

## 1. Violeta Brakus: what kinds of problems are faced by HLT instructors; how do I deal with these problems myself?

Violeta Brakus hails from Serbia. She teaches in French-speaking Switzerland (Lausanne, Crissier, Clarens, Leysin, Neuchâtel) in the HLT Serbian program.

Problems that confront HLT teachers arise with respect to different things. I am going to name a few especially important problem areas.

In the teacher training courses of the countries of origin (e. g. in the Balkans) there are no course offerings that would prepare teachers for «extraterritorial» work (e. g. a master program that would offer special socio-cultural and methodological-didactic qualifications) for teachers. Therefore, HLT instructors are mostly faced with an instructional type of HLT which is unknown to them until they arrive in the immigration country. In light of the changed organizational conditions of this type of teaching and a student body to whom the mother -tongue must be taught almost as a foreign language, the HLT instructors themselves inevitably become students and must improvise, become innovative, engage in professional development and orient themselves in the new cultural and pedagogical-didactic context – and all this parallel to their ongoing work!

The teaching materials, books, workbooks and sheets, as well as the pedagogical literature from the home country are based on a monolingual and monocultural approach. For the migrant children who are born in the new country, they are mostly inadequate, too voluminous, linguistically too difficult, and hardly applicable in practice because they are not based on a bilingual or multilingual approach. There is a lack of differentiated worksheets, designed for bilingual or multilingual use. It would be desirable to have teaching materials, based on the principles of bilingual methodology, in conjunction with workbooks and content dealing with the history, civilization, music and art of the country of origin.

The time schedule for HLT classes (in Switzerland) is demotivating. Following regular classroom instruction – and frequently even after sports or other activities – the HLT classes come last, sometime between 5pm and 8 pm. If the students attend at all, it is due to parental pressure rather than of their own volition, particularly on the secondary level. The strong heterogeneity of the classes (in terms of age, linguistic resources, etc.) as well as the discontinuity of the instruction (only two hours per week) constitutes a major challenge for the

instructors and makes planning more difficult. Example: in the same teaching group (class), I have students from all age levels, from pre-school to the secondary level. As instructor, I practically teach permanently on the run “on roller skates” between the various age- and competency levels. Since I also teach in different schools and communities, I am almost permanently “on the rails”, quasi as eternal traveller.

All these problems contribute to the fact that the traditional native language education program is often weakened and drained. For a student generation that grows up in a multilingual environment and with multicultural resources, it is not adequate content-wise (and through its detachment from regular classroom instruction and time tables) it is also organizationally unattractive.

For me as a practitioner, it would be necessary that countries of origin and host countries cooperate much better. They should create common strategies to create an institution that concerns itself with the preservation of the linguistic and cultural identity of the migration children. In a common effort from experts and practitioners from both countries, they should achieve organizational improvements and methodological adjustments of existing curricula and creation of corresponding teaching materials. There is a great need for organizational reforms of the current instructional model, a more dynamic conception of the work and the application of modern teaching and media. Aside from the periodic and constant faculty development in the country of origin as well as the immigration country, it is necessary to initiate common educational projects, such as research projects and expert seminars. There are already certain instances of cooperation, but mostly only as pilot projects and in insufficient form or only short-term duration.

Following the preparation in the country of origin, I myself have repeatedly discovered “the secrets” of native language education during my work, have learned throughout and attended seminars and spoken in the country of origin and in Switzerland about the problems of HLT instruction. I have continued to study, have created bilingual worksheets and materials, and I have participated in pilot projects between HLT and Swiss schools. In order for HLT to sustainably increase its quality, a complete mobilization of teachers and a cooperation of all concerned with this framework is necessary. This would include a stronger presence of HLT and its problems and opportunities in the media, as well as in the public, pedagogical and school-related discourse.

## 2. Yergahem Belay: Three big challenges

Yergahem Belay is from Ethiopia. She has been living in London since 1995, where she has taught HLT in the Tigrinya language since 2001.

I began in 2002 as instructor for the Ethiopian HLT. I was confronted with the following main issues and major problem areas already in the first three weeks:

How do I address the expectations of different groups (students, parents, teachers from the state school system)? To begin at all with instruction, we had to have conversations with the students, divide them into three groups, and communicate the assignments to the parents. This was difficult, as dividing the students according to age groups made little sense: many students (even younger ones) were quite proficient in Eritrean from speaking it in the home, others (even older ones) not at all. We therefore had to create age-independent groups according to the students' competence in their first language – which again caused other problems.

How did I proceed in terms of methodology and didactics? In light of the great heterogeneity of the groups in terms of age, and their age-related learning style, I had to become very creative in order to retain the interest of the students. I soon realized that a highly interactive approach, which activated the students, best served our needs.

How did I deal with the challenges concerning the textbooks and materials? I had no materials available for teaching abroad from the Ethiopian education authorities. To develop a program alone and without other means that consider and overcome the intercultural barriers, was very challenging indeed. In the beginning, I depended on Ethiopian textbooks. As I got to know my students and their backgrounds, I soon realized that an appropriate text for Ethiopia was not a good fit for the situation in England. Something new was needed, something with the relationship between the cultures of Ethiopia and England as a theme. Consequently, I created and continue to create my own materials with the topic "Ethiopian traditions and cultures", in order to sensitize the students for questions about their cultural identity and values. This work is highly work-intensive as the prevalent top-down approach to education in Ethiopia does not work in England and because the content of many existing texts is unsuitable for our circumstances, I was often frustrated. I am glad that I was able to avail myself of and rely on the internet as a source for materials.

## 3. Hyrije Sheqiri: My currently most pressing problem

Hyrije Sheqiri hails from Kosovo/Kosova. She has been living in Sweden since 1995, where she has taught in Ronneby, Karlskrona, and is responsible for the Albanian HLT in Karlshamn since 2007. The following text is the conclusion of her report in chapter 1 B.2.

The currently most pressing problem for myself – and most likely for many of my colleagues as well – is the participation of as many students as possible in native language education programs. HLT fulfills a critical function for the acquisition of skills as well as student success in Swedish schools, as borne out without a doubt by pedagogical research. I very much hope that we will overcome this hurdle with increased engagement and a greater awareness on the part of the parents. The participation of the greatest possible number of Albanian students in the Albanian HLT, which is offered as integrated subject into the Swedish school system, depends almost exclusively on the parents. Because of their active interest in their children's learning their mother tongue and with this foundation, the students learn more easily in other subjects while, at the same time, they strengthen their bilingual and bicultural identity. We are dealing here with a two-fold benefit in terms of language and cultural awareness: as individuals the students expand their personal competences and values. This way, they enrich not only themselves as well as their families, and become more competent. This benefits society and the country in which they live, as well as their country of origin itself.

I am convinced that this concern of mine (which is also shared by many other HLT instructors) can with the engagement and support of the parents be solved.

## 4. Three biographies of HLT students

### Gulcan (girl, 8 years), lives in England (Report of her teacher Zuleyha Toprak, London)

Gulcan was born in 2006 in London. Both parents are Turkish. She has an older sister. Their father left the family when Gulcan was five years old. This was particularly hard for her, as she had a good relationship with her father. Her mother is a young woman with various physical and mental disabilities. Although she has lived in England for over ten years, she does not speak English. The mother has no relatives in England. The family of the father live here; however, they do not support Gulcan or her sister.

Gulcan's mother tries to take her daughters to Turkey during summer vacations, so that they receive some love and support from her family there. Gulcan likes these holidays with her grandparents because she may play outside there as long as she wants. The grandparents pay for their flights to Turkey; other vacations are not possible for financial reasons.

Gulcan was taken to the HLT by her mother, because the child was flagged in the regular classes as needing special support. According to the mother, she was harassed – due to her being overweight and a slower learner than the others. She has only a few friends in the state school, but she gets along very well with a few children in the HLT classes.

Her hobbies are computer games, television and eating. She is crazy about the "Littlest Pet Shop Toys" with which she could play for hours. While caring for them lovingly for hours, she gives a relaxed impression.

### Aylin (a 10 year old girl), lives in Germany

My name is Aylin. I'm 10 years old. At the moment, I live with my family in Senden, which is a small city near Münster in the western part of Germany. My hobbies are music and dancing as well as reading. Furthermore, I love to go to the movies. I spend my spare time with my girlfriends who live in the neighborhood. My friends are mostly German and Kurdish. In addition, I have a few friends from Turkey, and from Russia, Poland, Bosnia, etc.

My parents are from southeastern Anatolia, in the Kurdish area of Turkey. They are part of the Kurdish ethnic group. They lived in a small village there, called Bahcin. The village still exists, it is near the city of Mardin. We belong to the Yazidi religious community. I have four sisters and was reared in a large family, which I appreciate very much. As sisters we always stick together. My family has been living in Germany for over 20 years. Like me, most of my sisters were born in Germany.

I was reared primarily with the Kurdish and German language. At home I speak Kurdish with my parents. With my sisters, I speak German, however.

### Behar (male, 17), lives in Sweden

My name is Behar and I am 17 years old. I was born and reared in Kosova, my home country, until I arrived in Sweden two months before my tenth birthday, where I now live and attend the first year of secondary school.

Life in Kosova is very different from Swedish life. In Kosova there was a lot of poverty; here in Sweden we live a rich and less problematic life. The schools are very different as well. In Swedish schools we receive a free lunch and beverage, whereas in Kosova you have to pay even for a roll and juice, which often constitutes the entire meal. In Kosova I attended school for four years. We were 45 students and had only one teacher. Here in Sweden, we are only 25 students and have a different teacher for every subject. I learned Swedish and English very quickly. Since the seventh grade, I am also studying German.

I always wanted to remain in Kosova, but my parents moved here, and I had to go with them. Perhaps when I am a little older and have graduated from school, I may return to Kosova in order to work there. We came to Sweden to have a better life and to escape poverty.

Discipline in Kosova schools is much better because the students there respect their teachers. Here in Sweden, there are many conceited students who are cheeky and do not listen to their teachers. According to news reports, the quality of instruction here is decreasing. Teaching and the schools in Kosova are much better, but the state does not have much money to invest in the schools.

When I have children of my own, I will not permit them to forget the Albanian language and culture. I think it is crazy when an Albanian child goes to Kosova and is unable to speak the Albanian language. This is certainly not going to happen to my children!