

Introduction

1. Goals and structure of this volume

The objectives of the present volume are the same as those of the foundations handbook and the didactic suggestions in booklets 1–4: supporting the HLT instructors in shaping a classroom experience that is current and attractive and methodologically and didactically as compatible as possible with regular classroom education in the immigration country.

However, the structure and the content concept of the volume “Teaching learning strategies and techniques in HLT” differs from volumes 1–4. Whereas the suggestions and teaching proposals there were primarily intended for the instructors, volume 5 is mainly comprised of teaching materials for students from the 4th or 5th grade on. The materials would need to be tweaked and simplified to be age-appropriate for the younger students.

Part I

Part I is comprised of 15 pages (M1–15) with a selection of concrete, easily understandable instructions for learning strategies and techniques. They concern the topics of practicing in general, using study tools, reading comprehension, writing, as well as test preparation and preparing for presentations. These pages are conceived as master copies and will be distributed to the students as copies. There is no particular sequential order, which allows the choice of materials to better support the current theme or kind of learning situation. For each learning technique, i.e., materials M1–15, there are recommendations for didactical implementation. These can be found on the introduction pages of the five mentioned theme areas and offer the instructors hints and suggestions for the specific tasks. (It should be noted that, naturally, the workbooks 1–4 already point out hints for learning strategies, see for example the writing strategies in volume 1. The prompts there, however, are directed at the instructors, whereas volume 5 offers materials that are directly intended for the students.

Part II

Part II contains a training program aimed at the prerequisites for successful learning and student success. The focus of this program – which is further described in chapter 4 below – is on the “unwritten rules” and their importance, particularly since complying with rules can be crucial or decisive for student success in the middle and northern European immigration countries. If we succeed in acquainting HLT students with these rules and work techniques and how they themselves can apply and use them, it would be an important step toward equal opportunity.

Initial introduction

Preceding the two practice parts is an introduction to the learning techniques and strategies in general (chapter 2), suggestions about the role of HLT in mediating these techniques (chapter 3), and suggestions for working with the referenced training program in Part II (chapter 4).

Regarding the origin of ideas

The current volume is closely oriented to, in part verbatim, the following titles by the same author and publisher: Basil Schader (2012, 2013): *Mein schlaues Lernheft*. Zürich, Orell Füssli. (My clever textbook). The “clever textbook” has not only proven its worth in Switzerland, it was also published in two Albanian editions (Peja, 2012; Lausanne, 2013). The author’s assembled learning techniques in those issues were partially shortened or summarized for inclusion in the present publication; the training program component was wholly integrated, however. The introduction, as well as the didactic suggestions and parts of the graphic design are totally new.

2. About the importance of learning strategies and techniques

What becomes immediately apparent in looking through current teaching materials – particularly language texts from the middle and northern European immigration countries – is that in contrast to earlier schoolbooks, they contain a great number of instructions, tips and techniques for individual learning. These suggestions directly address the students and support them with the following questions:

- ▶ How do you solve learning problems when reading?
- ▶ How do you orient yourselves in reference works and on the internet?
- ▶ How do you recognize what is important in reading a text?
- ▶ How do you plan the structure of a text or a presentation?
- ▶ How do you provide good feedback in a conversation?
- ▶ How can you identify to which part of speech a word belongs?

Hints, techniques or strategies of this kind were hardly ever taught in previous textbooks. The focus then was the mediation of factual knowledge or general expertise – e.g. in grammar – the training of this technical expertise through reproductive exercises. In many countries and cultures, this is still more or less the case today. This is also reflected in the fact that in those countries and languages there are few, if any publications devoted to learning techniques and strategies, whereas those in the central and northern European countries fill entire bookshelves.

The reasons for these differences are the developments in and focal points on the new pedagogy, didactics and methodology in the immigration countries. These are described in detail in Part II of the handbook and workbook “Foundations and backgrounds” (see chapters 3–6). To mention just a few of the keywords, the higher emphasis on autonomous learning vs guided learning, the new understanding of the role of the instructor as learning coach, the orientation of classroom instruction not primarily on the substance of the program, but on the learners themselves and on developing and expanding their competences. Moreover, the recognition that factual knowledge becomes quickly obsolete in our fast-paced and highly mediatised world, whereby it becomes increasingly important to have acquired the techniques and strategies for information gathering and know-how to help oneself. (Example: those who only learned a bunch of facts in natural science or history are less competent than those who know how to acquire and process new information from the internet or from reference works, and to process and implement that information into a good presentation, for instance.)

As a consequence, the mediation of strategic knowledge (strategies for using information, learning and problem solving strategies) versus the mediation of pure factual knowledge occupies a significantly broader space in the more recent middle and northern European teaching traditions. This is reflected in classroom teaching and in the teaching materials, as well as in the fact that we are devoting an entire volume to the topic of learning strategies and techniques in the series “Materials for heritage language teaching”.

3. The role of HLT in mediating learning strategies

Students who attend HLT classes are primarily educationally socialized in the immigration country where they receive the major part of their education. However, in HLT they are also exposed to the pedagogical traditions of their country of origin. These two traditions differ more or less widely, depending on the age, the personality, the place of training and the origin of the instructor. This may become an issue for the students if they are used to expanded learning and teaching methods or forms of autonomous learning from their regular classroom education, whereas HLT classes are conducted with a more teacher-centered approach. It would undoubtedly be optimal in terms of efficient and sustained learning if there were as few rifts as possible between HLT and regular mainstream education. The aim of the series “Materials for heritage language teaching” is to bridge them and to promote precisely the kind of cross-linking described in the foreword above.

The mediation of training and learning strategies and techniques is an area in which HLT and regular classroom instruction can collaborate and complement each other in a fruitful and mutually beneficial manner. On the one hand, HLT students have acquired from regular classroom instruction already a series of techniques and strategies which naturally can be used and practised in HLT as well. On the other hand, HLT can introduce and test learning strategies which can also be useful to the students in their mainstream education classes. The reason for this particularly effective cooperation in the area of learning strategies is that they are largely language-independent or rather can work across languages: those who have mastered the technique of orienting themselves in Turkish dictionaries and encyclopedias can transfer this easily to the reference works in the language of the school; those who know how to organize their work in preparation for a test or a presentation, can use this competence for tests and presentations in all kinds of possible languages.

Another aspect of considerable importance for the role of HLT in mediating learning strategies, techniques and applying them remains to be mentioned: many “local” children and adolescents in the immigration countries (particularly those from educated families) have already acquired certain learning techniques and work strategies. This foundation is lacking for many children and youths whose parents and grandparents emigrated from countries with a different learning culture. Affected are primarily the students from educationally rather disadvantaged families who do not have a corresponding background. They are in particular need of support, and HLT can help them especially well in that it meets them in their primary language and in a less stressful area.