



# EXCALIBUR Evening

27012025

## Intercultural competences in co-operation projects



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

Beate Lindemann UiT & Laura Pihkala-Posti, Tampere



# EXCALIBUR-Project

In Erasmus+-CLIL(LOTE) project EXCALIBUR (2022-2025), which has brought together i.e. German learning groups internationally to collaborate on sustainability issues in computer games such as *Minecraft* and *Minetest*, transforms the corresponding game in question into a 3D learning environment.

The leisure comfort zone is used as a catalyst for more motivation to use school foreign languages as a language of communication. This makes language use more meaningful and authentic.

In addition to one's own language class, other language groups from other schools, countries and possibly also other players with the language as their first language are also involved in the realization.

---

# CLILiG= CLIL in German

First thought: **A great idea,**

If you

- a) play a virtual game
- b) with peers from other countries
- c) need to find out about many sustainability topics
- d) and therefore have to search for and find (and possibly translate) information in different languages
- e) **and learn the foreign language at the same time**



# What is CLIL?

**CLIL** stands for

**C**ontent and **L**anguage **I**ntegrated **L**earning.

It means, that you learn **Language(s) and Content(s) simultaneously.**

This, in turn, means that you

- a) work in language class with themes and/or
- b) work also in subject teaching with languages.

We have worked with **English, German as a foreign language/DaF and French**

---

# And what is CLILiG (CLIL for German)?

This means that we

- a) work with **subject themes in language teaching** and/or
- b) work also in **subject teaching with languages** and/or
- c) we language teachers **work closely together** with the subject teachers

CLIL-teaching with German as a foreign language is called **CLILiG (CLIL in German)**.

---

# And what is CLIL-LOTE?

LOTE stands for **L**anguages **o**ther than **E**nglish.

Most students in Europe learn English as their 1. foreign language and achieve a completely different level of competence in English than in the following/other languages.

- mostly less teaching classes in the LOTE-languages
- poorer mastery of the language
- often barely any contact with the language.

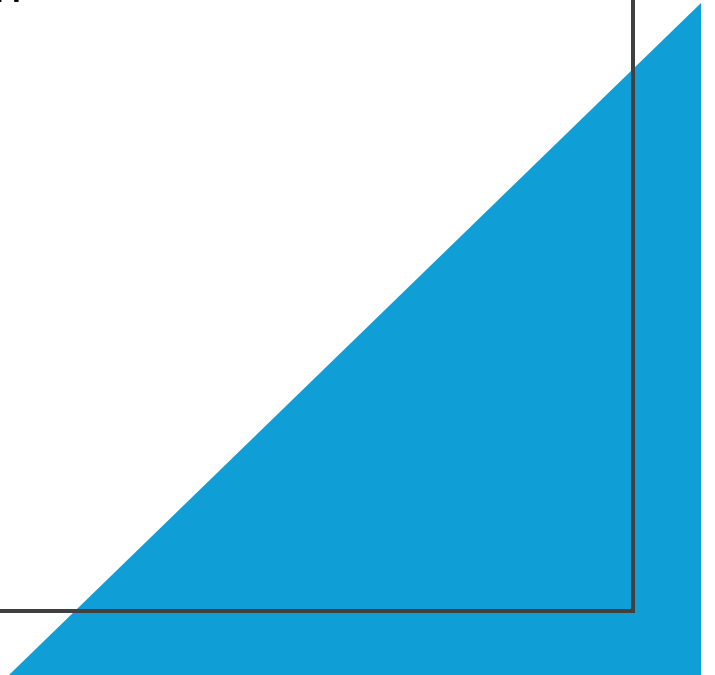
Link to CLIL-LOTE-project at ECML: <https://www.ecml.at/ECML-Programme/Programme2020-2023/CLILinlanguagesotherthanEnglish/tabid/4298/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>

---

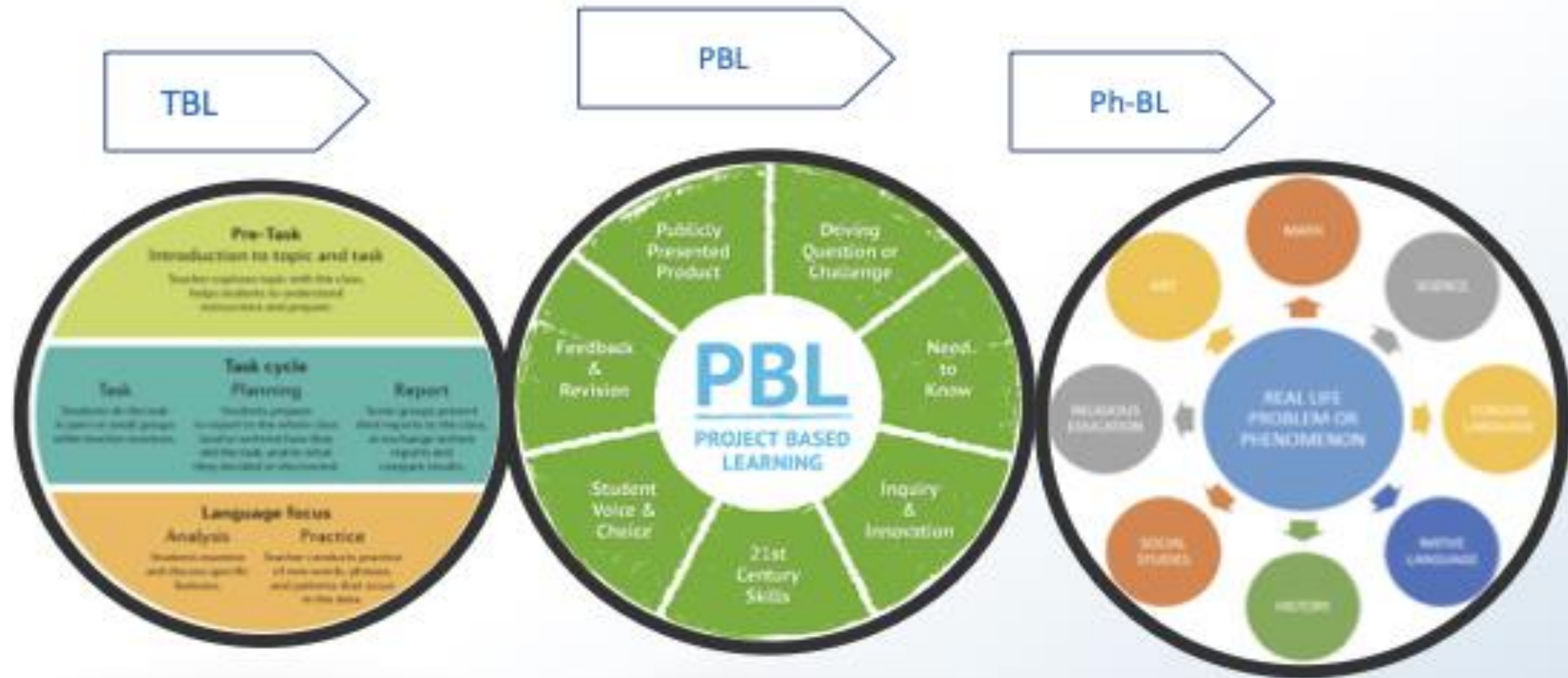
# What does the research say?

CLILiG gives students:

- more chances to use German
- authentic language use situations when searching for information
- authentic language use situations when reading texts
- authentic language use situations when watching videos
- authentic communication situations
- possibility to experience that language skills are useful
- possibility to recognise that we need linguistic diversity / multilingualism instead of monolingualism („English only“)

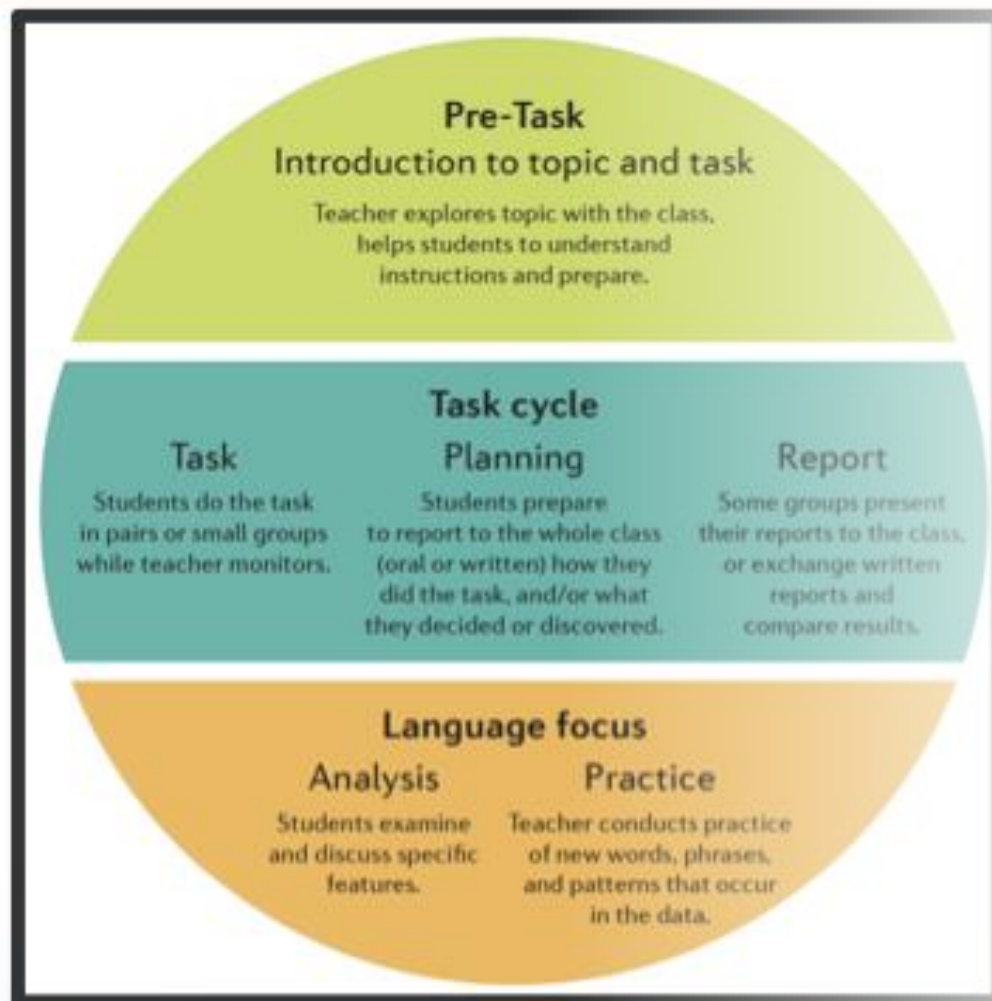


# Methods for CLIL



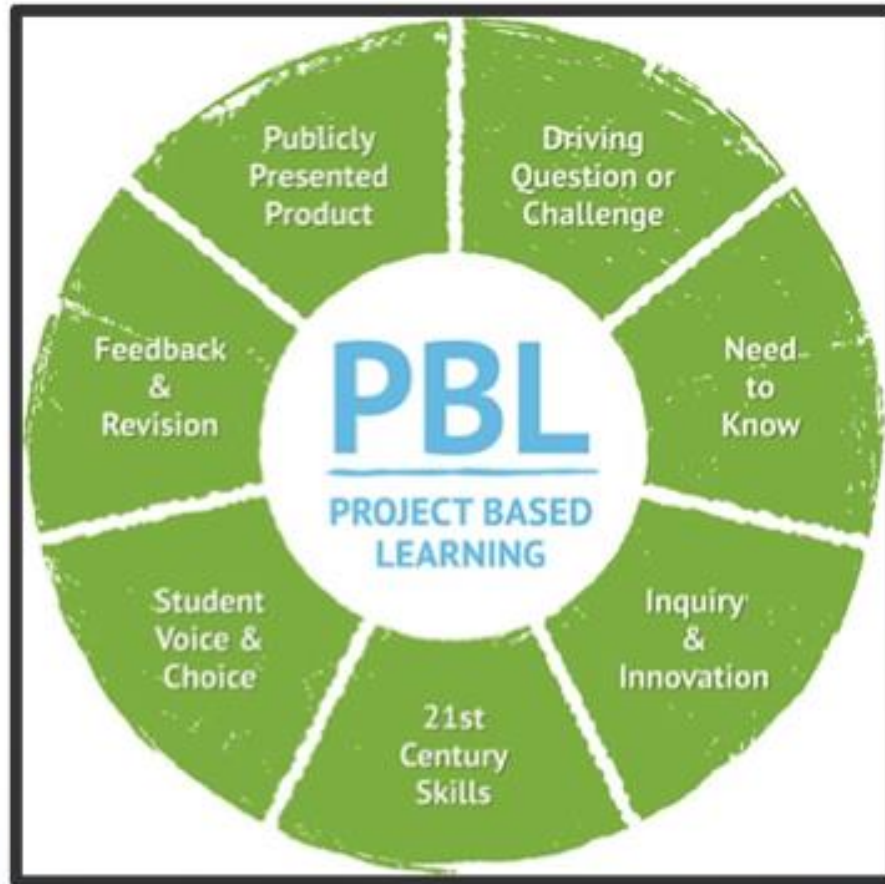


# Task-based learning



# Project-based learning

---



+

○ Problems or challenges



**+ Based on real challenges**

**+ Many school subjects can be integrated.**

# Game-based learning

- The game-based learning approach includes that a real computer game is used as a (digital) learning environment.
- In Excalibur project we used the most popular computer game in the world, ***Minecraft***, or its open source equivalent ***Minetest*** => ***Luant***
- The key point for choosing a **3D-Sandbox World** as the main platform for the training of the intercultural international online collaboration was its possibilities for action-based learning, learner centeredness and for an almost free creativeness.

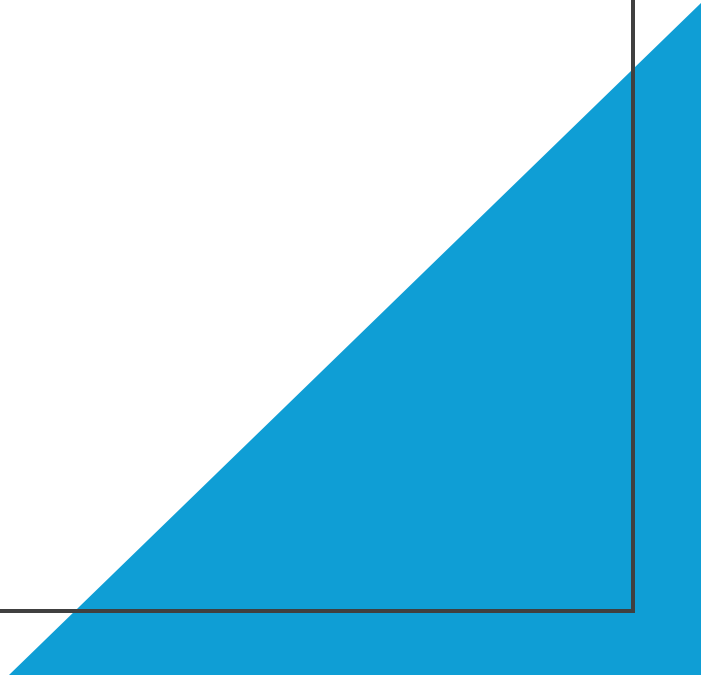




# The working languages of the students

- The working language / lingua franca of the group is in this case **English, German and French**.
  - The students should be encouraged, however, to utilise **all of their language skills**; including also their first language, their family language and every language they can use (**targeted multilingualism**).
  - Important: regardless of multilingualism **focus on the target language of the learning group, e.g. German**.
-

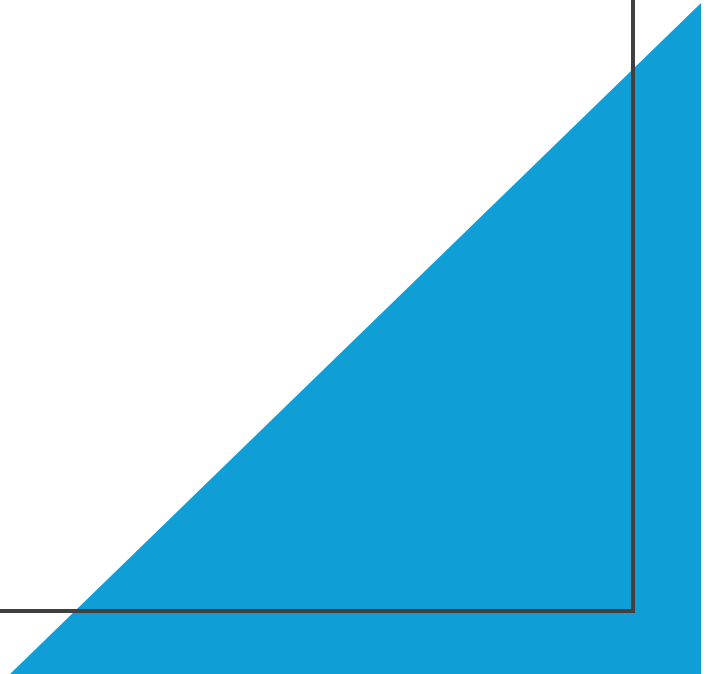
Theory  $\Rightarrow$   
Practice



# Good ideas, but how does it work in practice?

The goals of the project are:

1. CLIL-learning
2. Learn by playing: building in the game
3. Sustainability
4. Learn and use languages
5. Research / information literacy
6. Intercultural communication in groups



# Excalibur Activities in Minecraft

In our *game-based* project work we first implemented so called **Plain World Setting** projects where different classes collaborated with other classes in other schools and countries on one or more of the aspects / sub-themes of creating sustainable living environments. We had experts from different school subjects to work with, both languages and STEM.





# Excalibur Activities in Minecraft



This project's **Plain World Setting Approach** was developed by our project initiator *Laura Pihkala-Posti*, who has worked with Minecraft teaching use development and research for almost 15 years and has also created and published learning materials for sustainability and environment matters (Otava Publishing, Kurz und gut, especially 7-8 + ABI-Bonus)

- Pihkala-Posti L. & Uusi-Mäkelä M. 2013. *Kielenopetuksen tilat muutoksessa* (In English: Language Teaching Spaces in Transition). In E. Yli-Panula, H. Silfverberg & E. Kouki (eds.) *Ainedidaktisia tutkimuksia 7. Opettaminen valinkauhassa. Ainedidaktinen symposiumi Turussa 15.3.2013*. Turku: Suomen ainedidaktinen tutkimusseura. <https://helda.helsinki.fi/handle/10138/42530>
- Pihkala-Posti, L. (2014c) : *Die Entwicklung multimodaler interaktiver E-Learning-Konzepte für den Unterricht Deutsch als Fremdsprache* In: Thomas Tinnefeld (Hg.) unter Mitarbeit von Bürgel, Christoph/ Busch-Lauer, Ines-Andrea/ Kostrzewa, Frank/ Langner, Michael/ Lüger, Heinz-Helmut/ Siepmann, Dirk: *Fremdsprachenunterricht im Spannungsfeld zwischen Sprachwissen und Sprachkönnen*. SAARBRÜCKER SCHRIFTEN ZU LINGUISTIK UND FREMDSPRACHENDIDAKTIK (SSLF); B: Sammelbände; Bd. 2. Herausgegeben von Thomas Tinnefeld. Saarbrücken: htw saar 2014, S. 195-212. [https://sprachwissenundsprachkoennen.blogspot.com/2014/12/blog-post\\_47.html](https://sprachwissenundsprachkoennen.blogspot.com/2014/12/blog-post_47.html)
- Pihkala-Posti, L. (2015). *Spielerische Kollaboration und kommunikative Authentizität mit Minecraft*. German as foreign language 2015 (2), 99–133. [http://gfl-journal.de/2-2015/tm\\_pihkala-posti.pdf](http://gfl-journal.de/2-2015/tm_pihkala-posti.pdf).
- Uusi-Mäkelä, M. (2015) *Learning English in Minecraft: A Case Study on Language Competences and Classroom Practices*. University of Tampere, Master's Thesis. <https://trepo.tuni.fi/handle/10024/97626>
- Pihkala-Posti L. 2020 *Interactive, authentic, gameful e-learning concepts for the foreign language classroom* In: Subject Teacher Education in Transition : Educating Teachers for the Future. Tampere, p. 137-177 <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-359-016-8>
- Pihkala-Posti, L. (2022). *Authentische Interaktion mit dem Computerspiel Minecraft*. Fremdsprache Deutsch Nr 66/ 2022 (Thema Interaktion – digital und vernetzt), 45-52
- Pihkala-Posti, L. (2022). *In der virtuellen Welt die reale Welt retten lernen*. In: ON Lernen in der digitalen Welt Heft 10 /2022 , 30-31
- Pihkala-Posti, L.(2022). *Game-based Learning im Fremdsprachenunterricht. Möglichkeit fürs Training der 4Cs* . Weiterbildung 4/22, 38-41

# Plain world setting themes

**Themes that were given at the first stage of Excalibur project were**

1. Sustainable buildings and their surroundings
2. Sustainable energy solutions
3. Sustainable traffic solutions
4. Sustainable food solutions
5. Sustainable recycling solutions including the circular economy
6. Sustainable nature surroundings and supporting the biodiversity of the environment
7. Sustainable free time possibilities
8. Sustainable schools

=> Besides that, the student(s) (groups) suggested from the very beginning even own ideas/ themes, such as sustainable hospitals, sustainable tourism – and due to the actual world conflict situation even sustainable defence systems

# Excalibur Activities in Minecraft



## The Main steps for the basic Plain World Setting Approach of the project

- Students discuss the given (or by themselves chosen) theme together in their smaller teams and share what they know beforehand about the theme.
- Searching together for new information with a discussion: where do we seek information? Can we find something from schoolbooks in different subjects? What other sources do we use? The students will then discuss the sources and information they found. The sources can be in different languages, in which case the students need to explain and possibly translate the content to others: which requires communication in different languages.
- Then the students build, based on the discussions, critical reading and negotiations and mutual decision making, the objects in the 3D world.
- Finally, they will describe what they have done and present their work. Additionally, they will report what they have learned about intercultural communication and the sustainability theme.

# Excalibur Activities in Minecraft



During the three-year Excalibur Erasmus+ project (2022-2025) we have used the above-described Plain World Setting in more than 10 international sub project cases in different variants (from projects with some hours of synchronous or asynchronous collaboration to clearly longer ones, even informal club activity) that will be found described on our project pages during the spring 2025 on the official web page: <https://www.excalibur-project.eu/project-cases-materials/>

The material package offers a description about each case, used materials and support to implement an equal project. Momentarily you can already take a short look at many of the sub-projects without the teaching/ learning materials at: [https://webpages.tuni.fi/excalibur/wordpress/?page\\_id=366](https://webpages.tuni.fi/excalibur/wordpress/?page_id=366)

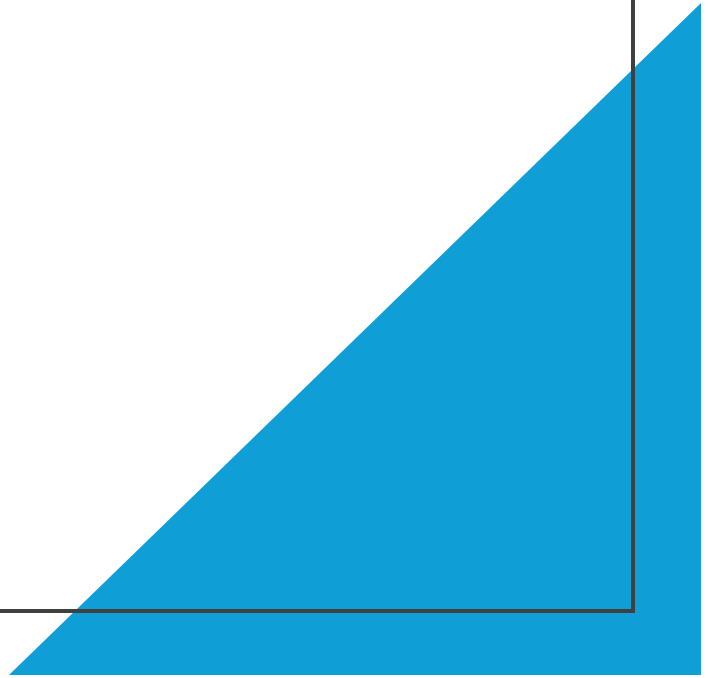
As a further step our three-person team (Pihkala-Posti, Hongisto & Kinnunen) developed new *action-based, problem-solving game world approaches in order to offer approach variation for school use*. We even got support from our project partner TeacherGaming (Koivisto & Uusi-Mäkelä).



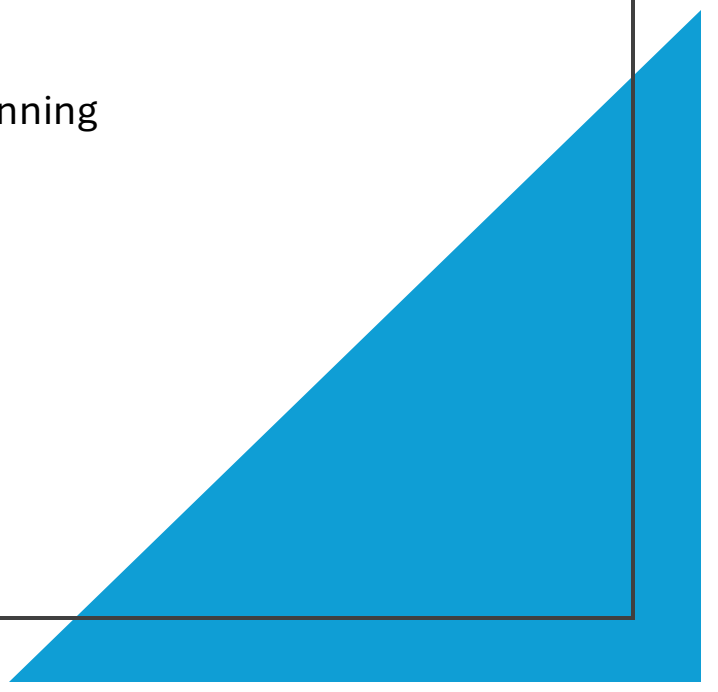
# In practice: Organising

## **Challenges and solutions**

- Common project times
- The structure of the school year
- The rhythm of the school year



# Organising

- Planning meetings online with the interested teachers from the partnering schools
  - Challenges with learning cultures, different time zones, holiday times, class planning
  - Comfort zone of the teacher(s) (their own group, language club etc..)
  - Technical challenges
- 

In practice:  
student culture(s)

- Customs: Communication in school context
- School context and teaching/learning methods
- Discussion behaviour

# Activities: Communication in school context 1

Before the first meeting, you should consider your personal school communication and speaking (**either in the class or already in the working groups**).

For the students!

## **Activity 1:**

- a) Try to describe in your first language / school language, what rules there are actually in your classroom. You can do this in a group of 2-3 people.
- b) Every group presents the rules they have found to the class. Discuss together if you don't agree to everything. You can use your first language.





## My strengths

## Example card

### **Flexibility**

I adapt quickly to new situations.

### **Empathy**

I can set myself in others' shoes and understand their perspectives.

### **Communication skills**

I can communicate clearly and effectively.

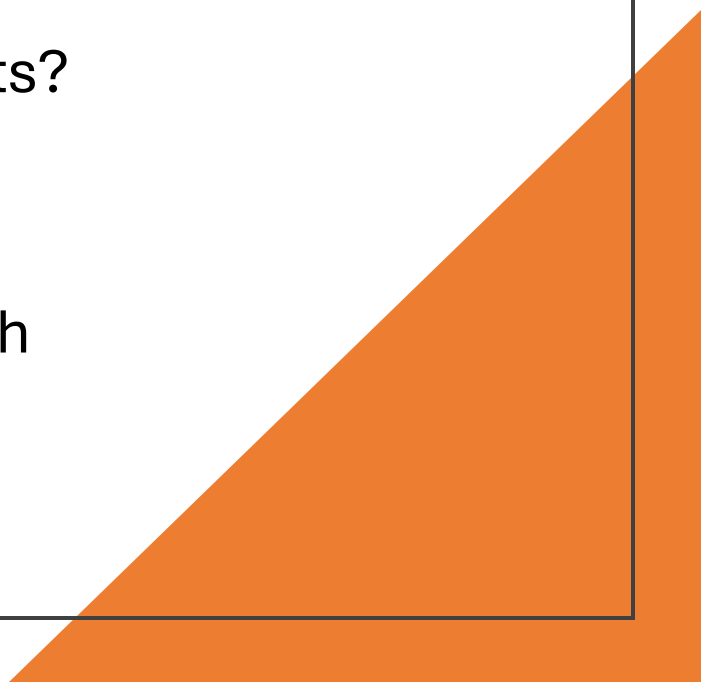
### **Team skills**

I work well in a team and support my team members.

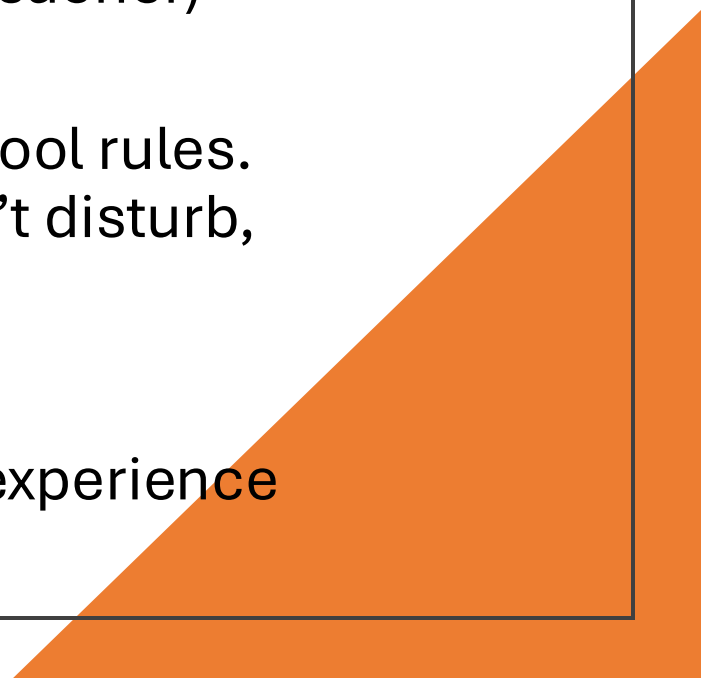
### **Reliability**

I am trustworthy and take responsibility for my work.

## Activities: Communication in school context 2

- c) Agree on what you all think is important.
  - d) How could you explain these rules to other students? (written list? video(s)? other ideas?)
  - e) Does that work? Possibly also other variants.
  - f) Show this to others in the school. Do they agree with you? Are there differences between classes?
- 
- A large orange triangle is positioned in the bottom right corner of the slide, pointing towards the top right.

## Activities: common rules in school context (example)

- 1. Don't share the world address with any outsiders, nor the Minecraft account information (that you get from your teacher) with anyone else.
  - 2. Behave responsibly and in accordance with your school rules. Don't destroy buildings built by other participants! Don't disturb, harm or grief others or their building work.
  - 3. Don't offend or insult anybody on purpose.
  - 4. We are here to learn and grow together so make the experience enjoyable for everybody involved.
- 
- A large orange triangle is positioned in the bottom right corner of the slide, pointing towards the top right.

# Activities: Communication in school context 3

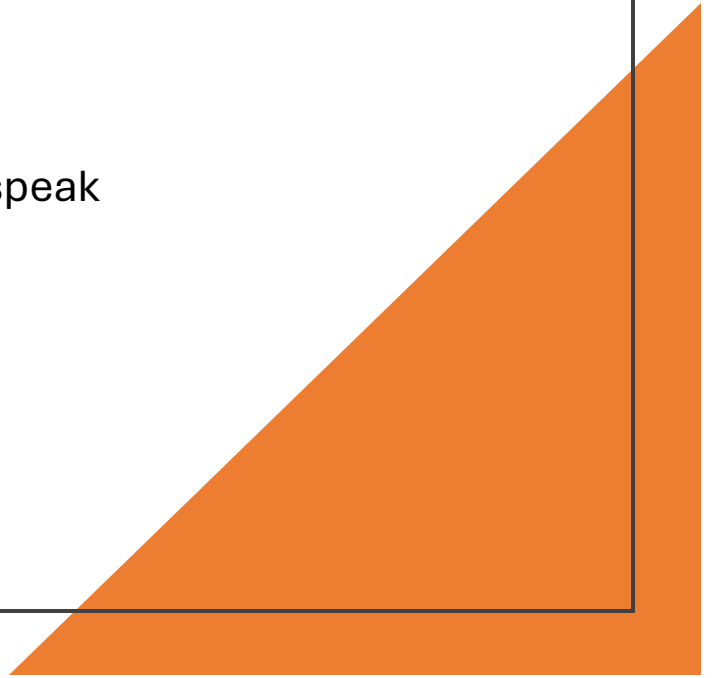
## **Activity 2:**

### **=> Translation(s)**

Translate your rules to English, German, Italian, French etc.

Translate them possibly also to the first languages of the students who don't speak the school language as their first language.

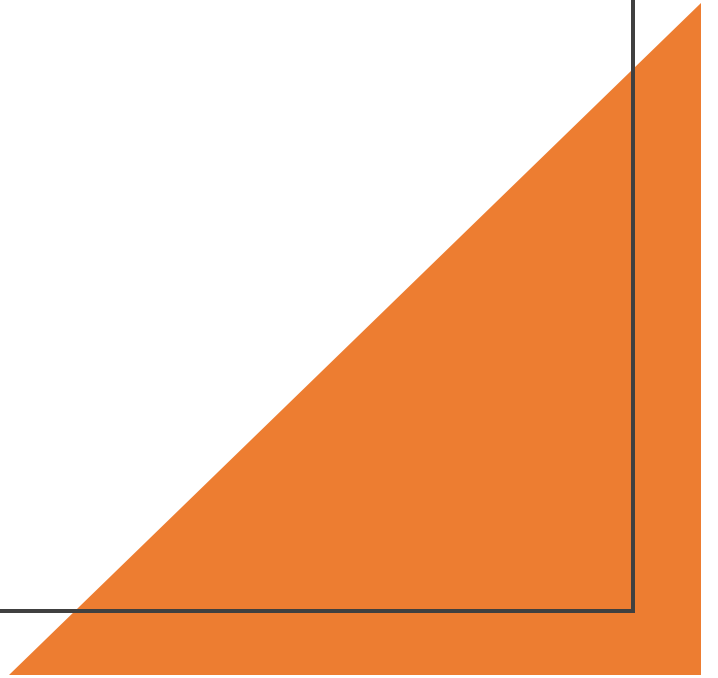
Use translation tools, dictionaries and native speakers for quality control.



# Activities: Communication in school context 4

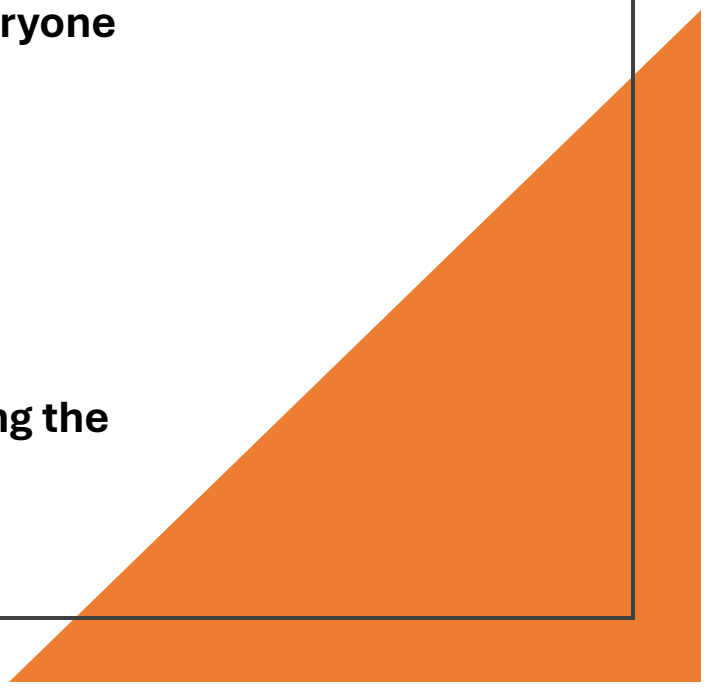
## **Activity 3: Thinking about the others**

- A) What rules apply in class room in other lands?
- B) Make lists.
- c) How did you arrive in these conclusions? Discuss.



# Activities: Communication in school context 5

## Activity 4:

- A) Consider: How can we contribute to making a good atmosphere for everyone in the new "virtual class room"?**
  - b) Should there be rules? Make a rule list in your first language.**
  - c) Discuss the list in the class.**
  - d) Translate the list to all languages with the help of translation tools.**
  - E) Bring the lists to the first meeting.**
  - F) Use the lists of all participants as a beginning point for discussion during the first meeting.**
- 
- A large orange triangle is positioned in the bottom right corner of the slide, pointing towards the top right.

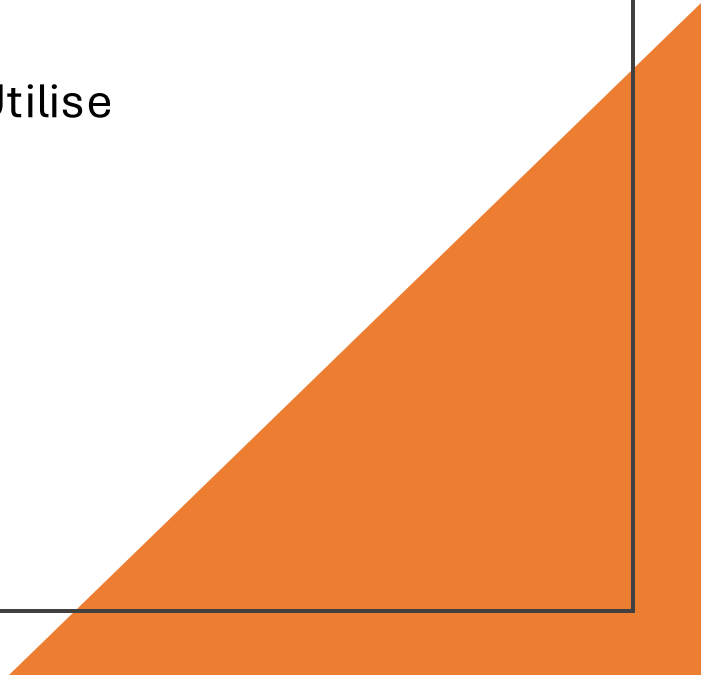
# Activities: Communication in school context 6

## **Activity 5:**

In the working groups, make rules for good co-operation in German. Utilise translation tools and help from native speakers.

Translate these rules next to your first language.

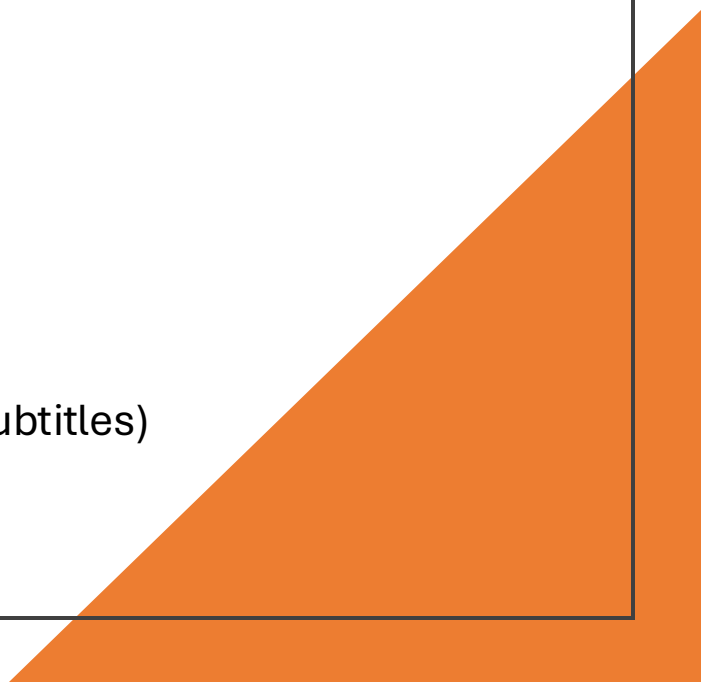
Possibly: compare these rules with the rules from Activity 1.



# Teaching and learning methods 1

## **Activity 1:**

**How do your teachers teach? What do your normal lessons look like?**

- a) Describe in your school language.
  - b) Compare in the class and discuss.
  - c) Agree on a list / typical characteristics.
  - d) Perhaps some students could make a video (Note: no insulting!!)?
  - e) Translate to German and the other languages (possibly another video or subtitles)
- 
- A large orange triangle is positioned in the bottom right corner of the slide, pointing towards the top right.



# Teaching and learning methods 2

## **Activity 2:**

**How do you actually learn? (i.e. German or another foreign language)**

- a) Reflect by yourself and describe shortly (in the school language).
- b) Work in pairs and compare your descriptions: what is similar, what is different?
- c) Translate your descriptions to German or another foreign language.

# Teaching and learning methods 3

## **Activity 3:**

In the first meeting

Exchange ideas with the others. Show them how your teachers work and how you learn.

What similarities and differences do you find?

When possible, use German and all other languages that you can in your group.



Practice: language(s)  
and language use

**Oral language use:**

- a) L1, English, German
- b) Language anxiety
- c) Language competences
- d) Corona

Practice: language(s)  
and language use  
**Oral language use:**  
L1, English, German

**Thorough language preparation in  
German important:**

- scaffolding, useful chunks and phrases for the co-operation (communication in the game, chat (written-oral), discussions)
- L1 and F as supporting languages, also translanguaging, but no avoidance
- G as search language
- G as mediation language

Practice: language(s)  
and language use  
**Oral language use 2:**  
L1, English, German

**Thorough language preparation in  
German important:**

- Scaffolding, useful chunks and phrases **developing lists** (see i.g. Evening B)
- L1 and F as helping languages, including translanguaging, but no avoidance: **practising translanguaging and discussing**
- G as search language: **testing important search keywords in German; reading and discussing finds**
- G as mediation language: **discussing the finds in German; practising communicating information in German**

Practice: language(s)  
and language use

**Oral language use 3:**

Language anxiety

Corona

**Practising speaking in front of others**

- Pair exercises, small groups
- Recording with mobile phone
- Good preparation ≠ reading manuals aloud
- Avatar as protection of identity and vulnerability

Practice: language(s)  
and language use  
**Oral language use 4:**  
Language anxiety  
Corona

## **Practising speaking in front of others:**

**Example: Representing your own important point of view**

- 1. Informing yourself well / searching for arguments**
- 2. In pairs:  
persuading/discussing/  
practising listening**
- 3. Recording short statements  
(Keywords: Yes; Manuals:  
No)**

Practice: language(s)  
and language use  
**Oral language use 5:**  
Language  
competences

**Discussion about building up your  
own language skills**

- **Vocabulary**
- **Basic grammar, especially  
structures that occur  
automatically during  
communication in the 3D world,  
i.e. alternating prepositions,  
inchoative verbs**

**"Without proper words and a little  
grammar I can convey nothing to the  
others."**



Practice: language(s)  
and language use  
**Oral language use 6:**  
Language  
competences

## **Vocabulary training**

Word/Phrase lists as foundation  
(teacher/student/together)

Application exercises  
oral/written/productive/receptive

Repetition for reinforcement

**(appropriate) Basic grammar**

## Practice: Playing/building together

"Building together is easier than  
talking with others"

Non-verbal communication in the  
game

Great in-game results

***Thank you very much  
for your interest!!!***



Contact:

excalibur.project[at]outlook.com

Beate Lindemann, Tromsø  
Laura Pihkala-Posti, Tampere



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union