Integrating Disadvantaged Ethnicities

through Adult Learning

The THEMIS-IDEAL Handbook for Implementation
October 2016 (first edition)

Contents

Introduction

IDEAL Integrating Disadvantaged Ethnicities through Adult Learning has been a multilateral *Grundtvig* project under EU's *Lifelong Learning Programme* (LLP). [1] IDEAL was partly funded by the EACEA (*Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency*) and was launched on October 1st, 2011. The project has had a lifespan of two years. IDEAL is based on the participatory and pedagogical method Themis.

This *THEMIS-IDEAL Handbook for Implementation* describes in detail the relevance, background and methodology of IDEAL, the implementation modalities, characteristics of the target group, and opportunities and limitations of the approach. It provides for extensive instructions and recommendations on implementing IDEAL in adult education for the target group in Europe, and to make it fit to local conditions and circumstances. It further provides for useful examples of classroom situations. Also the necessary competences and attitudes of IDEAL facilitators/teachers are outlined. Instruments for measuring progress are included as well: on language acquisition and on progress on levels of participation, for baseline and evaluation purposes. Finally it includes advices on additional and follow up activities. This THEMIS-IDEAL Handbook is available for free on the website: www.ideal-participation.eu

IDEAL is based on the Themis-method, which builds on mother tongue based and participatory facilitation by well-educated similar background role models, for marginalised non-western female migrants. The Dutch Themis modules were translated into English. Together, the IDEAL-partners developed the Themis-IDEAL Handbook for Facilitators[2].

In 2016, the Handbook was revised in order to serve as a practical manual for implementation of IDEAL for organizations and facilitators which plan to start new IDEAL-groups. The **Handbook for Implementation** is divided into three sections: 1) Methodology; 2) Conditions; 3) Materials. Furthermore, background information is provided in Appendices.

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[1] See p. 41 Development of IDEAL and acknowledgements.

[2] For more in-depth information about the evaluation of the 2011-2013 project, Handbook for Teachers version 2 is still available.

1. Methodology

1.1. Objectives

IDEAL aims at the empowerment and participation of disadvantaged citizens without or with little formal education experience. Its focus has been, but is in principle not exclusively, on non-western migrant women. Large numbers of migrants from non-western countries do not fully participate in the EU-countries of their arrival, especially women without education. Many among them suffer from low self-esteem and low self-confidence, and from various psychosomatic illnesses, which on their turn hinder their full participation in society and as such their citizenship. Working with these participants, the facilitator faces methodological challenges. With no experience with formal learning, no literacy as a method of memorising, but with an extensive use of oral and visual memorisation processes instead, the participants have different pedagogical needs as compared to a student with a well-developed educational background. The IDEAL method will help them to acquire the necessary knowledge, attitudes and competences for becoming an empowered active citizen of EU-member states.

Goals include different levels of participation:

Participation level 1:
- The competence to visit schools and to talk about the performance of their children (either a child or someone else);
- The competence to visit doctors/GPs without the assistance of a child or a family member (but might probably still need the assistance of a professional interpreter when more complex issues are discussed);
- The competence to make use of public transport without any assistance, and / or to undertake leisure activities;
- The competence to visit public facilities (like libraries, sports facilities, leisure facilities, cultural facilities like for instance museums, municipal authorities, insurance companies, etc.) without any assistance;
- The competence to travel without any assistance to other shopping areas than those in their own vicinity.

Participation level 2:
- The competence to undertake voluntary activities, like the care for sick / disabled family, neighbours, or friends; or
- The competence to undertake voluntary activities in the own neighbourhood, like support to street festivals, or taking care for collective facilities; or

- The competence to undertake internships or voluntary activities in school, health centres, sports clubs, libraries, shops, nursing homes, cultural centres, etc.

Participation level 3:
- The competence to work in a business of a family member, or
- The competence to work for a salary in a (part-time) job, or
- The competence to start a business enterprise.

IDEAL focuses on the first two levels of participation as a prerequisite to achieve the third level. In doing this, it provides a method of learning for first learners who have dropped out or experienced course-blocking in language education or training for work.

1.2. Philosophy

Illiterates, often and increasingly live on the edge of their society, in a rapidly modernising world. They must use all their strength and resourcefulness to survive in an environment upon which they do not seem to have any decision-making influence. A resourcefulness, which is admittedly sometimes astonishingly effective, but which usually leaves existing power relations essentially untouched, and is therefore not more than an apparent adjustment. They lack the power, the insight and the knowledge (the tools and the skills to deal with this) to adequately anticipate the course of the rapidly changing world around them; anticipation, resulting in bringing the process of transformation into motion, a shift in power and influence. There is often a lack of assertiveness, the ability to verbally defend and negotiate in favour of one's own interests. This requires that the words should connect with the perceptions of all those involved. As long as this is not achieved, they will continue to live on the 'periphery' of their society, a concept coined a few decades ago and which is still useful as a general determinant of position.

1.3. Target groups

One of the key design principles of IDEAL is working with homogeneous groups of participants. Basically, the only key characteristic for which IDEAL was developed is a low level of education/formal learning experience. IDEAL is not restricted to migrants or specific cultures. However, in a learning group, identification and role modelling are key to a safe learning environment. Therefore, participants with similar (cultural and language) backgrounds join in learning groups. Also, the groups are gender-specific. Working with heterogeneous groups has proved to be disadvantageous.

In the evaluated international project (2011-2013), IDEAL was aimed at migrant women from non-western countries with one or several of the following characteristics:

1. None or only a few years of primary education (illiteracy, functional illiteracy, low literacy)
2. Very limited knowledge and understanding of the western society
3. None or limited command of the language of their host country
4. An experience of their own knowledge and skills not being appreciated in the host country
5. Low self-esteem and self confidence
6. Limited communication skills
7. Suffering from physical, mental, or psychosomatic illness[3], often resulting in a predominant "illness identity" overshadowing other possible self-perceptions
8. Lack of understanding of gender equality, lack of skills as how to adjust traditional ways of parenting to gender balanced societies
9. Lack of understanding of their roles, as of how to bring their resources to bear in society
10. Social problems in the family
11. Experiences of stagnation and failure, the conviction that a transformation of one's life is impossible.

Many participants previously participated in study programs or language courses without mentionable results, reinforcing the experience of failure. One or several of these characteristics impede full participation and active citizenship in society.

1.4. Evidence

Outcomes suggest that, through the IDEAL-programme, significant progress has been achieved on:
- language proficiency
- self-confidence and self-esteem
- communication skills
- participation

These achievements are reported by both the participants themselves and by their facilitators. These are the first but imperative steps to taking control over their own lives and resources (= empowerment), which is reflected in progress on the participation ladder. On this ladder improvements are reported, as well as on language acquisition (the latter of course being a prerequisite for effective participation). Nevertheless, outcomes differed from country to country, most probably due to the differing

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[3] Examples of illness might be: (physical, psychosomatic) back pain, muscle tensions, migraine, diabetes 2, overweight, high cholesterol, arthritis; (mental) anxiety, depression, and phobia.

implementation modalities and conditions. In this Handbook v3, the most optimal conditions are described in Chapter 2.

> ↗ **Click to read (research article, open access):**
> **Learning Language that matters. A pedagogical method to support migrant mothers without formal education experience in their social integration in Western countries.**

1.5.   Outcomes

Gender sensitivity & equality, empowerment

Gender sensitivity and striving towards gender equity is at the backbone of IDEAL. Especially Module 4 has raised awareness among the participants on their right to strive for their own needs and perspectives. At the start they showed a large lack of understanding of gender equality, lack of skills as how to adjust traditional ways of parenting to gender balanced societies. Also a lack of understanding of their roles, as of how to bring their resources to bear in society was imminent. Through role plays tools for effective communication have been trained. These role plays were to a large extent inspired by approaches developed in the seventies of last century, for female emancipation purposes. The effects have been tremendous, resulting in significant increases on self-confidence and self-esteem by the participants. They report more peace at home and more tranquillity / less psycho-somatic complaints, due to improved communication skills. Also the parenting module enhances equality among boys and girls (Module 5).

Health awareness (preventive and curative)

Module 3 was developed and implemented to make the participants aware about the functioning of their body, and about the origins of physical complaints. Also communicating effectively with the doctor was an important element. This module was highly appreciated and well understood by the participants. Language came almost automatically with the handling of body parts and organs, and the complaints. The role plays supported effective communication with the doctor/GP.

Parenting

The Dutch version of Module 5 on parenting has brought forward significant effects. Participants reported that they are better organised at home, spend more quality time with their children, use less physical punishments and more positive parenting skills. Furthermore, the development phases of the child are better understood, allowing mothers to empathize with the child. The participants described the relief of sharing experiences and how they feel now that they are not alone with their thoughts and daily

life's joys and difficulties with their children. They have been encouraged and have helped each other with suggestions and support.

Participation

At baseline, the participants indicated that they would avoid contacts with teachers at their children's school and with western citizens in shops or in the street. None of the women were employed, and experience with formal education was limited. After completion, participants reported to have more effective contacts with the school of their children. Before most made use of an informal interpreter (husband, daughter, sister in law). Furthermore, participants reported effective contacts with people of the host country. Some participants expressed their wish and motivation to continue their education in a more formal manner. All participants make use of public transport by themselves and visit public facilities like the library.

Language proficiency

All participants aimed to achieve a better foreign language proficiency. They were very motivated to use functional oral language in everyday life and practise by role playing. Most participants reached one level of language proficiency higher than at baseline.

For more details on participation and language outcomes in the Dutch and Swedish groups:

↗ **Click to read (research article, open access):**
Learning Language that matters. A pedagogical method to support migrant mothers without formal education experience in their social integration in Western countries.

1.6.   Design principles

Building on lessons learned, several design principles for the most effective conditions and didactic methods were identified.

General principles
- ✓ Double context learning. Using the experiences and perspectives of the learners as a starting point and the context of participation in the host society as a goal.
- ✓ Learning things that matter to the learner. Taking daily life experiences and needs as a starting point for building a curriculum.
- ✓ Learning by exposure to different perspectives. Using diversity within the group, proposing challenging views, working with buddies, inviting 'experts' like a GP or a teacher, and facilitating excursions in order to broaden the horizon of participants.

✓ Voluntary participation. Participants are invited to meet each other and talk about their own life experiences and difficulties. The facilitator will structure and plan the meetings and make sure that the group's goals are identified and can be achieved and tested.

Specific principles

1- Mapping. At the start of a course and following each module, participants are invited to map the topics most pressing and stressful to them.

2- Role model facilitator. A similar-background role model facilitator shows feasible alternatives for perception and behaviour and serves as a cultural broker.

3- Homogeneous groups. Forming a group of learners with similar backgrounds is advantageous. They feel safe to experiment and accept change in the safety of the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1968).

4- Multi-sensory, semi-structured curriculum. By using many creative and playful didactic tools, the learning process is fun and leads to many experiences of success and encouragement.

5- Mother-tongue-based dual language approach. Participants are encouraged to effectively express themselves in their native language (L1). At the same time, they are constantly challenged to learn the new target language (L2) in a functional way, mainly listening and speaking

↗ **Click to read (position paper, open access):**
How do adult migrants learn to live in their new country? Redesigning civic integration education. Position paper.

2. Conditions

2.1.   Starting a group

General time recommendation for the IDEAL modules 1-5 is approximately three hours, three days a week during one year, thus approximately 300 / 350 contact hours in total.

↗ **Click to read (checklist, open access):**
http://ideal-participation.eu/site/handbook/checklist/

2.2.   Facilitator's characteristics

Language proficiency
The command of two languages on a high level of proficiency is, obviously, one of the important qualifications a bilingual facilitator needs to master. The level of proficiency has to be close to a native's, granting the ability to express yourself easily and with an appropriate vocabulary - not restricted to practical knowledge, but also including the ability to express feelings and reflections.

The bilingual facilitator is able to switch codes without problems and can express complex matters in different ways, thus moving easily back and forth on the scale of elaboration and style (e.g. academic - non-academic).

Sensitivity towards connotations and nuances, "culturally variable" uses of concepts
Being bilingual also implies being sensitive to (more or less) hidden connotations certain words might have in different languages. An example is the concept of "criticism", which can be both positive and negative (yet used with a dominant focus on the negative aspects in everyday use). If a concept cannot be translated properly with one matching word, explain the possible nuances.

Purposes of L1 and L2 in teaching settings
As mentioned above, the choice of L1 and L2 respectively depends on the purpose of each activity. Awareness rising should thus always be conducted in L1 (mother tongue of the participants), whereas communicative language exercises in L2 (language of the host country) should be done in L2 (apart from instructions, grammatical explanations and translation of vocabulary).

Sharing knowledge about the host society, role plays etcetera can be done either in L1 or L2, depending on the level of proficiency among the participants, the domain and the complexity of the matter involved.

An example: If the purpose of the role plays is to enable the participant to cope with a situation (doctor, employer, caseworker, school) it is advisable to do the role play in L2. However, if the role plays aims at practicing skills in relation to persons from the participant's own network, that is: speaking the same language, it is logical to do the role play in L1.

Determining which language to choose requires that the facilitator is aware of the different kinds of categories the IDEAL exercises represent. But the lesson plans provide for clear suggestions about which language to be used when.

Attitude and competence

A participatory approach is emphatically learner centred. Each debate takes the various views of the learners as a starting point: their comprehensive knowledge, experiences, motivations, values and attitudes (their mental framework). If necessary the facilitator adds new knowledge step by step and challenges the participants to reconsider their views. Through this reflective process awareness is raised about the roles, rights and responsibilities of the learners: the start of a process of *empowerment*. In other words: not the knowledge to be achieved (= *interactive approach*) is the starting point for capacity building through empowerment, but the existing views among the learners (= *participatory approach*).

In participatory programmes it is of crucial importance (and even salient) that all facilitators and staff have fully internalised the following qualities, for purposes of effectiveness and for being a role model. This is even more important in programmes in which issues like gender and safety are fundamental, like in IDEAL.

The facilitator assumes an inquisitive position and he/she has a strong and well developed capacity for mature critical self-reflection. This makes it possible to stimulate the thinking of the participants and other beneficiaries themselves, without any interference from personal prejudices, irrational loyalties, traumas, hang ups, fears or irritations on the side of the facilitator. The facilitator facilitates self-reflection about the own positions, qualities, problems, needs, and opportunities by the participants. During this, the facilitator makes careful observations, whereby he or she tries to allow everyone to express him or herself individually.

Moreover, it is important not to push too hard: the participants determine both the speed and the content of what they intend to tell/express. The facilitator should not be suggestive, because this would pre-empt them and take away their chance of putting

forth a thought, expression or idea. The facilitators must take the answers and expressions given seriously at all times, even if they themselves do not agree. After all, they (the facilitators) are responsible for guiding a process of awareness, development and education. The participants have their own truth and reality, a truth which is appreciated without prejudice and should be valued according to its own merits. Without this appreciation beneficiaries will fall silent. Thus, they must never experience rejection and must be shown trust and respect at all times.

This participatory pedagogical approach aims at enforcing beneficiaries' (students) self-esteem, self-confidence and the development of a positive and realistic self-concept (self-image), and thus aiming at enhancing individual empowerment and the capacity to organise one-self for future development. Furthermore this approach aims at creating an environment which allows respect for characteristic and sometimes differing cultural features. Facilitators try to accommodate and support every individual beneficiary and her specific needs and possibilities. *This support is limited: when participants suffer from serious psychiatric problems, like for instance border line, they cannot function in a group.*

Seen from this angle facilitators must have freed themselves fully from any prejudice to gender-aspects and/or from any irrational loyalties related to ethnicity, class, nationality, race or religion. Because prejudices and other irrationalities enforce *exclusion*: meaning that the other human being who does not belong to the same sex, ethnicity, race or religion could be treated with less respect. It is the great challenge of each and every facilitator to fight with zeal for a climate of *inclusion*: meaning that all human beings, irrespective their sex, race or background, should be treated with equal respect, not looking at the others *ascribed* (given) positions, but only by giving full value to his or hers individual and *achieved* qualities and competencies. Only then processes of empowerment and development can be fully fostered and facilitated.

Altogether, for being an effective IDEAL-facilitator it is necessary to have well developed communication skills in both languages, a mature capacity for critical self-reflection and a well-developed analysing capacity. Therefore it would be best to make use of facilitators with a background in higher education and some years of experience in teaching/facilitation. Ideally they also have an immigration history and a cultural background matching with the background of the participants. That would make them an almost perfect role model as well.

Sharing the cultural background of the target group
Being a bilingual teacher will very often imply that the facilitator shares the (geographical, linguistic, ethnic, etcetera) background of the participants.

A facilitator belonging to the same ethnic, religious, and linguistic group has large advantages when dealing with the target group. There will be an implicit and explicit expectation that the facilitator understands references to regional, national, religious and social customs and traditions, as well as shares puzzling, unpleasant and surprising experiences with the host country and its society, etcetera. Very important advantage is the role model effect.

The facilitator is able to understand connotations and implications connected to certain concepts. This may spare both parts - the facilitator and the participant - for the detour of long explanations, assumed that the concepts involved are conscious and explicit. Sometimes, the underlying circumstances might be implicit and unconscious. But in all cases it might be easier to picture these circumstances when the facilitator is familiar with the background of the participant: traditions will probably be well-known; the social status of demographic groups defined on the basis of gender, age, religious belief, castes or clans will be self-explaining to a person sharing the same background.

However, being a part of a (local, religious or ethnic) society can also imply being part of hierarchical relations (younger-older, female-male, clans or castes) - clashing with the roles of the facilitator and the role as group member. The facilitator can also be familiar with gossip, social and economic problems and other circumstances that may be difficult in a professional relationship. When both the facilitator and the group members know of the existence of such problems, this can disturb the professional relationship even when the facilitator does not display her awareness of these factors. Therefore it is very important that the facilitator does not have close family ties with (some of) the participants.

In some cases - when the facilitator shares traumatising and disturbing experiences such as war, escape, torture, or the violent death of family members or friends - it can be an overwhelming and painful task for the facilitator to be confronted with the group's memories and experiences during group discussions, guided fantasies, etcetera. In our experience, this situations demands professional supervision and a very conscious and explicit handling of one's own past. When the facilitator is being employed this subject should be raised. In case there is a risk that the facilitator has major traumas that are not processed this facilitator might not be able to take part as a facilitator in IDEAL.

A facilitator quality of invaluable importance, is the shared language and the role model factor, making it possible that the participant is able to speak her mind in her mother tongue, can express her thoughts and feelings in an adequate manner - as the adult she is - and that the facilitator comprehends her narration accordingly. Sharing a language is the prerequisite for the mother tongue based approach and group debates, group

conversations and guided fantasies in L1. 'Sharing a language' in this context implies also the sharing of or at least sensitivity towards different sociolects or dialects. The Arabic language ranges over a wide area of countries, comprising different regional, national and social varieties. A facilitator speaking a highly academic and sophisticated variety of Arabic may not convey a sense of commonalty, but might even highlight differences in class, education, and geography.

Therefore, to make the best of bilingualism and "biculturalism" and to tap their full potential, the bilingual and "bi-cultural" facilitator needs a self-critical attitude and an analysing capacity, as well as the ability to take one step back and reflect upon oneself from a critical distance, while applying her linguistic, social, and other competences.

2.3.   Training and supervision

It is of crucial importance that facilitators become well acquainted with the participatory approach and (if applicable) the principles of dual language teaching, and that they are going to feel at ease in implementing these integrated methods. Therefore new facilitators should be supervised on this approach.

For that purpose we provide basic training and regular supervision, in which the implementation modalities are discussed and in which experiences and challenges are shared. If more facilitators are involved, collegial consultation is organized.

Weekly evaluations forms are to be the starting point of each meeting or supervision session. These forms are part of the method. Critical and professional self-reflection and being accountable are fundamental aspects in these meetings. Furthermore, it is of essential importance to be enabled to discuss successes and hindrances in a very safe and conducive setting, allowing to express uncertainties openly, without any negative consequences.

Learning how to use the method is best done "on the job". Facilitators start an IDEAL-group, and receive two training sessions before starting, after which supervision and collegial consultation is provided.

Training: 2 x 6 hours
Independent study: online, variable
Supervision: 10 x 1 hour
Collegial consultation: online, on demand

The Empowerment Triangle can be a useful instrument for self-evaluation during intervision / supervision, by raising the following questions:

- what did I do in class (activities),
- what has been the purpose of what I did (objective),
- how did I implement the lesson and how do I know whether I have been successful (approach, assessment)?

Follow up questions: What went well - and where did I face challenges? How come - what made the difference?

> ↗ **Click to read (The Empowerment Triangle, open access):**
> **Empowerment. A definition, an indicator and a model.**

2.4.   Dual language approach

The mother tongue based approach of Themis-IDEAL gives the participant the opportunity to express herself in her mother tongue in a grown-up and nuanced manner. She does not feel herself reduced to a minor person who has to manage with an insufficient foreign language or is depending on an interpreter.

You cannot raise awareness in a language you do not master. Thus, groups with a non-existing or very weak command of the language of the host country can only participate in programmes like IDEAL when dual language principles are applied. This makes it possible to reach out to those subgroups that assumedly need the IDEAL approach most of all. Linguistic comprehension is crucial for the participant to be able to take conscious decisions with full ownership of the process.

This participatory approach involves the participant in a manner different from the traditional, formal teaching approach. It appeals to and makes use of several senses (the cognitive, visual, auditory, kinaesthetic and communicative); by doing so, it involves different types of learners and their strategies. The approach was developed in order to foster learning and development in Third World countries, thus including activities, learning strategies and memorisation techniques that meet the needs of a population with little or no formal education. This way it also supplies the needs of the target group in question. By sliding back and forth on the scale of literacy, the approach can be adjusted to the target group without interfering with the contents or the activities.

Our results show that even participants who have not profited from more formal teaching will experience progress and be able to redefine themselves as individuals capable of learning. The success boosts the motivation and encourages them to continue the struggle to strive for other changes.

Taking the mental framework of the participant as a starting point is a crucial aspect of this approach, as well as a safe and conducive learning environment. The participant is invited, through questions, debates, role plays, games, etc. to reflect on her knowledge, values, norms and beliefs, and to transform oneself to becoming an active participant in society.

The IDEAL approach also builds and maintains the important aspect of safety and trust that are needed when dealing with difficult and sensitive issues.

A limited educational background is a common feature in the target group of the project. However, "poor schooling" is a broad characteristic covering divergent subgroups of participants.

A participant with a few years of formal education in her home country and a person that has never learnt to read or write in any alphabet will have different approaches and needs in an educational setting in the host country. A person with a few years of education has gained experience with formal schooling, has acquired an understanding of the symbolic function of writing, understands basic strategies of encoding and decoding and might also have developed functional learning strategies.

Illiterates have no experience with formal education whatsoever. They have, however, alternative strategies and channels of memorisations, mostly relying on visual and auditory input. Imitating a role model, listening to instructions, memorising lists of objects or things-to-do etcetera might be the preferred way of acquiring new knowledge. Being able to read and write is not a prerequisite for being able to acquire and remember new knowledge.

However, experience shows that for a facilitator trained and educated in a formal Western educational setting it may be difficult to imagine that a true illiterate will not even *miss* literacy as a tool of memorisation. Imagine how you used to acquire your mother tongue and a broad variety of skills as a child. It probably never even occurred to you that you would need the support of written notes in order to learn. Although adults and children do acquire languages in different manner, writing is never a prerequisite. As a matter of fact, writing is a rather new invention compared to the long history of mankind full of innovation and progress.

This does not mean that literacy is not valuable. Coping with life in a modern western society is difficult without any reading or writing skills, so whenever possible it is advisable to gain at least a basic understanding of the Latin alphabet. Education is power, but education does not necessarily have to build upon full literacy. In fact, the

IDEAL project aims at educating a marginalised target group without the requirement of full literacy.

> **IDEAL makes use of the mother tongue (L1) of the participants as the language of instruction, gradually moving towards the target language (L2) of the host country.**

Imagine the volume button on a CD player where you can turn up and down the volume gradually. Use L2 the same way. But bear in mind that focusing on decoding a foreign language and focusing on the content of the message is a double challenge that should rather be avoided when the group's L2 command is limited.

Whenever embarking on a new exercise, please start with assessing the main purpose of the activity (L1 is the mother tongue, L2 the language of the host country):

1. Is it awareness rising? → L1
2. Are you giving information where details are important (communication of knowledge)? → L1
3. Do you want to explain the meaning of L2 words or the structure of L2 grammar? → L1
4. Do you want to train L2 practically and give the participants the opportunity to practice? → L2

The more the participants understand, the more you can increase the amount of L2 in the three last issues. Awareness raising exercises, however, should always be done in L1 unless the linguistic proficiency of L2 is close to a native speaker's (which very seldom is the case).

Use of written material / literacy

Basic writing and reading skills are useful. However, in the case of some participants psycho-social barriers block for the acquisition of language when the focus is too much on literacy. Some students have previously been enrolled in language courses without any success - another experience of defeat in a long line of others. Being illiterate without any formal schooling, traumatised or suffering from anxiety disorders, PTSD[4] or depression (resulting in concentration problems and learning difficulties) and perhaps advanced in years, the task of acquiring literacy might be too big to overcome. Do not underestimate the mental block that some participants experience when confronted with written material - due to prior failures, the experience of "not being able to learn" and low self-esteem and self-confidence in general.

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[4] PTSD: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Sometimes, written material also turns the focus of the group to the letters at the expense of the actual message of the exercise.

We thus preferred working with pictograms, photographs and symbols as much as possible. Imagine the use of written material as a scale you can slide back and forth on (or imagine the volume button of a CD player). If the group is capable of working with written material, use it. If you assess that too much energy is spent in the process of encoding and decoding, avoid it. In this case, produce additional picture material for the lessons - take pictures yourself, download legal photographs from the Internet, draw symbols and do the exercises orally as much as you can. But make sure that the pictures selected relate to the mind frame of the participants; thus no blond blue eyed women, if not functional for the issue at stake.

Given the description of the target group and the challenges this group usually struggles with, the main goal of the IDEAL project is a psycho-social development for active participation and empowerment, the acquisition of basic linguistic tools (L2) as well as knowledge about the host society. The written L2 command (literacy) must be considered secondary to these goals.

2.5.   Use of materials

3. Materials

3.1. Semi-structured curriculum

A target group whose starting point is lower than other comparable groups will probably need more time in order to accomplish the same goals. In this case it is advisable to extend the lesson plans and spend more time on each lesson. Make sure to give the participants time to "digest" the input and to grasp the challenge. Never push the participants or rush them through the curriculum. Bear in mind that conservatism has a function - it grants safety and stability to persons who feel alienated in their (host) society and have not yet found their own position in it. Also see next chapter on participatory education.

Pushing the participants, you run the risk of achieving the opposite of the desired effect: when confronted with a threat to the familiar perception of the world without yet having been able to identify a new, more appealing one, clinging to the existing identity and mind frame will be the most probable reaction. Besides, getting used to new ideas takes time. Give people the time to accept new thoughts and ideas.

3.2. Modules

In order to support facilitators, modules have been developed on issues which appear to be most relevant for non-western migrant female participants.
Materials should always be developed and adjusted according to the needs of the learning group.

The content and aims of the IDEAL Modules

Module	Promoting communication	Result*
Getting acquainted	Within the group of learners	Safe and conducive learning conditions; building trust
Family communication	With family and friends	Awareness of distressing effects of gossip; trust within the group
Health	With health care professionals	Awareness on preventive and curative health issues; enhanced body esteem
Caring for myself	With partner and family	Self-esteem and self-confidence, effective communication and dealing with conflict; improved social skills
Parenting	With children and teachers/carers	Awareness of attitudes towards childrearing; effective parenting communication skills

Note. * Further goals of IDEAL, integrated in the modules, are language acquisition and participation in society.

The lesson plans of each module provide for extensive instructions.

3.3. Materials

In IDEAL, several materials have been developed to support the organizations and facilitators. But bear in mind, that these materials should not serve as a fixed curriculum. Therefore, the lesson plans and handouts are only available (without cost) after training.

Activities may be altered, lengthened, shortened, added or skipped according to the needs of the learning group.

Five modules, including extensive instructions (lesson plans):

1. Getting acquainted
2. Gossip
3. Health
4. Fending for yourself
5. Parenting

4. Objectives for each module
5. Learner handouts
6. Tests for Modules 3, 4 and 5
7. Pictograms and the Themis-IDEAL Tree
8. Handbook Themis-IDEAL
9. Checklist for starting IDEAL groups

In Dutch more modules (toeleiding naar het Inburgeringsexamen) are available, see www.themis-participatie.nl

1.4. The importance of evaluation

Speaking your mind and expressing your opinion is an important component of the development process. Moreover, evaluation is an integrated part of the Northern European (working) culture - whenever you attend a course or have a meeting, the activity will most probably be concluded by an evaluation.

However, participants with a low educational background (probably within an authoritarian framework) and a low self-esteem, not being used to somebody actually asking for their opinion, will have difficulties in expressing criticism.

Give the participants time to get accustomed to evaluating.

Start with an anonymous evaluation. Draw a happy and an unhappy smiley on the whiteboard. Say goodbye to the participants and make sure you keep yourself busy with some other task (with your back to the whiteboard). In the meantime, let the participants walk past the whiteboard and tick off the smiley they find adequate. This does not require any public statement, but is a first step towards evaluation.

From lesson 01.04 onwards, the participants will work with small cards containing L2 expressions as "good", "not good/bad, "normal". These can be used during evaluations. The card can simply be shown to the class, and one single sentence in the mother tongue, motivating the choice of card, can be added.

Alternatively, print and laminate two big smileys (happy and unhappy). Pass them on to the participants. When holding the happy smiley, the participant has to mention one good thing in her mother tongue. Repeat the procedure with the unhappy smiley.

Start adding an extra sentence from module 01.04 or 01.05: Is there anything you would have preferred more of?

NB: Evaluations should always be done in L1 (apart from maybe saying "good", "not good/bad" or "normal" in L2). Take evaluation seriously and make sure there is time enough for it at the end of each day.

Appendix 1 - On participatory education

The basic philosophy of Themis-IDEAL, as seen from a methodological perspective, is fuelled by Paulo Freire. Paulo Freire (Recife, Brazil: 1921 – São Paulo, Brazil: 1997) is the inventor of participatory approaches in adult education. He said it outspokenly: "(...) *education is cultural action for freedom and therefore an act of knowing and not of memorisation. This act can never be accounted for in its complete totality by a mechanistic theory, for such a theory does not perceive education in general and adult literacy in particular as an act of knowing*". What is required is "knowing": an insight into the causes of the status quo, linked with an insight into one's own wishes and needs. Knowing that the causes are cultural, because they are determined by people and that culture is therefore changeable. This insight can lead to the transformation of one's own environment, of the existing cultural context. Change for the benefit of one's own expression, for the benefit of liberation from subordination and the apparent adjustment connected to it. The knowing (wo-) man has become aware of his / her influence.

Freire: *"Alienated man is a nostalgic man, never truly committed to his world. To appear to be rather than to be is one of his alienated wishes"*. Meaning that the alienated man or woman seemingly adjusts, but is not truly an intrinsic partner in his own environment and is therefore not in a position to change that environment, i.e. to transform. What is required in knowing and understanding, an insight into the causes of the status quo, linked with an insight into one's own wishes and needs: knowing and understanding that the causes are cultural, because they are determined by people and that culture is therefore changeable. This insight can lead to the transformation of one's own environment, of the existing cultural context. Change for the benefit of one's own expression, for the benefit of liberation from subordination and the apparent adjustment connected to it. The knowing man or woman has become aware of his influence and possibilities, and the need for transformation in order to create room for this.

In Freire's view, education is *"cultural action for freedom"*. This places an important task upon the shoulders of those who are initially responsible for learning processes: the teachers / facilitators. This is a task which also requires insight into their motivation, in addition to insight into how to present this type of education. This is quite demanding. The latter point, however, has received much attention from educationalists such as Freire. In any case, one cannot speak of good education in Freirian terms, if and when

merely mechanical transfer of knowledge is taking place ("memorisation", "a mechanistic theory"; see above). Knowledge learned by heart is necessary, but should not be left at that.

In many non-western countries, but increasingly also in metropolitan areas of Northern industrialised countries, an ever increasing group of powerless and marginalised people is being formed. They have no access to a better future. Unacknowledged feelings of inferiority bring them to translate their feelings of powerlessness and anger into forms of violence. This could colour the future of many more illiterate or barely educated people, as long as no sustainable measures are taken with and for them, offering a way out of this dead-end street. Following Freire here, illiterates and barely educated people are considered people who do not understand the power of the word. They often cannot read or write, but even if they could (to some extent), they would not be sufficiently capable of using that skill in a way that would be recognised by the centre. Thus, they would not have the positive self-esteem and self-confidence they need to organise themselves in order to improve their position. Purpose should be the ability to truly choose, to actually live, to be able to meet the surrounding world with insight and self-confidence.

Reading is a tool with which you can learn from others, learn about developments in society. Writing is a tool with which you can react, to let others know that you exists with your own priorities and perspectives. Acquiring these tools, however, does not teach you how you can react adequately - adequately, in terms of your own existence and assertiveness. In order to be able to anticipate adequately, it is necessary that you know and understand your own position and possibilities in relation to your environment. An environment has various layers: domestic and outside, with different levels and possibilities of influence. That is why other tools, besides reading and writing, are essential in order to escape from the marginal position of an illiterate: tools that assist in building up self-confidence through insight into the power of the word and tools that contribute to building up a reasonable existence in an ever changing environment. Collectively, these tools provide one with the opportunity to acquire basic skills, in order to become a functional part of the surrounding world. Learning within participatory education is a dynamic process; a process which does not stand on its own, but rather is part of the surrounding world and the dynamism that goes with it, from the word go. Participatory education can provide the participant with the opportunity to acquire skills

that will make him or her part of society, a participant who is capable of choosing and who can function in a dynamic environment.[5]

The starting point of the IDEAL modules and successive lessons is the existing mental framework of the participants. This includes the identification of their needs and possibilities, and the development of safe tools for transformation to create room for these. In order to fit to the mental framework of the participants, and to their needs and possibilities, IDEAL has used comprehensive modules on the basis of existing experiences in participatory (Freirian) education: the already existing Themis method.

Participatory education provides people with a toolbox for constructing one's own personal education map (ownership!): a box full of comprehensive tools necessary for acquiring new skills; skills to develop strategies and power in order to escape from the periphery, providing people with the opportunity to acquire 'empowerment'. The tool box offers people the opportunity to liberate themselves from their often deteriorated living conditions (at least socially) and a prospect of acquiring the role of an active participant in his or her own economic, social, political and cultural environment, instead of being a spectator. Through a process of well guided and safe awareness rising, the mental framework is challenged and stretched by adding small bits of information, for opening new horizons and thus options for the participants for transforming their environment.

Gender sensitivity and striving towards gender equity is also at the backbone of IDEAL. At the start participants show a large lack of understanding of gender equality and a lack of skills as how to adjust traditional ways of parenting to gender balanced societies. Also a lack of understanding of their roles, as of how to bring their resources to bear in society is imminent. Through role plays tools for effective communication are trained. These role plays are to a large extent inspired by approaches developed in the seventies of last century, for female emancipation purposes, resulting in significant increases on self-confidence and self-esteem by the participants. Ideally they will report more peace at home and more tranquillity/less psycho-somatic complaints, due to improved communication skills.

Basic characteristics of the Themis-IDEAL participatory approach are the following:
- Participatory: themes are connected to the mental world of the participants (Paulo Freire!)

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[5] Rood, Rogier van 't: "Empowerment through basic education, a foundation for development", Ceso/Nuffic, The Hague: 1997 (published with support from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs). This text refers to the ideas of Paulo Freire as described in his publication "Cultural action for Freedom" (1974).

- Safe: self-help among participants, self-developed rules, facilitator as a role model (well educated facilitator has a comparable background), women only
- Focus on achieving empowerment: being able to take your life in your own hands
- Robust: challenging static views and beliefs, in a safe and respectful manner
- Theory and practice are connected, through debates, games, guided fantasies and role plays
- Focus on enhancing participation
- Semi-concentric structure for better understanding (subjects are repeated under differing conditions)
- Pictograms: imagination and identification + memorisation
- First: strengthening of self-esteem, self-confidence , communication skills and self-reflection
- Afterwards: knowledge and understanding of the host society and active participation in this society
- Language skills through themes: language is a means and not a goal in itself and language acquisition is connected to the theme at stake
- Empowerment is the final goal: self-organisation, daring to choose and to act.

Appendix 2 - Empowerment: a definition and an indicator

> *Empowerment is the capacity of people*
> *to direct and control their own lives and resources:*
> *the ability to take their lives into their own hands.*

Ann Hope and Sally Timmel (1984, rev.ed. 1995) are South African citizens who developed a triangle for the identification of problems or challenges (its aspects are: basic needs, values and beliefs, community decisions). Their triangle can be used as a starting point for further developing the concept of empowerment. Within this context the use of the concept of 'transformation' is crucial. Empowerment entails more than just adequate adjustment. It entails the transformation of those involved and their society.

Redistribution of power is central to this emancipation (see also Paulo Freire, from whom this concept of transformation has been taken). This redistribution must do justice to the opportunities and needs of all members of society, but must take place in such a way that it does not happen at the expense of others. Everyone's freedom is limited the moment that freedom pushes someone else aside. Thus, freedom must be negotiable. This, however, requires that each partner in negotiations possesses the knowledge, skills and behaviour necessary to bring these negotiations to a satisfactory conclusion.

In order to transform their environment and to solve problems or face challenges, people need to organise themselves (alone and/or together with others). In this view *self-organisation* is an important indicator of empowerment: if and when people are capable of organising themselves in order to work towards self-identified goals and objectives, and when they are also capable of mobilising the necessary physical and/or human resources, they have started their own empowerment process.

This capacity includes necessary mental achievements, like self-respect, self-esteem, self-confidence and effective self-expression. In this view, fruitful self-organisation is to be implemented in the economic, the cultural, the political, the social and the physical dimensions of life.

Indicator for empowerment: *Self-organisation in a caring, a responsible and a safe way*

is an indicator for empowerment.

By self-organisation we mean the following:

1. Identification of a task (problem/challenge);
2. Assessment of goals/objectives;
3. Development of a strategy;
4. Mobilisation of resources (human, physical and financial);
5. Implementation of the strategy;
6. Reflection on results (monitoring and evaluation): be accountable, learn and make improvements.

Empowerment implies (among other issues) a capacity for self-reflection and accountability. It is necessary therefore to support capacity building of stakeholders through the achievement of empowerment (and ownership). Today it does not need any further proof to conclude that the most effective way of achieving empowerment is by using participatory approaches.

This pedagogical approach is emphatically learner centred, aiming at enforcing learners' self-esteem, self-confidence, self-expression skills and the development of a positive and realistic self-concept (self-image), and thus aiming at enhancing (individual) empowerment and the capacity to organise one-self for future tasks. Furthermore this approach aims at creating an environment which allows respect for characteristic and sometimes differing cultural features. Facilitators try to accommodate and support every individual learner and its specific needs and possibilities. Most participatory methods are based on the ideas of Paulo Freire and have been developed further.

Ownership, Empowerment and Social Accountability
In democratic societies citizens should be enabled to build and strengthen their capacities (with the assistance of civil society organisations who work with the people on grass root levels) and provide them with all resources necessary (ownership).

There is no ownership without empowerment. This implies that there can be ownership only, if people have achieved the life skills of care, responsibility and safety in a comprehensive manner: they understand what to do, the purpose of their task(s), and how to implement their activities. If one or more of these aspects are missing, people (and organisations!) did not achieve ownership over their tasks yet. As a result the outcomes or results of their activities will be disappointing, thus not effective.

For accountability on its turn, it is of utmost importance that people achieve the skills and competences, but also the necessary resources, to execute their legal rights and

responsibilities in an effective manner, enabling them to organise their own lives and resources, of course including education related affairs. In other words: there is no ownership without empowerment, and there is no effective social accountability without ownership.

References:
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Rood, Rogier van 't, in: Strengthening of Service Delivery through enhanced *Social Accountability* and *School Governance* in Namibia – HTSPE / European Commission: London, 2008 (pp. 11-12).

Schrijvers, Joke (1985): *Mothers for life: motherhood and marginalisation in the North central Province of Sri Lanka*, Eburon, Delft

Appendix 3 - Follow-up activities after IDEAL

For literacy lessons and follow up activities the following could be considered:

On literacy: those being illiterate could be offered extra literacy classes from approximately halfway Module 4 onwards. At that stage they might quite well have identified their need for becoming literate. Their necessary self-confidence is probably enough developed then as well. These literacy classes preferably should be linked content wise to issues raised during implementing the IDEAL-modules.

However, keep in mind that prior attempts to acquire literacy for a considerable number of participants will be connected to experiences of failure and defeat. Be careful when assessing the need or wish uttered by the group. This wish is, as experience shows, very often rooted in the prestige formal learning possesses, but it might not always be realistic. Weigh the risk of new defeats against the obvious advantages of literacy, when deciding whether to establish literacy workshops.

On follow up activities: at completion of Module 5 most of the participants might quite well like it to continue classes. Possible options are the following:
1. Continuation in a self-guided self-help group, facilities and initial support to be made available as long as necessary;
2. Follow up integration lessons on history (incl. the EU), geography, norms and values, democracy and the political system (rights and duties, constitution), making use of institutions, living with neighbours, etc. (see for instance the Dutch Themis-follow up modules on these issues)[6];
3. Preparation lessons for voluntary activities, to be followed by proposing and making available well guided volunteer positions;
4. Follow up formal education for those who are well-enough equipped, for acquiring minimal labour market competences.

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[6] Modules on these subjects are available in Dutch, developed by Themis.

Appendix 4 - CEFR language levels

The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (CEFR) by the Council of Europe, is a guideline to describe achievements of learners of foreign languages across Europe and, increasingly, in other countries. Its main aim is to provide a method of learning, teaching and assessing which applies to all languages in Europe. A European Union Council Resolution (2001) recommended using the CEFR to set up systems of validation of language ability. The six reference levels (see below) are becoming widely accepted as the European standard for grading an individual's language proficiency. The CEFR describes what a learner is supposed to be able to do in reading, listening, speaking and writing at each level (Wikipedia).

Council of Europe levels (CEFR)	Description
C2 **Mastery**	The capacity to deal with material which is academic or cognitively demanding and to use language to good effect at a level of performance which may in certain respects be more advanced than that of an average native speaker. Example: *CAN scan texts for relevant information, and grasp main topic of text, reading almost as quickly as a native speaker.*
C1 **Effective Operational Proficiency**	The ability to communicate with the emphasis on how well it is done, in terms of being appropriate, sensitive and with the capacity to deal with unfamiliar topics. Example: *CAN deal with hostile questioning confidently. CAN get and hold onto his/her turn to speak.*
B2 **Vantage**	The capacity to achieve most goals and express oneself on a range of topics. Example: *CAN show visitors around and give a detailed description of a place.*
B1 **Threshold**	The ability to express oneself in a limited way in familiar situations and to deal in a general way with non routine information. Example: *CAN ask to open an account at a bank, provided that the procedure is straightforward.*
A2 **Way stage**	An ability to deal with simple, straightforward information and begin to express oneself in familiar contexts. Example: *CAN take part in a routine conversation on simple predictable topics.*
A1 **Breakthrough**	A basic ability to communicate and exchange information in a simple way. Example: *CAN ask simple questions about a menu and understand simple answers.*

For IDEAL the focus is on achievements on the first two levels:

A2	Can interact with reasonable ease in structured situations and short conversations, provided the other person helps if necessary. Can manage simple, routine exchanges without undue effort; can ask and answer questions and exchange ideas and information on familiar topics in predictable everyday situations.
	Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters to do with work and free time. Can handle very short social exchanges but is rarely able to understand enough to keep conversation going of his/her own accord.
A1	Can interact in a simple way but communication is totally dependent on repetition at a slower rate of speech, rephrasing and repair. Can ask and answer simple questions, initiate and respond to simple statements in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.

Appendix 5 - Language tests

A1, A2 levels: listening

Name of participant: _____

Date of test: _____

Part 1: Interview	
Question	**Answer given by participant**
How are you today?	
What is your first name?	
What is your surname?	
How old are you?	
Where do you come from?	
Which language(s) do you speak?	
Are you married?	
Do you have children?	
How long have you been in (*name of host country*)?	
Where do you live?	

What is your telephone number?	

Part 2: Ask 10 questions about a standardised picture

Is the participant able to ask yes/no-questions?

    a. Correct   Yes ☐ No ☐

    b. Pragmatically functioning   Yes ☐ No ☐

Is the participant able to ask special questions (wh-questions)?

    a. Correct   Yes ☐ No ☐

    b. Pragmatically functioning   Yes ☐ No ☐

Does the participant know relevant vocabulary to ask questions?   Yes ☐ No ☐

Part 3: Description of a picture (free L2 production)

Is the participant able to describe the picture (situation, persons, objects) in simple phrases and with basic vocabulary?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Remarks:
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Part 4: Sociolinguistic competences

(Assessment by tester)

Is the participant able to:

a. Greet and introduce herself in accordance with national practices?

Yes ☐ No ☐

b. Say good-bye in accordance with national practices?

Yes ☐ No ☐

c. Able to express apologies, thanks etc. (if relevant) in accordance with national practices?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Name of participant: _____
Date of test: _____

Part 1: Interview

Question	Answer given by participant
How are you today?	
What is your name?	
Where do you come from?	
Which language(s) do you speak?	
What is your occupation here in (host country)?	
Did you go to school in your home country?	
Did you like it? + Why did you like it/dislike it?	
Do you have any work experience?	
What do you usually do in your leisure time?	

What is your date of birth?	
What is your telephone number?	

Part 2: Giving simple instructions

Can you tell me how you prepare tea (or coffee)?

Part 3: Dialogue – consensus finding

Consensus finding/making suggestions, and discussion.

Task: The tester and the participant want to do a leisure activity together. The participant starts the conversation and makes a suggestion.

Part 4: Monologue (free L2 production)

Task: Where do you live? Tell me a little about the area where you live, your housing situation etc.

Alternatively a presentation of own person (family, interests, leisure time, daily routines – e.g. morning, evening, and background: education/schooling, work, home town)
Duration: 1-2 min.

Assessment:

Is the participant able to talk about the topic in a basic language with simple phrases?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Is the participant's basic vocabulary sufficient?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Remarks: NB - *The participant uses some simple structures correctly, but still systematically makes basic mistakes. Nevertheless, it is usually clear what she is trying to say. False starts, pauses, reformulations are still evident at this level. The foreign accent is notable.*

_____
_____
_____
_____

Part 4: Sociolinguistic competences

(Assessment by tester)

Is the participant able to:

a. Greet politely and introduce herself in accordance with national practices?

Yes ☐ No ☐

b. Say good-bye in accordance with national practices?

Yes ☐ No ☐

c. Express apologies, thanks etc. (if relevant) in accordance with national practices?

Yes ☐ No ☐

d. Initiate, maintain and close a simple conversation?

Yes ☐ No ☐

e. Ask for clarification, repetition or reformulation?

Yes ☐ No ☐

f. Express that she is unable to follow (if relevant)?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Tuesday
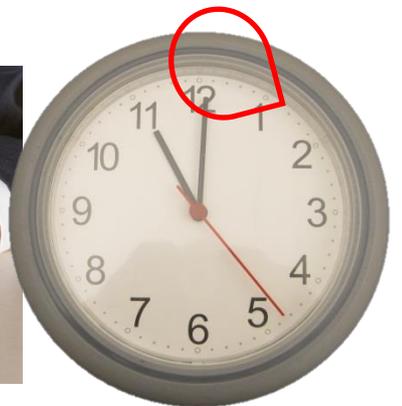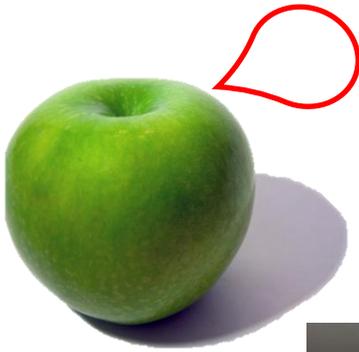
Instructions

The assessor (tester) reads the text out slowly (without mentioning the numbers). Hereafter, the examinee receives the print above. The examinant reads the text out once more, with the examinee looking at the pictures.

When the examinant reads the text for the third time, the numbers are added. The examinee writes the correct number into the corresponding bulb.

Alternatively (if the examinee is illiterate), she points at the corresponding pictures when the sentences and numbers are read out. The examinant checks whether the answers are right.

Development of IDEAL and acknowledgements

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For more information about the project and the materials, please visit the IDEAL-homepage: www.ideal-participation.eu.