

# Research Traineeships proposal format

## 1. Project title

### Gains and Losses

**From books to screen mediated means for teaching integration courses to newly arrived migrants in The Netherlands**

## 2. Coordinators

Dr. Massimiliano Spotti (DCU)

Dr. Rein Cozijn (DCC)

## 3. Project Summary

### Research Question

Contemporary Europe is spasmodically channelling funds and efforts in the integration of third country nationals (i.e. newly arrived migrants), working toward their absorption within mainstream society (Spotti *forthcoming*). The Netherlands is no exception to this. Rather, it does so through selling ‘language and culture learning’, i.e., learning the official language of the host country and learning the official norms and values of the host country, as the ‘miracle med’ toward an active, engaged and fast integration that should help emancipating and forming the new citizens to be (Kurvers & Spotti 2014) without relying for too long on municipality based support.

With this discursive background in mind that presents integration as moral duty of the newly arrived migrant, and corroborated by the fact that integration classroom environments have also embraced the digital turn (Spotti et al. 2011), the present project aims at investigating **what is gained and what is lost in the transition** that has taken place **between paper mediated and screen mediated** means for second language and culture learning. More specifically put, what has exactly changed in the graphic design of learning resources from paper to screen over the past 10 years? What are the shifts in the use that is made of images, writing, layout, colours, modes of representation of values and norms (intangible entities sold to newly arrived migrants as Aristotelian *sensus communis*) through the use of screen based learning materials? Are these changes in graphic design leading to (intended and unintended) changes in terms of what is learnt and how it is learnt? And, if so, what are the actual implications for both students and teachers?

**Given that the screen has, by now, found a firm place in integration classroom**, and across all typologies of learning environments more in general (cf. Driessen et al. 2011) **the following questions become imperative:**

a) how does this digitalisation of learning materials impact on the students and their learning praxis?

b) how does this digitalisation of learning materials impact on the teachers and their teaching praxis?

c) how does the digitalisation of learning materials impact on teachers' led classroom interactions?

d) how does the digitalisation of learning materials impact on students' led classroom interactions?

**The gains and losses** for both teachers and learners can be huge. Yet again, they are underexplored. In order to answer these questions it needs to be established which digital learning materials and resources are made available in the Netherlands to newly arrived migrants and by which teachers to which migrants, as well as how they are used and appreciated during classroom based interactions. The updating of this overview initially put together in 2010 would serve two purposes. It would first provide an insight into the spread, use, and appreciation of the several types of learning materials (state of the art) and, second, it would offer a background for the in-depth research at one or more sites.

### **Methods for Data Gathering**

Building on a 2009 overview collected at national level within the framework of a European Joint Research Centre project funded by the EU Institute of Prospective Technological Studies, the present project kicks off by catering for an updated overview of the screen based resources available for learning Dutch as L2 as well as for learning Dutch cultural norms and values.

Further, being rooted in a social semiotic approach to language teaching and learning (Kress & van Leeuwen 2001), the second part of this project deals with the social semiotic analysis of three screen based resources – and their paper based counterparts - that have been singled out from the overview mentioned above on the basis of criteria as: technological novelty and spread of usage.

Once the semiotic analyses of the three applications are drawn, the project moves to its third phase. This third phase uses an interpretive ethnographic lens that avails itself of qualitative methods for data collection as: participant classroom observation; long open ended interviews of both teachers and (high, mid and low educated) students and a key incident approach (Kroon & Sturm 2010) geared to investigate the affordances of screen based learning materials from the emic point of view of both students and teachers operating in three selected learning environments.

While the social semiotic and ethnographic part of the project are running, a survey run by Rein Cozijn and his student assistant will gather quantitative data on digital learning materials exploring from a quantitative perspective the gains and losses in the transition from paper to screen based. This survey is combined with a questionnaire which addresses

the teachers and migrants techniques and strategies of learning looking at the drives and barriers that ICT mediation may or may not bring into the process of learning for integration.

### **Collaborative Aspect of the Project**

The collaborative aspect of the project is to be found in the mixed method approach that the two applicants have put together. While the first applicant (M. Spotti) will work from a socio-semiotic / interpretive ethnographic perspective looking at the emic perspective of classroom agents using screen mediated and paper based learning materials for language and culture learning, the second applicant (R. Cozijn) will work instead from a quantitative perspective looking at the distribution of learning materials, as well as their use and appreciation. The two scientists have previously worked together at the joint supervision of a PhD thesis written by J. Maric and they have both experienced this co-operation as fruitful and constructive, from there the willingness and drive to work together again on a topic that is relevant to both their research agendas.

### **4. Project timeline**

- a. Updating the already existing literature review on ICT and L2 learning (month 1 - 3)
- b. Update of the already existing overview of ICT means for Dutch as L2 learning (month 1 - 3)
- c1. Ethnographic case study of ICT mediated classroom interaction at ROC Tilburg (month 4 - 6)
- c2. Survey of (a sample of) sites at which migrants are trained in Dutch as L2, and a questionnaire of the trainers and migrants at these sites (month 4 – 6)
- d1. Focused group discussions with teachers teaching to high, mid and low educated and high, mid and low educated Dutch as L2 learners that make use of ICT mediated means for L2 learning (month 7 for high educated; month 8 for mid. educated; month 9 for low educated).
- d2. Analysis of the survey and of the questionnaire (month 7 – 8)
- e. Writing up the report, feeding back to teachers and learners, dissemination through a conference (panel on ICT and learning) and a peer-reviewed publication in a high calibre journal, valorization through the feeding back to both teachers and learners at ROC Tilburg (month 10 – 12)

## **5. Research Trainee Profile**

Students with either an MA or MA Res can apply for the ethnographic part of the study, precondition is that they have followed and passed Research Skills: Doing Ethnographic Research with (at least) an 8,0 as final grade.