several interviewees expressed their perception that it takes a while to familiarize oneself with the LASLLIAM reference guide because it is a complex book and it requires quite some time for study and reflection. One material developer particularly commented on her/his efforts to get a solid grip on the levels:

Um, and I needed a bit to find my way around the levels. Because I had translated it, I had been able to deal with it very intensively, but to get a bit of a feeling for it... Um, just at the first time, at my first test, I had not yet dealt with the scales so intensively. And yes, I did have difficulties to distinguish the various can-do descriptions from each other and to say: “Okay, this is now this/ level one, and this is level two.” Um, so I think that's where I had the greatest difficulties, um, understanding what is actually meant by that? What is behind it? So I often had the feeling that I would like to talk to the authors and ask them for three more examples so that I can somehow operationalise it well. So, I think that was my biggest challenge. (German interview)<sup>25</sup>

We find a similar statement in one of the reports:

The LASLLIAM scales were quite difficult to me, especially understanding the differences between the levels. In France, the LASLLIAM levels are called “Alpha learners”, and there is not a lot of prescriptions to teach to these students. There are very little institutional curricula on it. (French report 2)

Another report pointed out that as participants of the LASLLIAM validation process, they found “the concepts and philosophy (...) clear”, but stressed the need to provide others with train-the-trainer initiatives on LASLLIAM:

For educators with no experience it will probably take some more time or some training, dissemination presentations to be more clear, accessible and ready to be used. The truth is that the experienced teachers with low-literate students recognise the concepts, scales, descriptors etc. in their practical use until now. (Greek report)

The picture that emerges from the interview data is quite coherent in the sense that a focuses on both the stimulating and the challenging character of the LASLLIAM scales. This suggests to us that substantial support for trainers in professional development programmes for teachers as well as material developers will be necessary to successfully disseminate the LASLLIAM scales.

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semplicissimo se non altro anche perché è nuovo e quindi bisogna eh eh digerirlo ((1s)) proiettarlo. Insomma impadronirsene non è una cosa così immediata. Però ripeto estremamente stimolante e sfidante. Ed è con questo spirito che ci siamo lanciati nella produzione dei materiali. Eh ehm e diciamo ha in qualche modo stimolato una grande creatività ((1s)) in questo senso perché appunto/ cioè ((1s)) ... non so ((1s)) nel caso mio e di [nome] abbiamo sfrondata perché in realtà i materiali erano ancora di più. Già i nostri insomma ((1s)) percorsi sono abbastanza lunghi e complessi ma vi assicuro che abbiamo scartato un sacco di cose in più eh di esercizi di attività in più proprio perché lo, lo strumento ci stimolava a, a creare a produrre in questo senso. Questa è la mia prima impressione. (Italian interview 1)

<sup>25</sup> Original: Ähm, und ich hab ein bisschen gebraucht, um mich in die Niveaustufen reinzufinden. Also, da ich das jetzt übersetzt hab, konnt ich mich da sehr intensiv mit beschäftigen, aber so n bisschen Gefühl dafür zu bekommen... Ähm also gerade bei der/ bei dem ersten Mal, bei meinem ersten Test, da, da ähm hatte ich mich noch nicht so intensiv mit den Skalen beschäftigt. Und da hatte ich schon Schwierigkeiten, die ähm, die einzelnen ähm Kann-Beschreibungen voneinander ähm abzugrenzen und zu sagen: „Okay, das ist jetzt diese/ das Niveau eins und das Niveau zwei. Ähm, also da hatte ich, glaube ich, die größten Schwierigkeiten, ähm das zu verstehen, was ist jetzt eigentlich damit gemeint? Was steckt dahinter? Also da hatte ich ganz oft so das Gefühl, an der Stelle würde ich voll gerne mal mit den Autoren sprechen und ähm sie nochmal um drei Beispiele bitten, damit ich das irgendwie gut operationalisieren kann. Also, das war, glaube, ich so meine größte Herausforderung. (German interview)

### 3.4.2 Balancing technical with functional literacy

In one of the interview groups, a longer discussion about the dichotomy of technical and functional literacy emerged. One of the material developers extensively contemplated on the question of whether functionality can be taught, learned and tested. Her/his colleague pointed out the option of combining technical and functional literacy and argued for its importance in order to avoid pseudo-literacy, i.e. technical skills that cannot be transferred to real life:

I think that you can still have the functional focus from the beginning, even in writing. So even if I start with the letters, I still try from the beginning to relate it back to the written language actions in the learners' everyday life. And in my opinion, that happens too little. And that's why I think this focus is actually very good. [...] Starting with a lot of technical competences, I wouldn't question that at all, but I shouldn't lose sight of the functional focus. And that is, I think, the most important problem that this is what happens and that learners are then unable to transfer the literary competences that acquire in the, in the alpha course into everyday life. (translated from German interview)<sup>26</sup>

The other expert then elaborated on her/his hypothesis that the substance of content in a literacy class is technical literacy. S/he expressed the position that functional literacy is a starting point, a helpful orientation frame for the teaching and learning of technical literacy, and that functional literacy itself cannot be measured. This initiated reflections on the relationship of technical and functional literacy from his/her colleague which s/he perceived to be independent of each other to a certain degree:

But I recognise there were certain things they could do with written language. So they were able to recognise a form. They knew from their knowledge of the world what information was being asked for. They were able to use their identity card as a resource and copy down the relevant information. So it wasn't that they couldn't act functionally with little technical competence. So especially learners who have simply been living in Germany for a longer period of time, who have already become familiar with certain types of text and who then, again, rely more on strategic knowledge and are then able to carry out certain written language actions. Of course, this is happening at a very low level, but I do believe that this can be measured. (German interview)<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Original: (...) ich denke, dass man den funktionalen Fokus äh ja trotzdem von Anfang an haben kann, auch in der Schriftlichkeit. Also selbst wenn ich mit den Buchstaben anfangen äh, dass ich trotzdem so von Anfang an versuche, das zurück zu beziehen auf sch/ ja schriftsprachliche Hand/ Handlungen im Alltag der Lernenden. Und das geschieht meines Erachtens zu wenig. Und von daher finde ich diesen Fokus eigentlich sehr gut. [...] Mit vielen technischen Kompetenzen anfangen, das, das würde ich auch überhaupt nicht in Frage stellen ähm, aber ich darf dabei irgendwie den funktionalen Fokus nicht aus den Augen verlieren. Und das ist, glaube ich, das ganz große Per/ Problem, dass es passiert und dass Lernende dann ähm nicht in der Lage sind, das, was sie an literalen Kompetenzen erwerben, im, im Alphakurs ist dann in den Alltag zu übertragen. (German interview)

<sup>27</sup> Original: Ich erkenne aber, es gab bestimmte Sachen, die konnten sie mit der Schriftsprache tun. Also sie waren in der Lage, ein Formular zu erkennen. Sie wussten aus ihrem Weltwissen heraus ähm, welche Informationen da abgefragt werden. Sie konnten als Ressource ihren Ausweis nutzen, die entsprechenden Informationen abschreiben. Also das war jetzt nicht so, dass sie ähm mit wenig technischen Kompetenzen überhaupt nicht funktional irgendwie handeln konnten. Also gerade Lernende, die einfach auch schon länger in Deutschland leben, die bestimmte Textsorten ähm schon kennen gelernt haben und die eben dann äh wiederum stärker auf strategisches Wissen zurückgreifen und dann in der Lage sind, bestimmte schriftsprachliche Handlungen auszuführen. Das ist natürlich auf einem ganz niedrigen Niveau, aber ich glaube schon ähm, dass man das, das messen kann. (German interview)

She concluded that technical literacy and strategies are important, not as an end in itself, but because they make an important contribution to functional literacy. This topic of balancing functional with technical literacy was only mentioned in one national context, and readers should therefore bear in mind that these findings are thus not very robust.

### 3.4.3 Scenarios

Scenarios were also discussed by the practitioners in the focus groups in one national context only. Research participants commented on the scenario approach in positive terms mentioning, in particular, its high practical relevance, and how the scales were helpful in developing scenario materials:

As for the, the work we did eh they are scenarios and ((1s)) - perhaps a colleague was saying this earlier ((1s)) - eh it is/ they are a way of working that is, is certainly interesting. We had, we had already experimented with it for the Toolkit because anyway they are very eh very concrete tasks. One eh... They are a set of reality tasks so you have to eh... ((2s)) They are very connected and in this the scales helped us. They helped us a lot because we found them relevant and also very progressive. There were no... We hardly had any difficulties with, with what was proposed to us. (translated from Italian interview 2)<sup>28</sup>

As other strengths, our research partners highlighted the facts that scenarios save time on repetition and work well in heterogenous groups. One teacher called attention to the fact that in low-literate classes, there is the need for a lot of repetition, so practice times are longer than with other target groups. S/he appreciated the scenario approach because it was a different, less time-requiring way of presenting contents, more rapid and focused than the teaching units or the modules and that scenarios allowed for interactivity and cooperation. Others pointed out that it lended itself to work in heterogenous groups, for example this material:

Well anyway the, the format of the scenario is short ((1s)). It is not a teaching unit so this made it possible to ((2s)) build anyway some, some activities ((2s)) some tools that had a very practical focus in the end. In conclusion a concluding know-how which is in any case a s/ a thing that I found very interesting in the production of materials. We are used to producing longer units but this is also very nice as a work challenge. ((1s)) The calibration of the scenarios on the levels so giving a level for oral a level for, for written ((1s)) even different ((1s)) which is something that happens very often in the classes but that we were able to do and so... It was also very interesting to work on ((1s)) mixed skills ((1s)) in short from the/ of the two parts I

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<sup>28</sup> Original: Per quanto riguarda il, il lavoro che abbiamo fatto eh sono scenari e ((1s)) - forse lo diceva prima una collega ((1s)) - eh sono/ è un modo di operare che sicuramente è, è interessante. L'avevamo, l'avevamo già sperimentato per il, per il Toolkit perché comunque sono compiti molto eh molto concreti. Si eh... Sono un insieme di compiti di realtà quindi bisogna eh... ((2s)) Sono molto legati e su questo le scale ci hanno aiutato. Ci hanno aiutato tantissimo perché comunque le abbiamo trovate rispondenti e anche molto progressive. Non ci sono state... Difficilmente ci siamo trovati in difficoltà con, con quello che ci veniva proposto. (Italian interview 2)

found it very very stimulating very realistic. It's something that is not done so often when producing materials. (translated from Italian interview 1)<sup>29</sup>

### 3.4.4 Digital tools and digital skills

The use of digital tools was a topic discussed intensely in several of the focus groups. Several statements of research partners pointed to the importance of digital skills for everyday life as well as for practice in the learning environment. Aspects of digital infrastructure were a third topic that emerged from the focus groups' discussions.

The importance of digital skills for everyday life was particularly stressed by teachers who had used materials that integrated the use of mobile phones into scenarios focused on oral skills. One of them described what s/he calls the craziness of observing how intensely students reacted to the empowering experience of using the calculator function of their cell phones:

I would say, I would say very interesting the activity of the/ of calculating eh mh the attendance percentage needed to get the certificate. Mh not so much for ((1s)) a progression in the ability to, to use numbers, but for the surprising use they made/ the surprise the students had in using the calculator on the computer or mobile phone. They discovered that they could do the math there eh as well. So mh then there was a non-stop flow of e-mails that I was receiving that I was sending off forms. A craziness. So they had a lot of fun, and, ((1s)) and I think they learned a lot. (translated from Italian interview 2)<sup>30</sup>

The same activity was also referred to by another teacher as an interesting and very intelligent way of using the mobile phone as learning content. S/he reported that she organized a WhatsApp group to practice greetings - a process in which s/he became the transmitter of written messages from one learner to another. In particular, s/he highlighted the facts that she was able to combine oral and written practice of greetings and that she observed how students helped each other in what s/he describes

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<sup>29</sup> Original: Beh comunque il, il format dello scenario è breve ((1s)). Non è un'unità didattica per cui questo ha permesso di ((2s)) costruire comunque delle, delle attività ((2s)) degli strumenti che avessero poi un focus molto pratico. In conclusione un saper fare conclusivo che è comunque un s/ una cosa che ho trovato molto interessante nella produzione di materiale. Noi siamo abituati a produrre più lunghe unità invece molto, molto bello anche questo come sfida di lavoro. ((1s)) Il mh il tarare gli scenari così sui livelli quindi dando un livello di orale un livello di, di scritto ((1s)) anche diversi ((1s)) eh che è una cosa che capita spessissimo nelle classi ma che abbiamo potuto fare e quindi... È stato anche molto interessante lavorare su abilità ((1s)) mescolate ((1s)) insomma dalle/ delle due parti. L'ho trovato molto molto stimolante molto realistico. È una cosa che non si fa tanto spesso quando si producono materiali. (Italian interview 1)

<sup>30</sup> Original: Direi, direi interessantissima l'attività della/ di calcolo, di calcolo eh mh sulla percentuale di presenze eh utile per avere il certificato. Mh non tanto per ((1s)) una progressione nella capacità di, di usare i numeri ma per l'uso sorprendente che hanno fatto/ la sorpresa che le studentesse hanno avuto nell'uso della calcolatrice sul computer o sul cellulare. Hanno scoperto che possono fare i conti eh anche lì. Quindi mh poi c'è stato un flusso ininterrotto di mail che ricevevo che mandavo di moduli. Un delirio. Quindi si sono divertite moltissimo e, ((1s)) e credo che abbiano imparato molto. (Italian interview 2)



as an extraordinary scene. Another quotation shows how a teacher described the power of students' actual use of the mobile phone for communication:

Well eh I too in my experience ah try mh to always stay connected to concrete experiences close to the lives of my students ((1s)). Paradoxically digital helps. It's only what one says: "Well digital you move away from reality." Instead it is exactly the opposite. Just yesterday ((1s)) I couldn't do/ implement the classic exercise ((1s)) very simple of course eh of trying to answer a question or a message on paper. They couldn't understand what I wanted from them. The moment I ((1s)) asked them on WhatsApp they understood. They said: "I have to answer." If you write me a message on WhatsApp I have to answer you. ((1s)) On paper I can hardly understand what you are asking me. Eh to say this is an episode that just happened to me recently. (translated from Italian interview 1)<sup>31</sup>

Teachers not only used the mobile phone for practising reading and writing messages, but the piloting materials also made them aware of its power in the development of oral skills. Referring to the isolation during the pandemic and the longing for communication with others, one teacher reports how s/he was successful in using the tool for participation in a videoconference with a group of young mothers. Others noted how even students who did not know how to start a computer quickly learned to use it in functional ways.

Another teacher mentioned the fact that s/he appreciated the integration of the use of activities with the mobile phone because these made students aware of the fact that they lacked digital competences and thus provided teachable moments for building technological literacy. The extraordinary potential of using (written) messages in everyday life to enhance literacy learning and to transition learners from oral to written speech was highlighted in the following insightful comment:

And I would say that the writing ahm unfortunately always remains quite marginal ah in the implementation of these courses because ((1s)) rightly so perhaps for them the first necessity is that of oral communication and oral comprehension ((1s)) while written production which perhaps emerged for the first time in/ on the occasion of this experimentation was for them a discovery. Eh but what was important was the fact that the writing/ the experience of writing was linked to the digital competence ((2s)) because for them it became - Ah, how can I put it? - ((1s)) a concrete use of writing comparable to orality in some ways. (translated from Italian interview 2)<sup>32</sup>

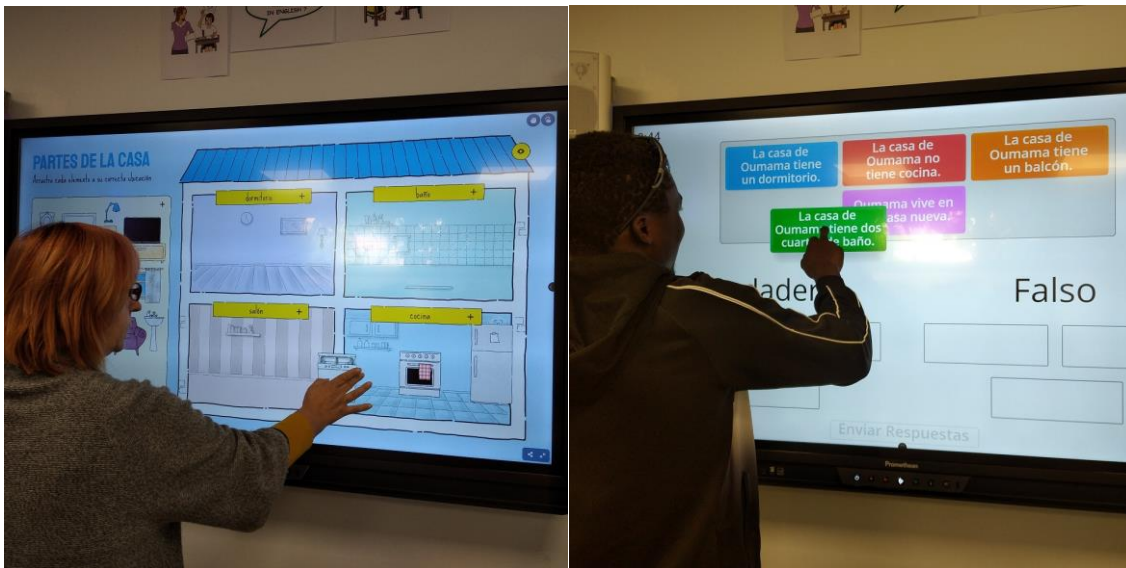
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<sup>31</sup> Original: Allora eh anch'io nella mia esperienza ah cerco mh di restare legata sempre a delle esperienze concrete e vicine alla vita dei miei studenti e delle mie studentesse ((1s)). Paradossalmente il digitale aiuta. Solo ciò che uno dice: "Vabbè il digitale ti allontani dalla realtà. Invece è esattamente il contrario. Giusto l'altro giorno ((1s)) il classico esercizio di tentare di rispondere a delle domande o un messaggio ((1s)) ehm molto semplice ovviamente eh su carta non riuscivo a far/ realizzarlo. Non riuscivano a capire che cosa volessi da loro. Nel momento in cui gliel'ho ((1s)) chiesto su WhatsApp hanno capito. Han detto devo rispondere. Se mi scrivi un messaggio su WhatsApp devo risponderti. ((1s)) Sulla carta faccio fatica a capire che cosa mi stai chiedendo. Eh Questo così un episodio giusto che mi è capitato di recente. (Italian interview 1)

<sup>32</sup> Original: E direi che l'aspetto della scrittura ahm purtroppo rimane sempre abbastanza marginale ah nello svolgimento di questi corsi perché ((1s)) giustamente forse per loro la prima necessità è quella della comunicazione orale e della comprensione orale ((1s)) mentre la produzione scritta che forse è emersa per la prima volta in, in questo/in occasione di questa sperimentazione è stata per loro una scoperta. E ma ciò che è stato importante è il fatto che la scrittura/l'esperienza di scrittura fosse legata a/alla competenza digitale ((2s)) perché per loro è diventato - Ah, come posso dire? - ((1s)) un uso concreto della scrittura paragonabile all'oralità per certi versi. (Italian interview 2)

It is interesting that a research participant also reflected on the fact that due to the constant flux of changes in digital uses, there is a constant need to up-date materials for digital learning. Nevertheless, s/he considers the digital scales as surely helpful:

And, the other thing that interested us so much was digital. ((2s)) Even if ehm compared to maybe three/ two three years ago there have been some big changes. Some schools had already equipped themselves a bit. They had started to work for example with DigComp. To readapt it for their own realities. But now there is a scale/there are scales that can certainly help us. (translated from Italian interview 2)<sup>33</sup>



*Figure 1: Photos from a piloting classroom in Spain*

The use of e-learning in the learning environment for practice was much appreciated by teachers and generally went well. It was pointed out that practice of basic keyboard skills as outlined in LASLLIAM is necessary and helpful for the target group:

Yeah, but it was so useful because you know the, the learners that really struggle with doing a capital letter and then @. [...] We spend a lot of time trying to show them @ and all the things that they need really to successfully send an e-mail. (English interview 2)

One teacher mentioned in particular the motivating power of games produced with the learning apps and the use of cell phones for practising.

It is important to note, though, that digital infrastructure posed challenges in several cases. One teacher reported that s/he chose not to work on a scenario including digital activities because previous experiences with female learners who cannot provide their own cell phone numbers and refer to those of their husband or son or who do not

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<sup>33</sup> Original: E, e l'altro elemento che ci ha interessato tantissimo è stato il digitale. ((2s)) Anche se ehm rispetto magari a tre/ due tre anni fa ci sono stati dei grandi cambiamenti. Alcune scuole si erano già un po' dotate. Avevano iniziato a lavorare per esempio col DigComp. A riadattarlo anche per la propria/ per le proprie realtà. Però insomma adesso c'è una scala che sicuramente/ ci sono delle scale che sicuramente ci possono aiutare. (Italian interview 2)

possess a smartphone, but an older version. Another teacher was concerned about privacy issues:

Some of the things were difficult to kind of replicate in a classroom, for example, like setting something up with a password because they would have kind of privacy issues. ((2s)) And equally I know that the material that I made about using videoing and videoing in the, in the jobs I... That to me, and that comes with a little bit of a worry, that especially with our large college classrooms that we don't have the situation where we can allow classmates to video each other. And it/ maybe work would work better in a smaller community group maybe you know where you would secure that people were friends and easier to manage and easier to delete or they were done. You had a, a sort of separate college device that you could control, but those kind of digital... Sort of, you know that that's not available on the whole to people. I think in most institutions to... Or maybe it is, but, but yeah... (English interview 1)

Also, another report mentions the fact that “[i]n classes without electronic media, not all activities could be carried out” (Spanish report), and another teacher points to the differences between generations in their use of the mobile phone:

The group was mixed from all points of view, the age for example. There were also women ((1s)) over 52 years old and kids as young as 17. Obviously the use of the mobile phone is not ((1s)) homogeneous ((laughs)) - How to say it? - ((1s)) not even with respect to, - How to say? - to the meaning given to this object. (translated from Italian Interview 2)<sup>34</sup>

Nevertheless, we would like to stress that, as shown in the quotations in the first part of this section, both - materials focusing on digital skills as well as materials focusing on other skills, but involving the use of the mobile phone for literacy events or for practice - were successfully used in various courses. To overcome technical barriers, team-teaching might be of particular importance as one teacher pointed out:

I think the most difficult part was getting them to get their phones out and we've all had them on the Wi-Fi. And I'm lucky that I've got two people in the class so it is me and another teacher. So we're around the phones and helping. Just this is what you do and trying to show them on the board, but once they got the NHS [=National Health Service] app downloaded that's/ that was/ it was all up from there. (English interview 1)

We thus conclude that the new digital scales were highly welcomed by practitioners in the various contexts, but that it will be important to call attention to infrastructural deficits in some of the learning environments for migrant adults.

### 3.4.5 Using LASLLIAM for the development of portfolio

The developers of the biography and language passport of the portfolio tool were able to build on two resources that had been very helpful: the already existing European Language Passport and the fact that they already had developed and used a Dutch

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<sup>34</sup> Original: Il gruppo era un gruppo misto da tutti i punti di vista. L'età per esempio c'erano anche donne ((1s)) oltre 52 anni e ragazzini di 17 anni. Quindi ovviamente l'uso del cellulare non è ((1s)) un uso omogeneo ((ride)) - Come dire? - ((1s)) e neanche rispetto alla/ - Come dire? - al senso che si dà a questo oggetto. (Italian Interview 2)

portfolio for Dutch- as-a-second-language literacy classes. Besides, the vision presented in the LASLLIAM guide about the learner as social agent with autonomy was embraced as important for the portfolio. The LASLLIAM scales were highly relevant in developing the language passport. The developers were dedicated to develop a portfolio in a particularly user-friendly way, also for true beginners in reading and writing. Therefore they tried to keep the format simple with only short instruction words or pictograms. For part of the language passport this was quite a challenge as this material developer stated:

In the language passport, we had, so to say, to try to create the global scales [...] for this group. The challenge was to do justice to the complex level description per skill and to do that preferably in a sentence that the learner could also read. [...] but I did think that was one of the biggest LASLLIAM challenges in this little project around the sample materials. (translated from Dutch interview)<sup>35</sup>

The portfolio was tried out in about nine different adult literacy classes, in most cases in heterogeneous groups of beginners in reading and writing and Dutch as a second language.

The teachers liked the teacher manual because it was short and very clear in explaining aims and offering advice on using different parts of the portfolio. Teachers also liked the vision about ownership and the adaptation of instructions to beginning readers. Asked about someone who had never worked with a portfolio before, one of the Dutch interviewees said:

For someone like that, it is nice that there is a manual that explains what the real purpose of it is.

And I found that very enlightening for someone who has never done anything with a portfolio before. What is the/ its purpose? What are you going to work on? You also give the learner themselves insight into what they can actually do already? And it also partly speaks (for) itself because if you ask people to make things about themselves, like in the biography, then say very quickly something like: “Oh, look I, I can show something.” So that joy about it, that is/ that already happens, playfully. I really liked that. (translated from Dutch interview)<sup>36</sup>

In all classes, the biography part of the portfolio was used, and all teachers liked the empowering value of the biography and the impact it had on the self-esteem and the group-spirit of the students in the classes.

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<sup>35</sup> Original: Voor het taalpaspoort hebben we, zeg maar, moeten proberen de Global Scales [...] , voor deze groep te maken. Waarbij de uitdaging was om die ontzettende complexe niveaubeschrijving per vaardigheid recht te doen en dat te doen het liefst in een zinnetje dat de leerder ook zou kunnen lezen. [...] maar ik vond dat wel een van de grootste LASLLIAM-uitdagingen in dit projectje rondom het voorbeeld voorbeeldmateriaal

<sup>36</sup> Original: Voor zo iemand is het wel fijn dat er een handleiding bij is waar ook uitleg bij staat van wat is nou de/ echt de bedoeling hiervan is. En dat vond ik ook wel heel verhelderend voor iemand die nog nooit iets gedaan heeft met een portfolio. Van wat is het doel? Waar ga je mee aan de slag of? Je geeft ook de leerder zelf inzicht in wat kun je eigenlijk allemaal al? En het spreekt ook deels (voor) zichzelf, want als je mensen vraagt om dingen te maken over zichzelf, zoals in de biografie, dan komt er ook al heel snel iets bij van: “Oh, kijk ik, ik kan iets laten zien.” Dus die blijheid daarover, dat is/ dat gebeurt al spelenderwijs. Dat vond ik wel heel mooi.

Teacher: In [city], there had been very emotional reactions in that group, especially when it came to, for example: “How was your work in your own country 10 years ago?” Then they ehm thought a lot about home and the situation by then and whether that was better or not and that had caused quite a few tears in the group. Besides that, they really enjoyed working with it. [...]

Developer: Could I ask you something about that? You said, there were pages about where people looked back on their lives, in their country of origin, which was quite emotional. Did the teachers find that a problem?

Teacher: No, not at all. They did like the fact that it happened, the group became closer. (translated from Dutch interview)<sup>37</sup>

Another teacher used these words to underline how helpful the biography was in fostering interaction between learners:

I also liked the fact that they wanted to show each other. So ehm really inviting each other: “Why don’t you tell us or show us?” So that almost spontaneous presentations arose. It made everyone happy and curious about each other. So that was really nice to work with. To see that. (translated from Dutch interview)<sup>38</sup>

Teachers stressed that the pages about what and how one learned required some more preparation in the group:

I actually only worked with the biography, so I can’t reflect so much on that other part (the language passport). What did you learn and when? For adults, that was also quite difficult. Because you noticed that people needed conversations, for example. To see if ( ): “Didn’t go to school, but what did I learn? Yes, don’t know.” You know, so then you get these conversations about ( ): “Yes, did you learn to cook from your mother?” Or something like that, for example. “Did you work and how? Yes, learned from a neighbour, you know.” But that does require more intensive, short conversations with the participants in order to bring that to the surface. So it is true that you need a lot of time to really (bring) something to the surface with the students.” (translated from Dutch interview)<sup>39</sup>

The page about ‘This is how I am’ was considered slightly more difficult:

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<sup>37</sup> Original: Docent: In [stad] waren er hele emotionele reacties geweest in die groep, vooral als het ging om bijvoorbeeld: “Hoe was 10 jaar geleden je werk in je eigen land?” Dan dachten ze eh heel veel aan thuis en de situatie toen en of die beter was of niet en dat nogal veel tranen had opgeleverd in de groep. Verder vonden ze het erg fijn om mee te werken. [...] Ontwikkelaar: Mag ik daar wat over vragen? Je zei, er waren bladen over waar mensen terugkijken op hun leven, in land van herkomst, wat nogal emotioneel was. Vonden de docenten dat een probleem? Docent: Nee helemaal niet. Ze vonden het wel mooi dat het gebeurde, de groep werd er hechter van.

<sup>38</sup> Original: Ik vond het ook heel mooi dat ze het aan elkaar wilden laten zien. Dus eh mekaar echt uitnodigen, “Nou vertel jij eens of laat jij eens zien.” Dus dat er echt bijna spontaan een soort van presentaties ontstonden. Een dat iedereen daar blij van werd en nieuwsgierig naar elkaar, dus. Dat was dan ook heel mooi om mee te werken/ om dat te zien.

<sup>39</sup> Original: Ik heb eigenlijk alleen met de biografie gewerkt, dus ik kan niet zo reflecteren op dat andere deel. Van wat heb je wanneer geleerd? Voor volwassenen was dat ook best wel moeilijk. Omdat je merkte dat mensen bijvoorbeeld gesprekje nodig hadden. Te kijken of ze ( ): “Ik ben niet naar school geweest, maar wat heb ik dan geleerd?” Ja, weet niet. Weet je wel, dus dan krijg je van die gesprekjes over ( ). “Ja, heb je dan bijvoorbeeld leren koken van je moeder of zo?” “Heb je gewerkt en hoe? Ja, bij de buurman geleerd, weet je wel.” Van oh nou, dan kun je dus dat gebruiken, Maar dat vraagt dus wel intensiever kortere gesprekjes met de deelnemers om dat naar boven te kunnen halen. Dus dat klopt wel dat je dus veel tijd nodig hebt om daar met de cursisten echt iets naar boven te kunnen (halen).



Teacher: We are still very much busy in class making things visual. Yes, and now you have to do things/ talk about things like “I am honest”. How can I do that in such a way that people understand that? For example: “I dare to make mistakes.” So I was always looking to give flesh on the bones of those abstract words. Like “I am kind, I am hospitable”, how to make those clear to people.

Interviewer: And if they can do that in their own language?

[...]

Teacher: Yes, but then they are very positive. Actually, a lot of people say: “Yes, I like to help.” and “I am hospitable.” Then you notice that all the positive things are pretty much in the same vein, all positive things were ticked. “Yes, and I am that too, and I am also kind, and I am also honest, because yes, God requires that. I have to be honest.” (translated from Dutch interview)<sup>40</sup>

The language passport was less used in the learning environments, partly because of lack of time, partly because teachers considered it to be quite difficult and probably more useful later in the learning trajectory.

Well, I found that difficult with my group. [...] Then I thought that those portfolio sheets (used for children) are much more focused on drawing and colouring. And here is/ in this portfolio, it is with pictograms, but it is actually very linguistic. I had to communicate very (well) with hands and feet to find out which language is spoken there. And then I thought, yes, I can't really think of a solution for that either, but I found it very difficult to do that with people who really have very little language. And then I did a bit with their mother tongue with other people, but yes. (translated from Dutch interview)<sup>41</sup>

Another teacher explained the reasons for choosing specific parts of the portfolio:

The way we are now working with [name] in [city], we have selected parts from the portfolio, that piece of “Who am I?”, “What can I do?”, “What do I want?”. Because that also ties in with the language lessons and workshops we give here, especially in the initial phase. And we notice that this is already very difficult because they don't yet have the vocabulary to tell something about their family, for instance. And then you do ask “Take a picture.”, but sometimes that is also very difficult. They can often say the words grandpa and grandma, but uncles and aunts and cousins are a big mess, often because they don't know the words or because family relationships are very different in their language. [...] That remains very difficult in the early stages with these very low-literate people. And that just means that as a teacher you have to prepare well and do it together in steps. So that you shouldn't say: “Well, the four of you do

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<sup>40</sup> Original: We zijn nog heel erg in de les bezig met dingen visueel maken. Ja, en nu moet je dingen doen van/ praten over dingen van “Ik ben eerlijk.” Hoe kan ik dat zo doen dat de mensen dat begrijpen, bijvoorbeeld? “Ik durf fouten te maken.” Dus ik was wel steeds op zoek om handen en voeten te geven aan die abstracte woorden. Zoals “Ik ben aardig.”, “Ik ben gastvrij.” Hoe ik die duidelijk kan maken voor de mensen. Interviewer: En als dat kan in de eigen taal? Ik neem aan dat cursisten dan wel iets van zichzelf vinden of is dat ook niet zo? Of zeg je, dat weet ik niet? Docent: Ja, dan zijn ze wel heel positief. Eigenlijk heel veel mensen zeggen dan “Ja, help graag” en “Ik ben gastvrij.” en zo. Dan merk je dat best wel in hetzelfde straatje ligt, allemaal de positieve dingen wel, daar werden echt wel heel veel kruisjes gezet van: “Ja, en dat ben ik ook, en ik ben ook aardig en ik ben ook eerlijk, want ja, dat moet ook van God. Ik moet eerlijk zijn.”

<sup>41</sup> Original: Nou, dat vond ik bij mijn groep wel lastig [...]. En toen dacht ik die portfolio bladen (voor kinderen) zijn wel veel meer gericht op tekenen en kleuren. En hier is/ in dit portfolio is het wel met pictogrammen, maar het is toch eigenlijk heel talig. Ik moet toch heel (goed) met handen en voeten gaan uitzoeken van welke taal spreek je daar? En toen dacht ik, ja, ik kan daar ook niet echt een oplossing voor verzinnen, maar dat vond ik zelf wel heel moeilijk om dat met mensen die echt nog heel weinig taal hebben, te doen. En dan deed ik wel een beetje met hun moedertaal erbij met andere mensen, maar ja.



something with that portfolio for an hour today.” Like: “Here’s a sheet of paper, and I’ll see you later.” (translated from Dutch interview)<sup>42</sup>

One of the developers also stressed the relevance of the language passport for the teachers:

What I think is still important is that it also makes teachers aware that course members have learned several languages and that this could start a conversation about what the difference is between the way you learned Turkish after learning Arabic ehm or the difference with how you learn Dutch now. I am now working on a study where people are very good at naming those differences and also the problem that causes the difference in the way they learn. In the first language, of course, so it can be quite a difficult conversation if it has to be conducted in Dutch. But I think it is actually important that we pay attention to this. But if I had a group, I would also start with the worksheets about “Who am I?” and “What can I do?”. So somewhere in the whole package I think it has a nice place. (translated from Dutch interview)<sup>43</sup>

Most teachers also stressed the relevance of the pieces about work activities of the learners, and suggested to even more explicitly point out in the manual that this is not only about paid work, but also about household work and volunteering.

Yes, and they get their appreciation from that too. If they spend even an hour a week in a community centre at the sewing club, it may look to us like they’re not doing anything. But (it) actually is. They go outside, they expand their network, they do an activity, they hear Dutch, that’s part of it. So then we do try to catch that and attach a photo of it. And then someone else says: “Yes, that is not a salary.” No, that’s true, but it is the first small step towards more participation. And that’s what makes them very happy in [city] when everyone participates. (translated from Dutch interview)<sup>44</sup>

Most teachers also liked the idea of the portfolio as a testimony of growth in language learning and participating.

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<sup>42</sup> Original: Zoals wij nu in [city] met [naam]werken, hebben we een selectie gemaakt van opdrachten uit het portfolio, dat stuk van “Wie ben ik?”, “Wat kan ik?”, “Wat wil ik?” Omdat dat ook aansluit bij de taallessen en workshops die we hier geven in vooral de beginfase. En we merken dat dat al heel erg lastig is, omdat ze bijvoorbeeld nog geen woordenschat hebben om iets te vertellen over hun familie. En dan vraag je wel “Maak een foto.” maar soms is dat ook heel lastig. Ze kunnen het woord opa en oma vaak nog wel benoemen, maar ooms en tantes en neven en nichten, dat wordt dan een grote brij, ook vaak omdat ze de woorden niet weten of omdat in hun taal de familierelaties heel anders liggen. [...] Dat blijft in die beginfase toch erg lastig met deze heel laaggeletterde mensen. En dat betekent gewoon dat je als docent dat goed moet voorbereiden en samen in stapjes moet doen. En dat je niet moet zeggen: “Nou jullie met zijn vieren, ga vandaag maar even een uurtje iets met dat portfolio doen.” Zo van: “Hier heb je een stapel papier en ik zie je straks wel.”

<sup>43</sup> Original: Wat ik nog wel belangrijk vind dat het ook docenten bewust maakt dat cursisten meerdere talen hebben geleerd en dat dat het gesprek op gang zou kunnen brengen over wat nou het verschil is tussen de manier waarop je Turks leerde nadat je Arabisch hebt geleerd eh of het verschil met hoe je nu Nederlands leert. Ik ben nu met een onderzoek bezig waar mensen die verschillen en ook probleem wat het verschil in manier van leren veroorzaakt ook heel goed kunnen benoemen. Wel in de eerste taal weliswaar, dus dat zal nog wel best een lastig gesprek kunnen zijn als dat in het Nederlands moet worden gevoerd. Maar ik denk dat het eigenlijk wel belangrijk is dat we wel aandacht creëren daarvoor. Maar ik zou als ik een groep had, ook beginnen met de werkbladen die gingen over “Wie ben ik?” en “Wat kan ik?”. Dus ergens in het hele pakketje vind ik het toch wel een mooie plek hebben.

<sup>44</sup> Original: Ja en ze halen daar ook weer hun waardering uit. Als ze inderdaad al is het maar een uur in de week in een buurthuis bij het naaiclubje zitten, dan mag dat voor ons nog lijken van hé, ze doen helemaal niks. Maar dat is (het) wel. Ze gaan naar buiten, ze vergroten hun netwerk, ze doen een activiteit, ze horen Nederlands, dat hoort er wel bij. Dus dan proberen we dat wel te vangen en dan wel daar een foto van bij te plakken. En dan roept iemand anders van: “Ja, dat is geen salaris.” Nee, dat klopt, maar het is wel het eerste kleine stapje in ieder geval naar meer participatie. En dat is waar ze in [stad] ook wel heel blij van worden als iedereen participeert.

We also see it mainly as a growth document that they can show to the municipality or to the social supervisor or where they participate. And that they can also take things with them to school from their participation place. Then it's quite possible to have two papers next to each other. One is still neatly copied and the next paper is, for example, that they have written a story themselves. Or ehm well, that's may be too far apart already, but then you can also show that growth. And we put dates on everything, so you can see that in January you didn't write the letter very neatly yet and now in March it's going very smoothly in different forms. These may be small steps and perhaps not at all tickable on a checklist or not at all testable with ehm the alpha A or alpha B test, but you can show that: "Hey, you have learned things and you have mastered things." That's what we think is more important at the moment than ehm ticking something off for the sake of ticking it off. (translated from Dutch interview)<sup>45</sup>

Teachers also expanded on the dossier-building part of the portfolio (which was not part of this tool), although one of the developers also noted that she had liked to be able to pay more attention to the biography part and less so on a checklist.

We are also wrestling with the teachers about what should be included as evidence in the portfolio. And then it's actually quite handy to have some kind of checklist for the teacher to check whether someone in alpha A is at the front or the back, or whether they can already do things in alpha B or something like that. Also because the municipality also asks for results and is familiar with the CEFR and so on. So you have a kind of common language. To this end, it might be useful to have a rough checklist and not "He has to prove this with XYZ, paper, worksheet, photo, video.", but something more global. We are also still very much struggling with that. How are we going to do that? And such a portfolio obviously doesn't have to look exactly the same for everyone, but you do want to be able to show that someone can read, write or pronounce certain letters or whatever. (translated from Dutch interview)<sup>46</sup>

In sum, practitioners favoured the value of the developed portfolio for the usability in heterogeneous groups and for getting to know their students better. They also demonstrated a deep understanding of how to foster autonomy of non- and low-literate learners by reflecting on language learning and life skills, and by sharing these reflection with the group and documenting them for others.

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<sup>45</sup> Original: Wij zien het ook vooral als een groeidocument dat ze kunnen laten zien aan de gemeente of aan de maatschappelijke begeleider of waar ze participeren. En dat ze ook dingen mee kunnen nemen naar school van hun participatieplaats. Dan kun je best twee papieren achter elkaar hebben zitten, waarbij de één is nog netjes overschrijven en een volgend papier is bijvoorbeeld dat ze zelf een verhaaltje hebben geschreven. Of eh nou ja, dat ligt alweer heel ver uit elkaar, maar dan kun je ook die groei laten zien. En wij zetten overal data op, dus dan zie je van hé, in januari schreef je de letter a nog niet zo netjes en nu in maart gaat hij super soepel in verschillende vormen en daar kun je dan natuurlijk ook een gesprek over aangaan met die cursist, zodat ze wel zien van, hé, het heeft zin dat ik naar school ga. Dat zijn misschien kleine stapjes en misschien is dat helemaal niet aan te tekenen op een afvinklijst of al helemaal niet te toetsen met nou ja de alfa A of Alfa B toets, maar je kunt wel laten zien van: "Hé, je hebt dingen geleerd en je hebt dingen onder de knie gekregen". Dat is wat wij op dit moment belangrijker vinden dan nou ja, het afvinken om het af te vinken.

<sup>46</sup> Original: We zijn hier met de docenten wel ook aan worstelen over dat/ wat moet er dan als bewijs in dat portfolio? En dan is het eigenlijk toch wel weer handig dat je in elk geval voor de docent een soort van afvinklijst hebt om toch even te ijken zit iemand in alfa A vooraan of achteraan, of kan die al dingen van Alfa B of zoiets. Ook omdat de gemeente toch ook wel vraagt om resultaten en nu net een beetje ook het ERK en zo kent. Dus je hebt een soort gemeenschappelijke taal. Daarvoor is het dan misschien toch wel handig is om een grofmazige afvinklijst te hebben en niet van: "Hij moet dit bewijzen met XYZ, papier, werkblad, foto, filmpje", maar iets globaler. Daar zijn we ook nog heel erg mee aan het aan het stoeien: hoe gaan we dat doen? En zo'n portfolio hoeft er natuurlijk niet voor iedereen precies hetzelfde uit te zien, maar je wil wel kunnen laten zien dat iemand bepaalde letters kan lezen, schrijven of uitspreken of wat dan ook.

### 3.4.6 Using LASLLIAM for the development of assessment tools within the learning environments

Among the focus group participants, only one expert used the LASLLIAM reference guide for the development of a diagnostic test. This person describes her/his experience in these words:

I used LASLLIAM in every phase of the test development. I proceeded according to Bachmann and Palmer, who say that you first have to identify and describe the target language use domain. And I found LASLLIAM very helpful with this because by giving the domains, which are described with the corresponding examples... This gave me text types for concrete language actions that could be relevant for literacy learners. So that/ I also used other sources, but that was already helpful in any case. And then, quite banally, of course, to describe the test construct, I used LASLLIAM. So to speak the written scales, both the communicative and the technical ones are the test construct that I try to measure in the test. (translated from German interview)<sup>47</sup>

S/he reports some challenges in operationalising the descriptors at the four levels in a way that was transparent to a second rater. She solved this problem by finding more text-specific operationalizations and by not yet operationalizing the strategy descriptors.

The data corpus thus contains very few statements on using LASLLIAM for the development of assessment tools, but as mentioned in the introduction, ALTE-LAMI undertook an encompassing effort to illustrate this field. Within the ALTE-LAMI<sup>48</sup> activities, 18 ALTE-LAMI members, from 12 ALTE institutions representing 12 languages<sup>49</sup>, developed four explanatory tools to illustrate use of LASLLIAM for assessment purposes within a framework aimed at improving connections between learning, teaching and assessment.

The LAMI-LASLLIAM Assessment Tools (LLAT) aim to support equity and quality through inclusive and tailor-made learning and teaching. They reflect the action-oriented approach which views language learners primarily as social agents engaged in tasks. In particular, LLAT take into account tasks based on communicative language activities involving oral and written reception, production and interaction, as illustrated by the LASLLIAM scales.

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<sup>47</sup> Original: In jeder Phase der Testentwicklung habe ich LASLLIAM herangezogen. Also ich bin nach Bachmann und Palmer vorgegangen, die sagen, dass man erst die Target Language Use Domain ausmachen muss und beschreiben muss. Und da fand ich LASLLIAM schon sehr hilfreich, weil es ähm durch die Domänen, die ja auch beschrieben werden und die entsprechenden Beispiele ähm... So kamen für mich auch schon Textsorten für konkrete Sprachhandlungen, die für Lernende im Alphabereich eben relevant sein könnten. Also das/ ich habe auch andere Quellen genutzt, aber da war das schon ähm auf jeden Fall hilfreich. Und dann also ganz banal natürlich zur Beschreibung des Testkonstrukts ähm habe ich LASLLIAM benutzt. Also quasi die schriftlichen äh Skalen, sowohl die kommunikativen als auch die technischen sind die/ das Testkonstrukt, das ich quasi versuche zu messen im Test. (German interview)

<sup>48</sup> See <https://www.alte.org/LAMI-SIG>

<sup>49</sup> Czech, Dutch, English, Esperanto, German, Greek, Italian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovenian and Spanish

In developing the tools, the approach highlighted in LASLLIAM was adopted. This means that the use of LLAT...

- 1) is intended as fully embedded within the learning environment; in this respect, the four tools represent concrete examples of the recommended uses of LASLLIAM in the field of assessment, and take into account the important stipulation that the reference guide is not designed for the development of standardized high-stakes and large-scale tests
- 2) is designed to support the concept of profiles and the “recognition of partial competences”. In this sense, LLAT allow users to illustrate learners’ uneven profiles, providing evidence of what is achieved should always lead to positive outcomes in order to sustain learners’ motivation, mindful of the fact that LASLLIAM scales are not intended to fix any cut-off point.

In order to share feedback with teachers and volunteers who used LLAT with their learners, 11 focus groups were organized in 6 countries (Germany, Greece, Italy, Northern Ireland, Norway and Slovenia). The overall result was very positive:

- The educators highlighted the necessity for tools like these, mentioning as the most positive aspects the inclusive approach as well as the suitability of the tasks for the specific learning audience.
- Generally, LLAT was considered adequate to the LASLLIAM levels and appropriate for the target learners who found the materials really interesting, with contents reflecting their everyday needs.
- The guidelines for users were judged as easy to understand, exhaustive and practical.
- The instructions for learners were characterised as precise and helpful for users, but somehow perceived as difficult for learners: on the one hand simplifications were suggested accordingly; on the other hand it was recommended to allow the possibility for teachers to give the instructions orally in different languages, where needed.
- Looking at the tasks provided by the four tools, the format was considered absolutely correct. However, users gave many useful suggestions for changings, even of details (e.g. replacing some words, rewordings of few sentences, modifying one item sequencing or selecting a couple of different pictures, adding more explanatory footnotes, providing a version “for the learner” potentially ready to be printed and distributed). The common aim of the aforementioned suggestions was to improve adequacy, by limiting as much as possible cultural implications and sensible topics.

Taking into account all the input received, the ALTE-LAMI members had several exchanges and two rounds of online meetings in order to comment on the results of the focus groups. At the very end of this complex process, many of the suggestions received have been welcomed, by giving the opportunity to the LLAT developers to update and improve the tools in the light of their effective use within the learning environments.

## 4. Conclusion

In this report, we presented data from focus groups of material developers and teachers who discussed their experiences with drafting and piloting LASLLIAM tools in various European languages. These group interviews also served to improve the tools before publication on the Council of Europe's website for a larger audience. However, this paper focused on practitioners' perceptions of the challenges in teaching second languages to non- and low-literate adult migrants and the usefulness of the LASLLIAM reference guide for tool development as well as the usefulness of LASLLIAM tools for teaching. Our aim was thus to explore and document the emic perspectives of those material developers and teachers who transferred and piloted the supranational reference guide in specific European languages, learning traditions, and curricular contexts.

Interviews were conducted in eight different countries and partly transcribed (ca. 8 hours) and partly summarized (ca. 8 hours). Additionally, the outcomes of 11 discussions in 6 countries were summarized as well within the piloting conducted by ALTE-LAMI. Despite minor differences in the interviewing procedures, sizes of focus groups and intensity of their discussions, we were able to build a solid multilingual data corpus. A coarsely-grained content analysis allowed us to answer the three research questions:

1. What challenges do participants experience in teaching LASLLIAM learners in their contexts?

Challenges were strikingly similar across contexts. Interviewees mentioned their students' challenge of learning a second language without being able to rely on writing in this process, the extreme heterogeneity of their learner groups, the social isolation of many learners as well as the irregular attendance patterns. Differences emerged in terms of materials provided in various languages with English, for example, offering a multitude of materials that was considered to be confusing, and Turkish, for example, offering so few materials that many teachers produce and share their own materials. Other differences emerged across institutions with some colleagues not having access to well-equipped learning environments (especially digital equipment).

2. How do material developers perceive the usefulness of LASLLIAM for developing teaching tools?

The analysis showed that material developers were able to deeply grasp the goals and to thoroughly understand the theoretical foundations of the LASLLIAM reference guide. They underlined both the stimulating and the challenging character of the LASLLIAM scales highlighting in particular the importance of domain examples for their own understanding of the LASLLIAM descriptors. Taking into consideration the fact that our sample of interviewees was positively biased in the sense that it comprised particularly experienced and dedicated colleagues, we conclude that substantial support for trainers in professional development programmes for teachers as well as material developers will be necessary to disseminate the LASLLIAM scales.

3. How do teachers perceive the tools developed?

Teachers clearly understood the tools' goals framed in LASLLIAM descriptors and were able to work successfully with these tools. In specific cases, they discussed innovative aspects of teaching recommended by the LASLLIAM reference guide, such as balancing technical and functional literacy or using scenarios. In almost all focus groups, discussion of the digital tools and digital skills was particularly lively, with teachers highly welcoming the new digital perspectives delineated in the piloting tools. The focus group on using the portfolio appreciated its autonomous, reflective, and participatory power so that we highly recommend its translation from Dutch and English into other languages for the dissemination phase. Finally, the LAMI-LASLLIAM Assessment Tools (LLAT) provided and piloted in twelve languages found high approval of teachers and illustrate assessment options fully embedded within the learning environment and based on the notion of profiles.

## Appendix 1: Overview of piloting tools developed

Language	Domain	Theme	Level	Tool
Dutch	Educational	Portfolio: Biography and Language Passport?	mixed levels	Portfolio
English	Educational	Digital literacy skills: Getting started on the computers; Office 365 for college email & TEAMS access; Basic functions of TEAMS	1	Workbook
English	Professional	Job centre communication and job search Using the college website to search and register interest or for an assessment	3	Scenario
English	Educational	Practicing for a job interview	4	Scenario
English	Public	NHS - Making an appointment by phone and following the recorded instruction process. Finding a Pharmacy	2	Scenario
English	Public	Visit to the Baltic museum	mixed levels	Mini-project
French	Private	Neighbours' Festival	1-2	Learning Unit
French	Public	Public services	1-4	Learning Unit
French	Educational	School and family	4	Learning Unit
French	Professional	Job search	3-4	Learning Unit
German	Educational	What is your name?	4	Workbook : strategy unit



German	Educational	Where are you from?	2	Workbook : strategy unit
German	Educational	Where are you from?	3	Workbook : strategy unit
German	Educational	Filling own address into a form	2	Workbook : strategy unit
German	Public	On your way to school	2	Workbook : strategy unit
Greek	Educational	School and children	2-3	Scenario
Greek	Public	Getting around, travelling	2	Scenario
Greek	Professional	At the workplace	3-4	Scenario
Greek	Private	Self-presentation	1-4	Scenario
Italian	Private	Using the phone for everyday life	2	Scenario
Italian	Public	Talking Machine: the ticket machine	3 written- 4 oral	Scenario
Italian	Professional	The new job - In the kitchen	1 written- 3 oral	Scenario
Italian	Educational	Joining a course through video conferencing	1	Scenario/ video tutorial
Spanish	Public	Introductions	mixed levels	Learning unit
Spanish	Public	Shopping	1	Learning unit
Spanish	Public	Looking for a place to live	2	Learning unit
Spanish	Educational	How many languages do we speak in class?	3	Learning unit
Spanish	Public	Health and illness	4	Learning unit
Turkish	Public	Istanbul ferry	3	Scenario

## Appendix 2: Guideline for focus group interviews

Phase	Main focus	Horizon of expectation in terms of topics
Warm-up (10 min)	What was your role in the piloting study?	Think of... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>material development? which material?</li> <li>teaching? which class(es)?</li> </ul>
	Generally speaking, what are the major challenges	Think of...

	you have been confronted with in L2 literacy teaching and material development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• heterogeneity in terms of oral competences?</li> <li>• heterogeneity in terms of written competences?</li> <li>• heterogeneity in terms of formal learning experiences and learner autonomy?</li> <li>• other heterogeneity in terms of learners' backgrounds?</li> </ul>
	Generally speaking, what curricula have guided your L2 literacy teaching and material development in your particular work contexts?	Think of... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• curricula at the national/regional level?</li> <li>• curricula at the meso level (i.e. school, institution)?</li> <li>• Individual satisfaction with these given curricula?</li> </ul>
	When you plan your own lessons and curricular sequences how do you usually proceed?	Think of... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• curricula at the micro level (your own classroom planning)?</li> <li>• sources of materials/own production?</li> <li>• differentiation into levels?</li> </ul>
Material development (15 min)	Now let's turn to your experiences while using the LASLLIAM reference guide for material development.	
	When you first read the reference guide, how difficult was it for you to understand the LASLLIAM scales?	Think of... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• concept of levels?</li> <li>• differences/similarities to national/regional/ institutional curricula?</li> <li>• transfer to specific (own) language?</li> </ul>
	How did you proceed when you developed your materials and how did you use the LASLLIAM reference guide in this process?	Think of... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• choice of learning goals and end tasks?</li> <li>• reducing complexity of <b>skills in focus</b> to the required level?</li> <li>• reducing complexity of <b>other skills</b> needed to the required level?</li> <li>• balance of technical and functional literacy (exercises/tasks)?</li> <li>• use of LASLLIAM chapters other than chapter 4?</li> <li>• any differences to earlier material development process without LASLLIAM reference guide?</li> </ul>

	Did you encounter difficulties when using the LASLLIAM reference guide for material development? If so, which ones and how did you try to tackle these challenges?	Think of... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• relevance of the overall and especially of the specific scales (i.e. only related to language activity) which LASLLIAM provides for your context?</li> <li>• ease of using LASLLIAM?</li> <li>• in line with national/regional/institutional curricula?</li> <li>• technical literacy in your specific language?</li> </ul>
	How was the LASLLIAM reference guide useful for material development or how did it improve your work?	Think of... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consideration of functional aspects?</li> <li>• consideration of technical aspects?</li> <li>• integration of functional and technical aspects?</li> <li>• scaling progression?</li> </ul>

Classroom piloting of materials (15 min.)	Now let's turn to your experiences while using these materials in actual classrooms.	
	How adequate did you find the guidelines for teachers?	Think of... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• easy/difficult to understand?</li> <li>• anything missing?</li> </ul>
	In general, how well did the materials work in your classroom?	Think of... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• student responses?</li> <li>• teacher response?</li> <li>• appropriateness of time?</li> <li>• motivation level?</li> </ul>
	More specifically, how appropriate did you find the learning goals for your group and were you able to reach them?	Think of... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• skills?</li> <li>• descriptors from general and specific scales?</li> <li>• domains?</li> </ul>
	How adequate was difficulty of the materials for your particular students?	Think of... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• difficulty level of the <b>functional skills in focus</b> of learning goal? (If written skill: difficulty level of technical literacy skills required for this learning goal?)</li> <li>• difficulty of <b>other functional skills</b> required during the lessons?</li> </ul>

Suggestions for	Now let's turn to any suggestions for	
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improvement of materials (15 min.)	improvement of the materials you might have.	
	Would you delete or replace anything? (Please indicate the page numbers.) If so, why?	Think of... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• activities?</li> <li>• details (of texts, pictures, instructions for learners...)?</li> <li>• instructions for teachers/meta-information</li> </ul>
	What would you like to add to the materials? (Please indicate at which point you would add them.) If so, why?	Think of... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• activities?</li> <li>• details (of texts, pictures, instructions for learners...)?</li> <li>• instructions for teachers/meta-information?</li> </ul>
Closing/de-briefing (5 min.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anything else you would like to bring up about the materials developed?</li> <li>• Anything you would like to know about the research process?</li> <li>• If you feel uneasy about anything that happened during our session today, would you like to bring it up before we say good-bye?</li> <li>• Thank you very much for your participation on behalf of the LASLLIAM authoring group.</li> </ul>	In case you cannot answer questions about the research process or address specific worries of participants, please contact Karen ( <a href="mailto:karen.schramm@univie.ac.at">karen.schramm@univie.ac.at</a> ) who will be happy to supply info after the interview.

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