



*MOTIVATING EUROPEANS
TO LEARN LANGUAGES*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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1. Objectives

The general objective of the LINGO study was to identify and disseminate methods that have proved successful in motivating people, particularly those outside formal education, to learn another language. Its specific objectives were:

- to demonstrate the importance of languages to people outside formal education;
- to outline practical ways of encouraging European citizens to learn another language; and
- to raise awareness of the importance of motivation in language learning.

The key output of the study is a brochure – «LINGO: 50 ways to motivate language learners»¹ – which presents examples of projects, methods and events that have encouraged people either to learn a new language or to make practical use of their existing linguistic skills. These «good practices» were selected following an analysis at all policy levels (local, regional, national, European, governmental, non-governmental, public and private sector).

By selecting methods that motivate learners, the study presents reliable data in a field where no prior research has been undertaken. The analysis of the results provides the European Commission and the wider public with practical information and critical reviews that can be used in the development of future policies as well as in the everyday practice of language teaching and learning.

LINGO is aimed primarily at educationalists, decision-takers and civil society at European, national, regional and local levels. However, it is expected that the results will also be of benefit to current and future project promoters, academic researchers, language experts and potential sponsors.

2. Criteria for selection²

To qualify for selection as a «good practice», methods had to fulfil certain basic conditions: to take place in non-formal or informal language learning environments or, in the case of formal educational institutions, to promote language learning activities outside the classroom. Furthermore, the study only took into consideration examples of intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation. Thus, examples stimulating people to learn languages for vocational purpose were not covered.

After much debate, the experts agreed upon the following quality criteria to which a «good practice» should correspond: transferability, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and originality.

¹http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/lang/key/studies_en.html

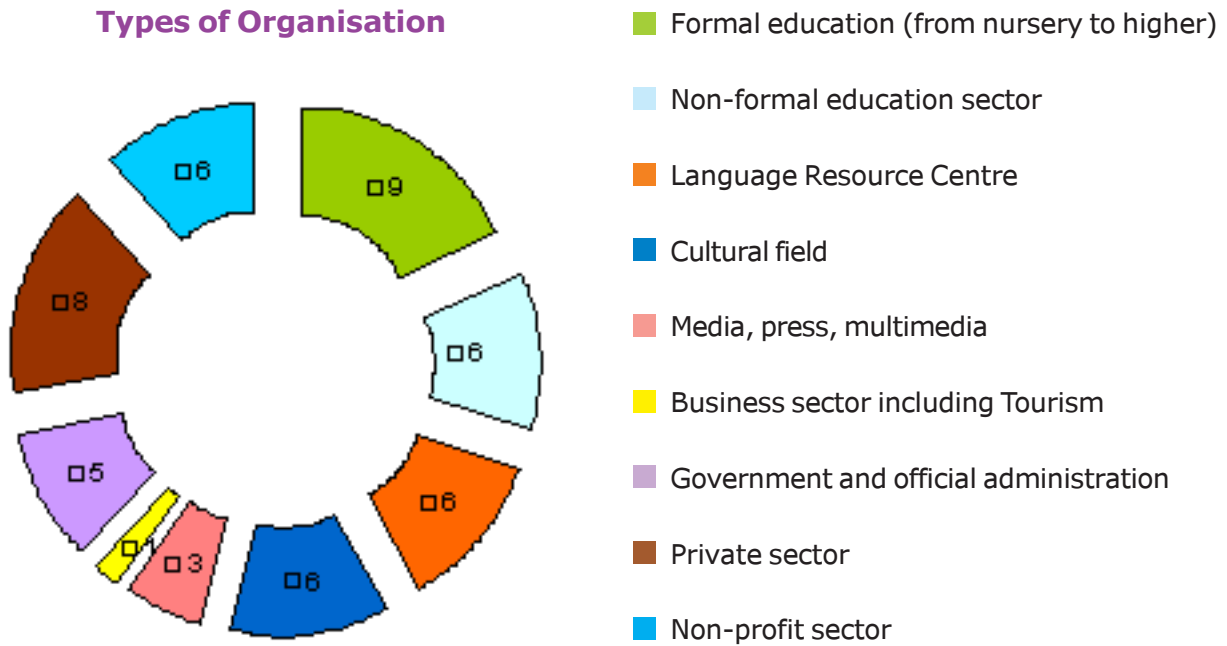
²Further details about the selection process can be found in the «Methodology» annex.

3. Results of selected practices

3.1 Institutional context

Of the 50 examples selected for the LINGO brochure, only 18% come from the formal education sector, although it should be noted that the study took into consideration only those activities that took place outside the formal classroom/curriculum context. The remaining examples come from a diverse array of organisations, notably from vocational, training and adult education centres, language resource centres, cultural institutions, the media or the business sector. Among the practices from the non-formal sector, 10% are promoted by local, regional or governmental authorities.

Types of Organisation



3.2 Thematic areas

Language learning is a lifelong activity. As such, it should not necessarily take place in the classroom or lecture hall. The LINGO study took into consideration those language-friendly environments that proved to be most attractive for potential learners.

18% of the selected practices used media (TV and radio broadcasters), the press, multimedia learning packages or advertising as catalysts to raise interest for language learning, which can be explained by the high capacity for diffusion offered by this sector.



Examples:

- *Plaisir des mots, amour des langues*
- *Speech Bubbles*

Art and culture - such as music, theatre, dance and exhibitions - has always presented attractive opportunities for bringing language learning to people of all ages and social groups. 12% of the selected practices fall within this category.

Examples:

- *Emigredes*
- *Poland Stopover*
- *See you at the Port*
- *Shakespeare per i ragazzi*

12% of the selected practices use public events, such as festivals, to promote interest in language learning and linguistic diversity.

Examples:

- *Alden Biesen*
- *Fête des langues à Nantes*
- *Maribor Language Festival*
- *Multilingual Christmas Market*

The theme of cultural heritage - story-telling, history, literature and folklore - is represented in 10% of the selected practices.

Examples:

- *Enfants d'ici, contes d'ailleurs*
- *Poetry Competition*
- *Saxon Fortress Churches in Sibiu County*

8% of the examples show how activities linked to social cohesion and community building can provide friendly environments for language learning.

Examples:

- *From Kindergarten to Jobless*
- *Language-friendly Communities*

A further 8% use language clubs, camps and evening classes to stimulate people to learn languages.

Examples:

- *Join the Club!*
- *JoyFLL*

Most of these practices typically include two or three other types of activities or learning environments: e-learning platforms, language campaigns, products such as calendars, posters or open competitions.

Examples:

- *Get Talking*
- *INLET*
- *Soccerlingua*

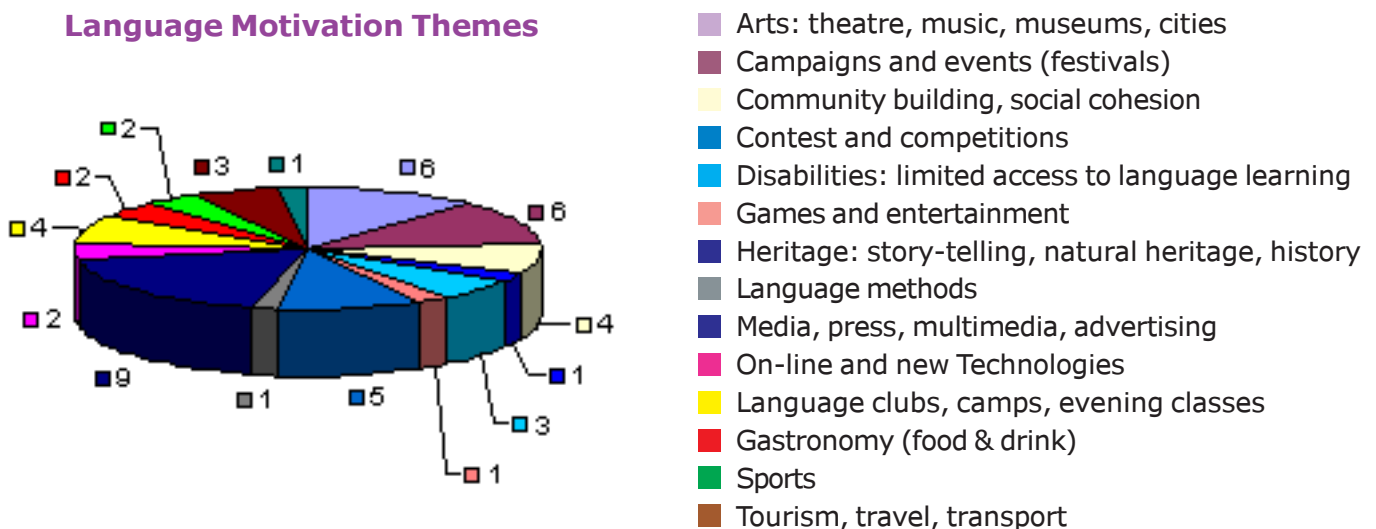
Particular attention was paid to methods addressed to learners with special needs. One interesting example, for the teaching of English to blind or visually impaired people, is offered by *Listen and Touch*. Other examples bring language learning to those who - for reasons of social or economic disadvantage, geographical isolation, physical or learning disabilities - have limited opportunities to learn languages.

Examples:

- *ALLEGRO*
- *Steps to the World*

The majority of the selected practices have produced a website and publications which were widely distributed, thereby ensuring sustainability beyond the period for which they were funded. In this way, they remain reliable resources for inspiration, adaptability or transferability to other learning situations, age groups, social strata and languages other than those originally promoted.

Language Motivation Themes



4. Linguistic analysis

The study reveals a great interest in the promotion of less widely-used and less taught (LWULT) languages, which are present in 42% of the selected practices. In most cases, they target LWULT in combination with widely-used and taught (WUT) languages, to facilitate intercultural communication within larger multicultural partnerships or between multilingual resource centres.



Examples:

- *EU&I*
- *Maribor Language Festival*
- *NIFIN*
- *Open Door Event and Italian Week*
- *Språkdagen*
- *World Language Programme*

24% of the selected practices refer to WUT languages. Though this category of languages was not a priority as far as this study was concerned, these examples were retained on account of their originality and their potential to be adapted or transferred to other languages. Examples include: *English for Art Lovers*; *Moi Toi Nous*, which promotes French in a museum setting; *Herzliche Grüsse*, which aims to raise interest in German; *JoyFLL*, which promotes English during classes for grandparents; and *Steps to the World*, which makes intensive use of English as a catalyst to support insertion of institutionalised Roma children into social, professional and adult family life.

So-called «regional and minority» and migrant languages are represented in 18% of the examples: *Voluntaris per la Llengua* promotes Catalan and receives significant support from local authorities responsible for language normalisation; *Camps in Euskera* offers colloquial Basque to students and is supported by the Government of Navarra; *Babaiola e Baballotti in Tutto il Mondo* promotes the discovery of Sardinian through nursery rhymes, childrens' drawings and folklore with the help of local communities; *Morning Train* promotes Russian; *Tra La La* and *Languages Work* promote Arabic; *YLE Language Resources* promotes Chinese; and *Enfants d'ici, contes d'ailleurs* brings together a series of fairy tales from «other» European cultures - Armenian, Berber, Kurdish and Roma – as a way of enabling children in multicultural schools to communicate better with classmates who belong to minority groups.

It is also worth mentioning that in some cases a WUT language can be treated as the language of minority communities. For example, *Saxon Fortress Churches in Sibiu County* promotes German in the context of the small German minority of Saxon origin still resident in the Sibiu (Hermanstadt) area of Romania.

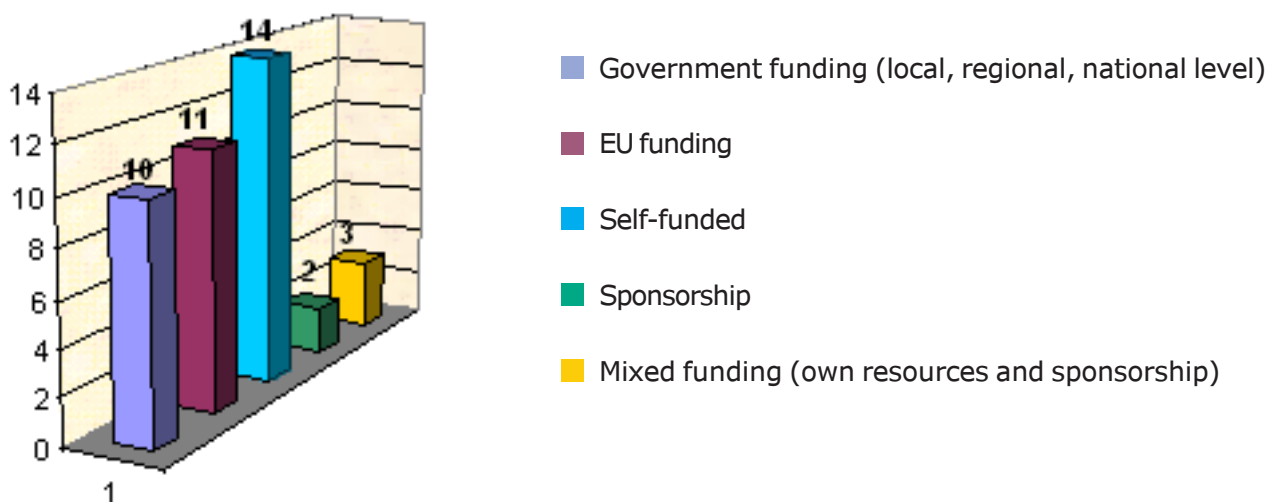
Interesting combinations of WUT and LWULT languages can be found in practices relating to neighbouring languages in border regions: for example, *Language-friendly Communities* promotes some of the regional languages spoken in the Danish-German border region, including Low German and Frisian, as well as Danish and German.

Ancient and rare languages are represented in 4% of the selected practices: *Fête des langues à Nantes* is a festival dedicated to celebrating linguistic diversity and includes 40 «regional and minority», migrant and ancient languages and dialects spoken in France, such as Amharic, Berber, Chinese, Corsican, Creole, Dari, Khmer, Kurd, Persian, Poitevin-Saintongeais, Quechua and Touareg; *NIFIN* includes Faroese and Greenlandic alongside the main Nordic languages; and *Languages Work* presents opportunities for learning languages such as Amharic, Bengali, Hebrew, Japanese, Oromo and Tamil.

8% of the selected practices do not mention a specific target language but have been included on account of the original and effective teaching methods they propose: an example is *EU&I*, which follows the «intercomprehension» approach, exploiting lexical or grammatical similarities between languages.

4. Funding analysis

It was not the intention of this study to present a prevalence of EU-funded projects. These are already widely diffused and catalogued, and are made available on-line and through various publications related to language policies. The largest category among the selected practices was those that were completely self-supported by the promoting institutions (28%). They were followed by projects funded under the EU's Lingua and Grundtvig actions (22%) and by examples that received government funding at local, regional or national level (20%). 6% of the examples received mixed funding from their own resources and from private or public sponsors, while only 4% benefited completely from external resources such as private sponsorship.



5. Multiplier effects of the study

5.1 Institution and community building

The LINGO study offered the possibility to experienced language promoters as well as newcomers to learn about each other's experiences. Many organisations contacted during the course of the study mentioned that the opportunity to have their work presented in a European brochure would help publicise their activities, raise the profile of their institution and hopefully offer the prospect of further projects and the improvement and sustainability of their existing activities.

5.2 Networking and partnerships

On-line contacts, organised visits and presentations of the LINGO study at various events had the unexpected but important result of encouraging networking among language promoters.



The events hosted by certain Socrates National Agencies provided an arena in which participants could meet new potential partners or disseminate their practices through various national channels that they had not envisaged (for example, in Bulgaria, the partners in the *JoyFLL* project were able to present their methodology to local authorities with whom they had never previously been in contact).

For those who had not been involved in language promotion before, networking with the promoters of good practices allowed them to exchange expertise and share in new and original ideas. Last but not least, the idea of motivating language learners in informal environments was presented to authorities and practitioners who had only ever considered language learning within formal educational settings.

5.3 Widening knowledge of European initiatives

One of the most important multiplier effects of the study was the opportunity to present to various interested parties the good practices that were made possible thanks to EU funding. Many institutions that were contacted had little knowledge of the European Year of Languages, the European Language Label or the Lingua Action, and the opportunity to participate in the survey triggered their interest in applying for EU funding to extend their activities to other European countries.

Thus, many «national» good practices could eventually lead to European partnerships that will disseminate their experience at European level (this was the case for *Souvenir Calendar*, which is now operating as a Lingua project under the title *FEEL: Funny, Easy and Effective Learning about Countries, Cultures and Languages*, and the Lingua project *Fairy Tales before Take-Off*, which resulted from the *Marathons des contes et langues* initiative).

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

A number of practical and political conclusions have been drawn from the findings of the LINGO study. These are accompanied by 8 recommendations to language promoters and the European Commission for further action.

6.1 Motivation

The LINGO study demonstrates that motivation is indeed at the heart of language learning, and highlights the many different factors that can motivate people to learn a language. Aside from educational and professional development, socialising, travel, leisure, friendships and personal interests are just a few of the many reasons why people choose to take up another language. Unfortunately, however, relatively few of the key actors involved in language teaching are aware of the wide variety of possibilities that exist to motivate learners.



Recommendation 1:

The issue of motivation should be given greater consideration when drafting policies and action plans to promote language learning. Informing language educators, policy makers and promoters about the variety and quality of existing methods for motivation has the potential to increase public interest in languages. The European Commission could therefore consider the funding of more exchanges of practice on motivational methods, given that the results of the study show how much there is still to be done in this area.

6.2 Formal versus non-formal/informal environments

Most of the good practices selected in the LINGO brochure take place in non-formal/informal settings. Languages «on the road», in a museum, in historic castles and cathedrals, in Olympic stadiums and at the airport are just some of the locations where language learning can be a successful and enjoyable experience. Interest in language learning may be substantially increased when it takes place outside the classroom, lecture room or workplace.

Recommendation 2:

Promotion of non-formal and informal ways to motivate language learners should be considered both by language promoters and educators at all levels. A lot seems to have been done in terms of the exchange of methodologies and materials in the classroom and at academic level, but there are very few studies on non-formal/informal language learning. This concerns all European citizens and contributes to a better understanding of European citizenship, diversity and multiculturalism.

6.3 Imagination and originality in methods and materials

Simple and original ideas, imaginative methods and innovative techniques can sometimes be more effective in motivating the general public to learn languages than traditional materials. Surprising the public with a method that is not normally used in language promotion (for example, an exhibition on the «senses» of a language, languages in a fairy tale setting or humorous messages on TV) may succeed in attracting learners in cases where more «mainstream» methods fail. Attractive designs, unusual themes and unique settings can all help to raise public interest in language learning.

Recommendation 3:

Language learning materials and methods, as well as the environment in which learning takes place, need to inspire enthusiasm and a strong commitment to learn. Policy documents, campaigns and presentations need to send messages that are clear, eye-catching and easily understood, communicating a vibrant and enthusiastic approach to languages.



6.4 Cross-sectoral approaches

There is great potential to bring together the academic and non-academic sectors to work on language promotion. For example, synergies can quite easily be exploited between education and the arts, business, the media or the leisure industry. Virtually any type of organisation can be involved in language promotion and consequently raise interest in language learning. It is no longer the task of educational institutions alone.

Recommendation 4:

Policy makers at national and European level should consider the possibility of information campaigns or publications on the importance of linking language learning to other (non-educational) sectors. Links to the media, in particular, may increase motivation and public interest in language learning. At European level, actions that promote synergies between the education sector and other sectors should be supported, since language promotion can bring more successful results when language learning is not merely seen as an «educational» product.

6.5 Funding and sponsorship of promotional activities

The LINGO study proved that a simple, low-cost idea can be as successful and effective as a large-scale, high-cost activity. Many of the examples that appear in the LINGO brochure have been carried out with very limited financial means. Although this is a positive characteristic, it is also noticeable how few of the selected practices received 100% of their budget from private sponsorship. It is a cause for some concern that languages do not seem to be an attractive proposition for private sponsors.

Recommendation 5:

Cultural events (films, exhibitions, concerts, etc.) seem able to attract private sponsorship much more easily than events relating to languages. Perhaps this is because languages are seen as a purely «educational» matter and are therefore left to public authorities to support. If language learning were to be promoted as a cultural as well as an educational product, there might be a better chance to secure private funding. Language promoters need to start thinking of how to «sell» language learning to the private sector and the general public, instead of considering only public funding and government support. At the same time, the private sector needs to be made more aware of the fact that languages are an integral part of culture, and so become more supportive of language learning projects, campaigns and events.

6.6 Language learning and social cohesion

Language learning has an important role to play in promoting social cohesion and active citizenship. Language learning for people with disabilities, minority groups, people living in less favoured areas and «group learning» are all reflected among the selected practices. Activities such as learning a language in a summer camp, putting children and their grandparents together in the classroom, language exchange programmes for journalists from different countries and sending young pupils to another country to perform a play in a foreign language all create the right setting for further socialising, new friendships and an enthusiasm to learn by being part of a group.



Recommendation 6:

Much has been done to promote e-learning partnerships, but far less has been done to encourage group learning, which increases socialising and hence group motivation. Promotion of the social context of languages should receive much greater support at all policy levels.

6.7 Languages for life

Language learning is relevant at any stage of life, and the LINGO practices reflect this, ranging from kindergarten to the third age. The examples relating to early language learning show that learning at an early age can result in a greater awareness of the importance of languages at a later stage in life, increasing also one's interest in multilingualism and multiculturalism.

Recommendation 7:

Promotion of early language learning and adult learning, particularly in the third age, needs to be given greater prominence in national policies and in action plans developed by language promoters. The importance of early language learning and adult learning has already been recognised at European level, but a stronger focus by national/regional/local authorities, the private sector and civil society is strongly recommended.

6.8 Networking and dissemination of good practice

Exchange of good practice, promotion of interesting and original methods and networking are crucial to ensure the sustainability and spread of high-quality motivational methods. Many of the examples in the LINGO study are the result of extensive networking, strong co-operation between different actors, cross-sectoral co-operation and, often, of European partnerships. This demonstrates that language promotion is better implemented, and may have a stronger impact, when it is the result of networking (preferably at European level).

Recommendation 8:

One of the most important recommendations of this study is the need for strong encouragement and support for European networks of excellence in language promotion. It is expected that the LINGO study will help to increase visibility for those organisations that have participated and will lead to a degree of informal networking. However, formalised networking is also very strongly recommended. The funding of networks for language promotion at national, regional and local, as well as European, levels should therefore be a key priority.



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The study «LINGO: Motivating Europeans to learn languages» was carried out on behalf of the European Commission, Directorate General for Education and Culture by **European Cultural Interactions**.



An on-line version of the study is available from:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/lang/key/studies_en.html
<http://www.eurointeractions.com/projectlingo.htm>



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