DIY² Lab – Summary Report

Language Animation An energizer in international virtual meetings

IJAB

March 2022

In March 2021, IJAB launched its new project DIY² Lab: Do-it-Yourself in Digital International Youth Work for experts, project managers and team leaders who want to explore the possibilities afforded by digital international youth work. The DIY² Labs are an opportunity for experts and team leaders to try out digital tools and methods and discuss practical as well as more fundamental issues associated with digital international youth work in the group. The events are usually held on Zoom.

Speechless in front of the camera? Language Animation is a way to support interaction in digital international youth work, activating and energizing participants regardless of their language skills. In the DIY² Lab on March 10th, 2022 (2 - 3:30 p.m. CET), participants found out about the amazing effects of language animation activities adapted to online settings.

Language Animation is a non-formal method that helps people overcome inhibitions and establish (natural) communication settings between participants. It is not about the structured learning of a foreign language - the way pupils learn languages at school - instead it is about having fun using the partner language(s). Moreover, the interactive character of Language Animation can foster group dynamics. These positive aspects also apply to virtual space.

The DIY² Lab was supported by Bettina Wissing, project manager at IJAB's Language Unit. She has been dealing with language animation for many years, starting with German-French youth exchanges, later on coordinating the setting up of language animation for German-Greek youth exchanges and recently adapting the method to virtual contexts.

DIY² Lab

Further DIY² Labs will take place monthly, one month in English, the next in German.

7 April 2022 (German)

17-18 May 2022: International Barcamp „Digital Transformer Days"

Programme

Check-in activity: Would you rather …?

To get to know each other a little bit, participants were shown slides with different options or questions. They were asked to put a stamp on the shared images via the annotate function in Zoom (in the drop down menu on top of the page "View options" choose "annotate").

The options - presented with pictures as well as in several languages - were:
tea - coffee, winter – summer, cat – dog, city –nature, Which languages do you speak?

Screenshot: IJAB

Activity: Colour hunt

Objectives: Learning the colours, movement
Duration: 10-15 minutes
Material: Whiteboard or a prepared document with the main colours in the partner languages and with phonetic spelling

Game description
The language animator introduces the colours in both languages, using a shared document. If possible, all participants have their cameras and microphones turned on and repeat the colours aloud. After the colours have been introduced, the shared screen can be disabled and the colours copied into the chat. The language animator starts the game by choosing one of the colours. The participants then look around their environment for an object in the given colour.

When the time's up, all the participants hold their objects up to the camera and then name the objects in both languages one after the other. The language animator can write down the words in both languages in the chat. The first participant to find an object in the right colour, then picks a colour in the next round.

The participants should not be allowed to show the same object more than once if they are playing several rounds.

A screenshot can be taken of all the participants as they hold up the objects to the camera.

Variations
The game can be played with numbers from 1-10 instead of colours. The participants start by learning the numbers in the partner languages, then they have to look for an object in the given number – for example, for the number 5, one participant finds five forks, another finds five envelopes, and so on.
Or they have to look for objects that start with a certain letter (in their own or the partner language). The participants then write down the names of the objects in the chat (or on a whiteboard) and the other participants add the names in the other language(s).

Introduction to language animation

Language Animation
- language→verbal and non-verbal
- „animare"→latin: to put life into something

Developed in the 1990s by the Franco German Youth Office.
Since then further developed for different international youth work contexts:
- German-Polish
- German-Czech
- German-Russian
- German-Israeli
- German-Greek
- Sports
- Inclusive international youth work.

Aims of language animation
- Reduce inhibitions
- Create natural communication settings
- Allow a playful contact with the partner language(s)
- Foster group dynamics
- Foster intercultural learning

Useful booklets
IJAB: Language Animation in Online Youth Meetings - Handbook
in English: https://ijab.de/bestellservice/language-animation-in-online-youth-meetings
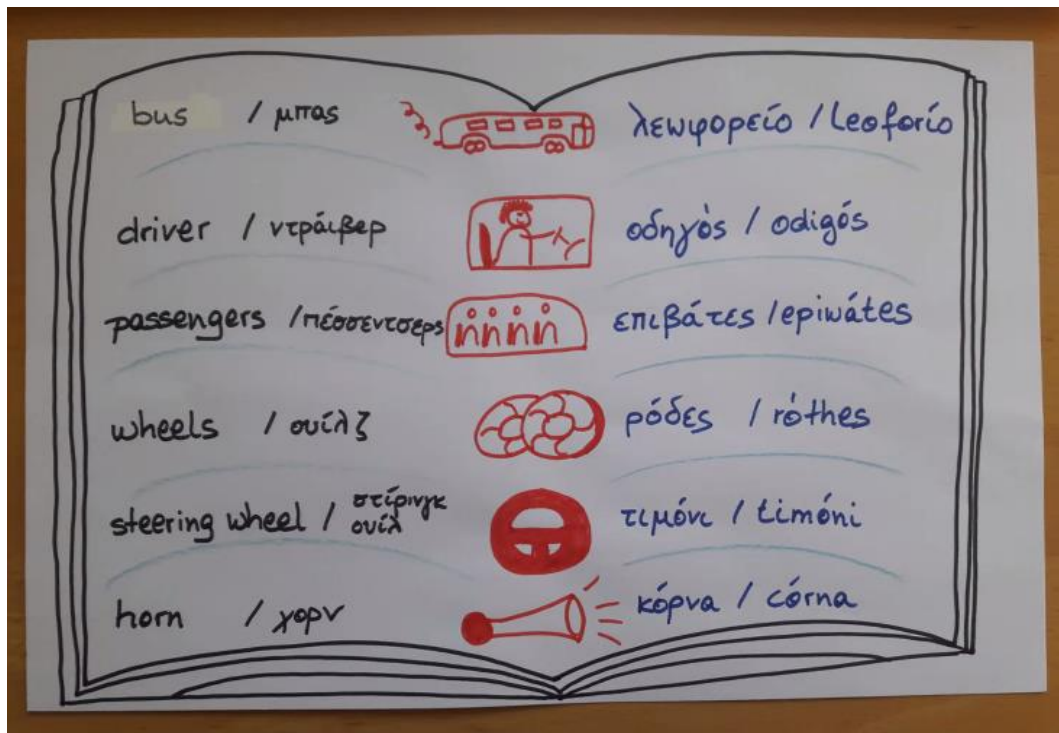in German: https://ijab.de/bestellservice/sprachanimation-bei-online-jugendbegegnungen

Franco-German Youth Office (only in German): Sprachanimation Online – Anregungen für spielerische Aktivitäten im virtuellen Raum
https://www.dfjw.org/ressourcen/sprachanimation-online-anregungen-fur-spielerische-aktivitaten-im-virtuellen-raum.html

IJAB: Sprachanimation - inklusiv gedacht | Language Animation - the inclusive way (bilingual)
https://ijab.de/bestellservice/sprachanimation-inklusiv-gedacht-language-animation-the-inclusive-way

Activity: The bus trip

Objectives:	Language learning, recognising the immersive potential of listening and mime
Material:	bilingual (or multilingual) text to read aloud, visualisation of the terms, Breakout-Sessions
Group size:	12-50
Duration:	20-30 minutes

Game description
A bilingual (or multilingual) text is read out in which a selection of terms occurs very often. Depending on the size of the group, a suitable number of these terms is selected and practised. In the case of the bus trip text (English – Greek), there is a maximum of 6 terms:

- driver – οδηγός (odigós)
- passengers – επιβάτες (epiwátes)
- horn – κόρνα (córna)
- steering wheel – τιμόνι (timóni)
- bus – λεωφορείο (leoforío)
- wheels- ρόδες (róthes)

The pronunciation of the terms in all relevant languages is practised with the whole group. Small groups are then formed and each group is assigned a term.

Work assignment for the small groups
Think of a pantomime performance and a special and appropriate way to pronounce the term (in both/all languages).

In addition, the names of the small groups (i.e. the terms in all relevant languages) are written in the chat. Now the working time in the groups begins in previously prepared breakout sessions (suggestion: 2-3 minutes).

After the work in the small groups, everyone is back in the main meeting and the small groups briefly present what they have come up with. Now please turn on all the microphones. The facilitator starts to read out the text bilingually/multilingually (not as a translation, but as a continuous story). Whenever one of the terms is mentioned, the respective group appears with their gesture and their special pronunciation version. The term is always repeated in the language in which it appeared in the text.

Depending on the group's language skills and motivation, the text can be read out again, this time the sentences/paragraphs in the other language.

Note/supplement: There are various options for forming the small groups:

- The participants are assigned to breakout rooms (manually by the moderator or automatically by the video conference tool, e.g. Zoom).
- Using a website (e.g. https://www.ultimatesolver.com/en/random-subset or in German www.ultimatesolver.com/de/zufall-gruppen).
- The participants find themselves in small groups (with the help of the "Annotate" function during screen sharing).

Variations
With your own text, this method can be used to give a nice review of the youth exchange that you have experienced. It is important that all terms occur frequently and about the same number of times. They must not be replaced by pronouns, even if this does not correspond to the normal flow of language.

Activity: Clapping rhythm – hello, how are you?

Objective: Language learning, rhythm
Material: Visualisation of words, e.g., PDF or photo of a poster
Participants: No restriction on number of players
Time: 10-20 minutes (depending on number of languages)

Game description:
The participants learn to clap a rhythm together. This rhythm is based on four beats. The level of difficulty of this "body percussion" game can be adapted to the group. The easiest version is to clap hands on legs twice and clap hands together twice. Another variation is to clap left leg with left hand for the first beat, and then clap right leg with right hand for the second, snap the fingers of the left hand for the third beat, and snap the fingers of the right hand for the fourth. Other creative variations are possible. If participants' language skills are still limited, it's best to choose an easy body percussion.

The language animator shares a document with the words in the participating languages. Beats 1 and 2 have no words, then beats 3 and 4 are each followed by a word or part of a word (e.g., beat 3: Hel-, beat 4: -lo). The next set of beats incorporates the next question or answer, in this case "How are you?" In some languages, the question or answer may consist of more than two syllables. In those cases, the text can either be shortened (e.g., "I am good" becomes "I'm good"), or two or more syllables can be spoken per beat (e.g., in English "How are" is spoken on beat 3, "you" on beat 4).

Examples
In Greek, the answer "I am good" /"I am well" has four syllables: πολύ καλά [polí kalá].
Here, the full phrase could be shortened to καλά [kalá] (good/well), so "ka" on beat 3 and "lá" on beat 4.
In English, the question "How are you" has three syllables. The first (How) could be spoken on beat 3, the next two (are you) on beat 4, so "How - are you?".

Hal - lo!	Hel – lo!	Sa – lut!	Γεια – σου! [ja – ssu]
Wie - geht's?	How – are you?	Ça – va?	Τι – κάνις; [ti – kánis?]
Sehr - gut	Very – good	Très – bien	κα – λά [ka – lá]
Dan – ke	Thank – you	Mer – ci	Ευχαρι – στώ [efchari – stó]

Unfortunately, it's not possible for everyone to perfectly repeat a rhythm together in video conferences when microphones are turned on because the sound arrives with a short delay due to latencies. In hybrid events, however, a small group of participants who are physically present can create a joint rhythm. Alternatively, the language animator can repeat a rhythm with individual participants. Or participants actually use the delays and repeat a roughly equal rhythm with their microphones enabled. This works too and can promote team-building.
By repeating the short dialogue according to a rhythm, words are easier to memorise.

Variations:
Rather than introducing lots of languages at once, the game can be played every day, with a new language added every time. Languages other than the official partner languages can be included to take into account the participants' multilingualism.

Brainstorming on Energizers

The exercises were followed by brainstorming on energizers in breakout sessions. Participants presented their ideas or tried them out with the group:

Digital rock paper scissors

The game is played in gallery view. Each person fixes the video of one person and plays rock paper scissors against that person. If you win, you stay in the game. If you lose, you turn off your camera. Fewer and fewer people remain. The remaining people keep playing until at the end there are only two and then one person left.
With 16 people, it took 4 minutes.

1 -2- 3 - in different languages

Each person teaches the others the numbers 1 to 3 in their language combined with movements. Then the others repeat the words and movements, for example jumping once, clapping twice on the legs, clapping three times above the head.

Digital twister without twister field

The exercise involves the environment of the participants.
One person gives instructions about which color to touch with which part of the body. For example: "Touch something yellow with your foot, something blue with your hand, ...".
Alternatively, the game can be played with objects that everyone has. For example: "Put your knee on your chair, put your hand on the ground".

Count to 20

One person says the first number, then someone else says the next number. If two people say the same number, you have to start from the beginning.

Guess what changed

The activity takes place in gallery view. Have everyone look at each other's screens, pictures, and backgrounds. The facilitator turns off the camera of one participants. First the other participants need to guess who is missing and what the person was wearing, what his/her background looked like, … Alternatively, individual participants turn off the camera, change something (for example, put on a hat, take off their glasses) and the others guess what has changed. In addition, the spotlight function can be used.

Dance Energizer

The activity takes place in gallery view. Music is playing. One person makes a movement that everyone repeats. It is repeated until someone else spontaneously makes another movement, which in turn is copied by everything. Everyone can change the movement by demonstrating the next movement and everyone has to be attentive and watch who changes something.

Check-out activity: How do you feel?

Participants were asked how they felt after the lab and asked to put a stamp for their mood on the shared image via the annotate function in Zoom (in the drop down menu on top of the page "View options" choose "annotate").

Screenshot: IJAB

Digital Tools

Zoom (Videokonferenz-Tool): https://zoom.us

Evaluation tool www.edkimo.com

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