

CIVET
Workshop report
08/06/2012

Participants: vocational trainers, including an expert in language learning and an expert in cultural matters.

Location: Greta du Velay – 27 boulevard Bertrand – 43000 Le Puy-en-Velay

1) Introduction

Brief on the objective of the workshop, in the frame of the CIVET project.

Introduction of participants, their speciality, why they were interested to participate in such a discussion.

All trainers have migrants in their courses (presently or before).

2) Exchange on simplified language

A short presentation of the concept of “simplified language” that seems not to exist in France has been done using an example of a text reclaiming of illustrating this concept from Quebec¹. The text has been distributed to the participants. Nothing similar exists in France. The expert in teaching French language didn’t find this text very demonstrative as it includes:

- long sentences (too long)
- complicated structures (eg. “*le restaurant peut te refuser l’entrée*”).

The other participants also had difficulties in seeing what was simplified in the text.

The language expert explained that it is better to use more visual supports to convey messages. Working with pictures allows to be understood by a large number of learners. Short sentences are also required. The matter is not to remain satisfied with this stage because with images there are some limitations.

For example, short dialogues can be created to illustrate a situation.

The example presented requires a B2 level, while few immigrants have a B2 level when they arrive in France.

Participants have also been surprised to have the “*tu*” instead of “*vous*” used. Even when speaking to young adults (and especially on written communication), “*vous*” is preferred.

3) Existence of communication difficulties due to insufficient mastering of the French language

Discussion on the case of one Moroccan woman who has dropped from a computer course because of an insufficient mastering of the French language. It would have required too much time for the trainer to facilitate her full participation. After the exchange between trainers, it appears that this woman was registered on this course after a misunderstanding. She had been mis-oriented and she should have gone through a French as a foreign language course first.

Discussion on another case of someone coming from Mayotte who was on a computer course. It was obvious that he did not understand what was happening. He did not communicate. He had another interview with a training coordinator and consequently has been re-oriented towards the key skills learning workshop. There he has no problem in participating. After some weeks he will be able to integrate the computer course.

Sometimes, and especially with women, it is difficult to evaluate the level of French language and this may cause orientation problems. It happens with women who do not come alone for their first interview. Often, when there

¹ The text found and presented here, is in fact, the result of a two step process: an adaptation in English “plain language” done by the Vocational and Rehabilitation Research Institute after an original in English (<http://www.vecova.ca>), followed by a translation and an adaptation in French made by Pierre Lebel a student from Quebec University under the supervision of Julie Ruel from Pavillon du Parc (www.pavillonduparc.com). The document is titled “*Ce que tu dois savoir quand tu vas au restaurant*” – [What you need to know before going to the restaurant].

is an accompanying person, the husband or the brother usually, he tends to speak for her. Of course training managers try to centre the discussion with the woman, but it is not always easy. In some cases, the man who is present refuses to leave the room. Here the management of the situation is left to the appreciation of each manager. Some can refuse to lead an interview with the accompanying man, and the potential learner will not integrate the training centre. Some do not want to create conflict situation and they may accept once to have such interviews.

4) How to solve these communication difficulties?

Some trainers draw small schemes to facilitate the understanding of learners with low language level.

Articulate clearly when speaking.

Design of specific exercises (to replace or to complement existing ones).

Making the process in front of the learner, then the learner has to do it again (and usually, s/he can do it).

Talk to the person individually, not to the group.

Use gesture to accompany the speech.

Organise moments to give the learner the possibility to express.

Check that the learner has understood by putting him/her in practice, not just by asking him/her (they usually say yes to please the trainer).

Sometimes it may be useful to give a sheet with written explanations in order to support what is being said orally and that the learner can keep (instead of having to write his/her own notes). This requires some preparation time longer before the training session.

Trainers ask learners to reformulate what has been said. This is a way to ensure that the understanding is done.

Possibility to use another learner who has understood and ask him/her to “tutor” the learner who faces difficulties.

Use of the web to illustrate what is said.

Use of online translation tools.

5) Integration difficulties in the courses due to religious beliefs or to cultural habits

Religious problems may cause difficulties for learners who want to integrate some vocational careers.

That is the case for migrants who want to prepare diplomas (and work) in the cook and service sector. Two problems exist that cannot be solved if the migrant doesn't change of behaviour. The best is to prevent him/her to enter such a training and to target a diploma in that sector.

The first problem is linked to the veil that some women do not want to quit in the kitchen (where it is forbidden for safety and hygienic reasons) or for the service (where it is also prohibited).

The second problem is that some persons refuse to touch pork meat. The preparation of dishes based on pork may be part of some requirements for exams. With this attitude, the diploma cannot be obtained.

Other difficulties exist with wines that are also part of the heritage and of the culture. Learners have to know about them and be able to talk about them (that is quite difficult if you don't taste them – even if of course, there is no obligation to drink them – it is even advised).

A problem has appeared once with a learner who brought her own chicken (halal) to serve as support for the course (the tradition is that after the course, learners can eat together what they have prepared or bring it back home). Of course, for health and safety rules, the trainer has refused to include the chicken on the goods. The learner had some difficulty to understand the reason. Perhaps the trainer should have spent more time to talk with her as it is difficult for the training manager who selects the participants for the training course to explain all the potential problems in order to prevent them. There is always a new situation that may occur.

6) How to prevent integration difficulties due to religious beliefs or to cultural habits?

The first interview is important to evaluate the level of French and to prevent the manifestation of extreme

religious attitudes (refusing to take out the veil, refusing to touch pork meat, refusing to cook non halal products, refusing to participate in working groups including women, etc.). Its role is to detect potential risks so they do not occur during the training process (with the risk to perturbate the learning process of non involved learners).

To do:

- Dedicate more time for the first interview
- Providing a check-list to
- Organise role-play with training managers to help them avoiding conflict or solving conflicts.

Sometimes we use a trainer whose family has the same cultural background of a learner. He is more respected and listened in the advises he gives for integration. He also can act as a model.

All trainers should participate to a conflict management course.

Integrate a specific part on the trainers' induction guide.

Question about our legitimacy regarding cultural matters. A discussion has followed.

Regarding communication problems, it is our task to solve them. When a religious attitude perturbate the group, when it is opposite to hygiene and safety rules, when it doesn't cope with a diploma reference framework, we have some legitimacy.

When there is a risk to invest public money in paying for the training path and mis-orient a person towards a career where she will not be able to find a work, it is also probably our task.

It is also our role to intervene in situations that are against the equal rights of men and women.

We have to take care on the way we organise our discourse. Do we ask the learner to change his/her culture, or do we ask to adapt?

Trainers have to be perceived as 100% neutral regarding the values conveyed by the cultures. They also have to have a full freedom of speech and be direct when they have something to say.

To conclude, communication problems as well as cultural or religious problems do not happen very often. Here we have talked a lot about them, but this is not the norm.