

LIFE Presentation Guide

During your presentation you should talk about following topics (the questions are)

1. Name of the project (same as on the LIFE website) **Teach Estonian vol 2!**

2. Represented studies, supervisors, partners (**Elina ja Anastasia**)

Our team consists of twelve people. Each of us has a different background and is mastering a specific specialty: early childhood educator, special education teacher, pedagogue, law, Estonian philology, Estonian studies, Arts Liberales, European Studies and Culture. Thanks to the fact that each of us has certain skills in our professional field, everyone was able to contribute to the development of this project.

The project was realized under the guidance of the supervisors - Ele Arder, Helin Puksand. They provided us valuable help and support in the realization of this project.

Together we have created materials for learning Estonian language at the elementary level, as a foreign language. These materials are not only based on the theoretical base, but also easy to use.

The partners of our project could be teachers, who teach Estonian as non-native language. The materials of this project can be also used by both students and adults, who are learning language on their own.

3. Problem, significance and goal (**Emily + Helin**)

- What was the problem being solved?
- Why was it important to deal with this topic?
- What was the goal of the project or what did you want to achieve?
- How do you know you've reached your goal?

The goal of the project

The aim of the project "Teach Estonian Vol 2!" was to develop the second volume of A1-level Estonian teaching materials (i.e. the sequel to the project "Teach Estonian vol 1!") that would help learners to obtain A1-level Estonian linked to appearance description (i.e. physical appearance and clothing). The topic was chosen because of its meaningfulness, i.e. the topic can be considered connected to real-life (i.e. not created artificially for educational purposes.). The aspect of meaningfulness through engaging topics helps learners to process the material more deeply and acquire it more efficiently than in the case of non-meaningful topics (Kitsnik, 2019).

Our materials are intended for adult language learners, including both beginners and those with some prior

knowledge of Estonian. The materials may be used for independent study as well as in small study groups, since the tasks are provided both in Estonian and English.

The importance of the problem

The project intends to provide an alternative language learning resource for adult learners in addition to the conventional Estonian textbooks currently available. The standard textbooks do not include the concept of gamification, which can be interpreted as a process of adding game-like elements to the traditionally non-playful activities (e.g. different challenges and interactive activities). And because of not including the elements of gamification, the traditional textbooks often feel monotonous, which in turn may lead to the decrease of motivation, resulting in less effective language acquisition (Kitsnik, 2019).

However, gamification helps to make repetition that is necessary, but often boring, more interesting and meaningful (Kitsnik, 2019). Furthermore, gamification helps to break the idea that language acquisition process must be serious and hard work – but via game-like elements, there is a higher level of involvement (e.g. compared to the traditional grammar exercises) and through this, the level of motivation is more likely to increase (Kitsnik, 2019). So, in conclusion, we developed tasks including the concept of gamification, using a wide variety of gamification platforms (Wordwall, Interacty, Learningapps, Wordwall, Kahoot, Vocaroo etc.), creating activities that included listening, reading, speaking and writing tasks.

In addition to gamification, we used the approach of learning through collaborative and meaningful interaction, i.e. we combined the approaches mentioned. Furthermore, we included the visualization approach (i.e. pictorial dictionary approach, comics) and audio materials to accompany practical appearance-related activities. For example, the aim of using a wide array of photos and illustrations was to help the students create clearer connections between the new vocabulary and the actual items (e.g. linking the clothing items presented in the task to the correct photos), as it is easier to learn and memorize new words if the images visualize the items. That is how we created a balanced teaching system that has not been used in the traditional textbooks. Through this, we hope to raise the motivation level of the language learners in order to help them to acquire a strong base of A1 Estonian language level, so that the learners could feel confident in real-life communicative situations.

How do you know you've reached your goal?

The materials created have been tested by presenting them at a lesson, and employing low stakes evaluative

means commonly used by educators which we researched and identified, and will elaborate more in the results and conclusion portion of the report.

Reference: Kitsnik, M. (2019). Eesti keele kui teise keele õppimine: kas raske töö või kerge lõbu? *Keel ja Kirjandus* 1–2/2019, pp. 39–56.

Applied activities **(Karolin + Elina)**

In our project *Teach Estonian vol 2!*, we aimed to create a rich, learner-centered language learning experience for A1-level students, focusing on vocabulary, grammar, and communication around the topic of describing people and their appearance. Together with our team of twelve students from diverse disciplines, we applied a variety of methods and activities that integrated theory, creativity, and real-life relevance.

To reach our goals, we based our work on several key pedagogical approaches:

- Gamification (based on Karl Kapp's framework), to make learning engaging and interactive;
- Social constructivism (Vygotsky), encouraging learning through collaboration and meaningful interaction;
- Communicative Language Teaching and Task-Based Language Teaching, which shaped our focus on practical, everyday conversations.

The team designed a multimodal structure of activities that included listening, reading, speaking, and writing tasks, supported by visuals, audio, and games.

- Anastasia Nefedova and Elina Palu created comics with accompanying tasks. These visual stories depicted real-life situations (like going to the hairdresser), followed by comprehension and discussion questions to support vocabulary retention and sentence structure understanding.
- Asia Timofieieva worked on the grammar topic "*possession*" (*mul on, sul on, tal on*), preparing clear explanations and practical exercises embedded in communicative contexts. She also actively participated in the testing phase as a learner, helping evaluate whether the materials were accessible and understandable from the student perspective.
- Milana Alisieva developed role-play tasks for each subtopic, such as booking appointments or describing people, encouraging spontaneous language use and collaboration.
- Emily Johanna Jokela and Helin Mere created two worksheets for the physical appearance

description (using pictorial dictionary approach) + small exercise where the learners can test worksheet based vocabulary skills, vocabulary tasks linked to clothing items (i.e. new clothing-related vocabulary) and descriptive clothing-related speaking activity (which combines the use of vocabulary, grammar practice, and speaking fluency).

- Johanna Dubrovkin focused on game design, ensuring that learners could repeat vocabulary at various stages. She took scaffolding into account by designing different types of games: some for learning only nouns, others for combining nouns with adjectives.
- Karolin Isabel Kungla recorded listening materials, including an original dialogue on clothing and appearance and also contributed additional games to reinforce the vocabulary introduced in audio exercises.
- Elina Väli developed the board game "*Seiklus Eestimaal*", which included vocabulary-based tasks of varying difficulty (green, orange, red), such as simple questions, role-play prompts, and movement activities. She also created an additional listening task with audio and recorded country names in Estonian for Kino's geography-themed digital game. To check how the board game works with younger learners, Elina conducted a trial session with 7-year-old children and gathered observations for small adjustments.
- Kristiina Pritsõk created voice materials for some comics and run a test lesson, allowing us to pilot and refine our materials. Put the pages of the materials in the correct order. After the test-lesson, created flashcards for clothing subtopic.
- Jonathan Noah DeRose created a detailed evaluation framework for our lesson materials, based on CEFR A1 descriptors and principles of low-stakes formative assessment, helping us ensure the materials were both effective and learner-friendly and run a test lesson. He also designed some learning games, for example one to teach colors, and another to reinforce how time is told. Additional games included sentence unjumbling exercises, for example to help learn about describing an ordinary day.
- Kino Toshiki developed a custom digital platform to host interactive language games, helping us offer learners fun, accessible practice outside the classroom. His platform complemented our physical board game and extended our project's reach into blended learning. In addition to his technical role, he also took part in testing the materials as a student, providing valuable feedback on clarity and usability from the learner's point of view.

Throughout the project, we used a variety of digital platforms like LearningApps, Wordwall, Kahoot, and Vocaroo and etc for creating interactive, self-correcting tasks, supporting different learning styles and

promoting autonomy. Collaboration was an essential part of the process – it was common for team members to help each other with technical issues, content corrections, or brainstorming ideas during game development. Many participants took an active role in discussing and refining activities in our group chat, which helped ensure coherence across different materials and formats.

As a result, our applied activities reflected a strong integration of theory and practice. Each member's contribution added to the creation of a coherent, dynamic, and motivating Estonian learning experience tailored to the needs of beginning learners.

4. Research base and interdisciplinarity of the project **(Milana)**

Our project is based on a combination of theoretical frameworks and practical analysis to develop effective and engaging Estonian language learning materials. The foundation of our work lies in a blend of gamification, social constructivism, and language acquisition theories. We drew particularly on Karl Kapp's (2012) work on gamification, which focuses on applying game-like elements to enhance engagement in non-game contexts. This was reflected in our use of interactive exercises, such as word jumbles, board games, role plays, and digital platforms like Kahoot, Wordwall, and LearningApps.

Also, we applied Lev Vygotsky's social constructivist approach, which emphasizes that knowledge is constructed through interaction and human activity. This theoretical lens supported the design of communicative tasks where learners interact, collaborate, and construct meaning through real-world language use. These ideas are further strengthened by Communicative Language Teaching and Task-Based Language Teaching, which helped us focus on creating practical, conversation-driven scenarios like ordering food or describing people. We also incorporated multi-sensory and cognitive learning principles, ensuring that our materials use visual, auditory, and interactive elements to support diverse learning styles. Theories such as distributed and situated learning allowed us to embed vocabulary and grammar in meaningful, long-term contexts.

Importantly, the research base for our project also stemmed from the materials developed by the previous student group. We carefully reviewed and evaluated their work, identifying both its strengths and the areas needing improvement. Through this process, we identified a gap in specific topics and decided on a clear focus for our own development. To ensure the linguistic level was appropriate, we also conducted additional research using multiple educational websites to determine which vocabulary items from our topic would best fit the CEFR A1 level.

The interdisciplinary nature of the project played a crucial role in its success. With a team of twelve students from seven different study fields, including law, early childhood education, special education, Estonian studies, philology, general education, and liberal arts, we were able to combine pedagogical knowledge, linguistic accuracy, inclusivity, and real-world relevance. Each discipline contributed a unique perspective: law students focused on clarity and formal structure; early childhood and special education students ensured accessibility and inclusiveness; language specialists contributed to correctness and cultural sensitivity; and education and humanities students supported the pedagogical design and meaningful learning experience. This collaboration across fields allowed us to create dynamic, learner-centered materials that are both theoretically grounded and practically useful.

5. Results

- What specific results did you achieve during the project?
- How many people did your results reach or how many lives did you influence?

We chose "Appearance" as our main topic and divided it into 3 subtopics: "At the hairdresser's", "My friend is missing" and "Giving compliments". As a result of the project we created a variety of studying materials for these subtopics that are inspired from real-life situations. Each topic's materials have the same structure that covers different aspects of learning:

- Vocabulary
- Grammar
- Listening/reading
- Speaking/writing
- Games/activities

Our studying materials include:

- Worksheets for learning vocabulary and grammar. These worksheets can be used to learn how to form plural nominatives and how to express possessions. Vocabulary is supported by illustrations to make learning more effective.
- Comics that can be used to practice reading. Comics depict real-life situations and communication, as the task-based language learning principle requires.

- Role-play tasks to practice speaking. These tasks are inspired from real-life situations and encourage spontaneous language use and collaboration.
- Audio materials with accompanying tasks. These materials consist of audio and the same text in written form followed by questions based on the text. Audio materials allow students to hear native speakers and the correct pronunciation.
- Variety of games:
 - At the end of each subtopic there are games that help to retain the vocabulary learned within the topic. We used the scaffolding principle and created games for various levels of difficulty (separate games for learning only nouns, only adjectives and nouns combined with adjectives). These games can be played independently and at any time.
 - Board game "Seiklus Eestimaal". The idea of this game is to move forward on the game board and answer various questions that arise along the way. The questions are designed for three different levels of difficulty. The goal is to reach the finish line which is Tallinn Airport.
- We have published our studying materials on a website that is accessible to everyone: <https://eestikeel.neocities.org/>.

We conducted a test lesson with 4 test subjects and refined our studying materials according to the feedback.

So far, our studying materials have been used by test subjects, but as they are published on a public website, then our studying materials are available for everyone.

6. Conclusions

In order to draw conclusions, we had to arrive at and design a testing framework for the materials themselves. The materials created have been tested by presenting them at a lesson, where language learners representative of our stakeholder group participated in our finally developed lesson on appearances, focusing on our three subtopics "At the hairdresser's", "My friend is missing" and "Giving compliments". While the lesson was short in time, and we had to be careful in integrating the evaluation methods of the lesson itself, we were able to do so by employing a method called a Know-Want to know-Learned, or Tean-Tahan teada-Sain teada chart, referred to as KWL or TTS chart in English and Estonian, respectively. This is a method used by educators often in such situations to provide low stakes evaluation by initially assessing the baseline of what test subjects know, would like to know and then afterwards asking what they learned. It is a free form assessment, in that students are free to respond with whatever is on their mind, thus low stakes.

We complemented the KWL chart with direct classroom observation and a post-lesson survey as well as voluntary and informed collection of contact information for future project groups to use to conduct follow-up inquiry and potentially invite learners back to a future lesson.

The pilot group of five adult learners, whose proficiency ranged from complete beginner (pre-A1) to early A2, completed the lesson evaluation materials before and after the forty-five-minute session, allowing us to check their baseline, goals and take-aways against the content of the lesson itself.

Baseline knowledge (Know)

The “Know” column shows that four participants already handled the indispensable starter items of Estonian: numbers, the most basic colour words, and the simple to-be construction, where “on” means “is.” Only one participant (#5) reported prior knowledge of words for clothing. This pattern confirmed that the lesson material closed a genuine gap without repeating content that everyone had already mastered. The group was mixed in ability—one learner wrote “Nothing!” in the baseline section, while another was experimenting with past-tense forms—yet the shared absence of appearance vocabulary meant the planned content was relevant and reachable for all.

Across the five pilot participants, self-reported baseline competence spans from pre-A1 to early A2. Learner #3 declares no prior knowledge, whereas learner #5 reports familiarity with core verbs, past and present tense, and a working clothing lexicon, indicating an incipient A2 floor. The remaining three learners cluster around early A1: variously able to handle greetings, cashier exchanges, self-introductions, colours, numbers, and basic shopping dialogues, yet still omit key everyday sets such as weekdays or extended descriptive language.

Grammar awareness is emerging and uneven. Casual references to plural formation, possessives and past-tense usage reveal emerging control rather than systematic mastery; no participant shows evidence of handling case endings or complex verb conjugations at baseline level.

The language learning core is therefore partially established, and this distribution suggests the group can engage with role-play tasks that mirror common micro-interactions without overwhelming the least

experienced member, leading us to the conclusion that we have an ideal basis for testing our materials, with regard to the baseline knowledge of our group of learners.

Learning objectives (Want to know)

The “Want to Know” entries show that four of the five learners arrived with clearly articulated aims that dovetail with the lesson’s focus on describing appearance, while the fifth later expressed an overarching goal of reaching full A1 competence. Learner #1 sought “more Estonian” to follow and join everyday conversations, signalling a need for the very clothing, hairstyle and physical-feature vocabulary introduced in the session. Learner #2 aimed for fluent interaction in public institutions, cafés and restaurants and for the ability to “speak in full sentences” and “ask for directions”; although these contexts extend beyond the immediate theme, the learner’s underlying requirement, for a richer stock of adjectives and accurate sentence frames, directly matches the lesson’s grammar load. Learner #3 left the “Want” row blank but noted in the survey a wish to master A1-level words and structures, indicating difficulty formulating short-term objectives rather than disinterest in the topic. Participants #4 and #5 explicitly ask for help building longer clauses, placing adjectives correctly, and diagnosing residual errors. These requests signal that learners perceive syntax, word order and agreement, not merely vocabulary, as limiting factors in their communicative reach. Learner #5 wanted to “build the sentence correctly, expand vocabulary, and see the weak points” left over from a previous A1 course, needs that the lesson’s descriptive lexicon and agreement drills were designed to meet while also supplying the requested diagnostic feedback.

Collectively, the data reveal three converging priorities: targeted vocabulary growth in the domain of personal description and everyday service encounters; heightened sentence-level accuracy through control of word order, plural formation and adjective agreement; and clearer formative diagnostics to identify individual gaps. From this, we can conclude that the lesson’s emphasis on descriptive lexis, plural nominatives and agreement therefore addresses a genuine lexical-grammatical gap that learners in our pilot testing group themselves recognised.

Reported Gains (Learned)

Every learner recorded new colour or clothing terms after the lesson . Three (#1, #2, #5) additionally referenced plural-rule discoveries (“recognise plural nouns,” “difference between singular and plural,” “the

plural form need on was new”) while participant #4 noted an unresolved detail about an intricate spelling rule, “the right vowel after a consonant” in plural nominatives. Only participant #3 mentioned situational phrases (“practical usages at shopping, when going to a hair salon”), indicating that vocabulary rather than fixed expressions may have made the strongest immediate impression.

Survey and observational evidence

Participant #2 wrote that they “completed all the tasks quickly” and that the lesson “went well,” then added that they would “revise this material once again,” implying personal study needs rather than a pacing problem. Participant #4 similarly said they would “need more time and repetition to learn the words”. No other sheet raised speed or workload concerns. All five respondents use English at B1–C1, and three command an additional European language at A2–B1; several commented that limited beginner resources make Estonian harder to learn, underscoring the systemic value of the materials just piloted.

Synthesis

Cross-checking the KWL charts, classroom field-notes and interview comments against the lesson design shows that the pilot lesson met its narrow communicative aims. The appearance theme matched genuine lexical gaps; the grammatical load (plural nominatives and adjective–noun agreement) aligned with stated learner objectives; and every participant reported concrete vocabulary or rule gains within that frame. The only residual issues concern fine-grained plural spelling and the desire for more built-in recycling. No learner requested, within the context of the pilot lesson, content outside the appearance focus, confirming thematic relevance. These findings validate the tested appearance lesson bundle as a substantive and necessary addition to the A1 resource pool. More contact time is always desirable, although it may not be possible in every circumstance, which is addressable to some extent by independent study, which as noted earlier, our materials are also designed to support. Built-in recycling via development of other additional exercises was also both a noted request, and one that we as a group initiated acting on after the pilot lesson review, by continuing further development of the exercises. The website developed to host and freely distribute our materials aids in addressing both the issue of contact time and independent review and study ability, particularly the latter. If a future group were to take advantage of the retained contact information, they can gain valuable insight on the long term success of our material, although in the short term, it appears that we largely succeeded in attaining our development goals and also got valuable short term feedback which we

have been able to begin to act on in our limited remaining time together as a group.