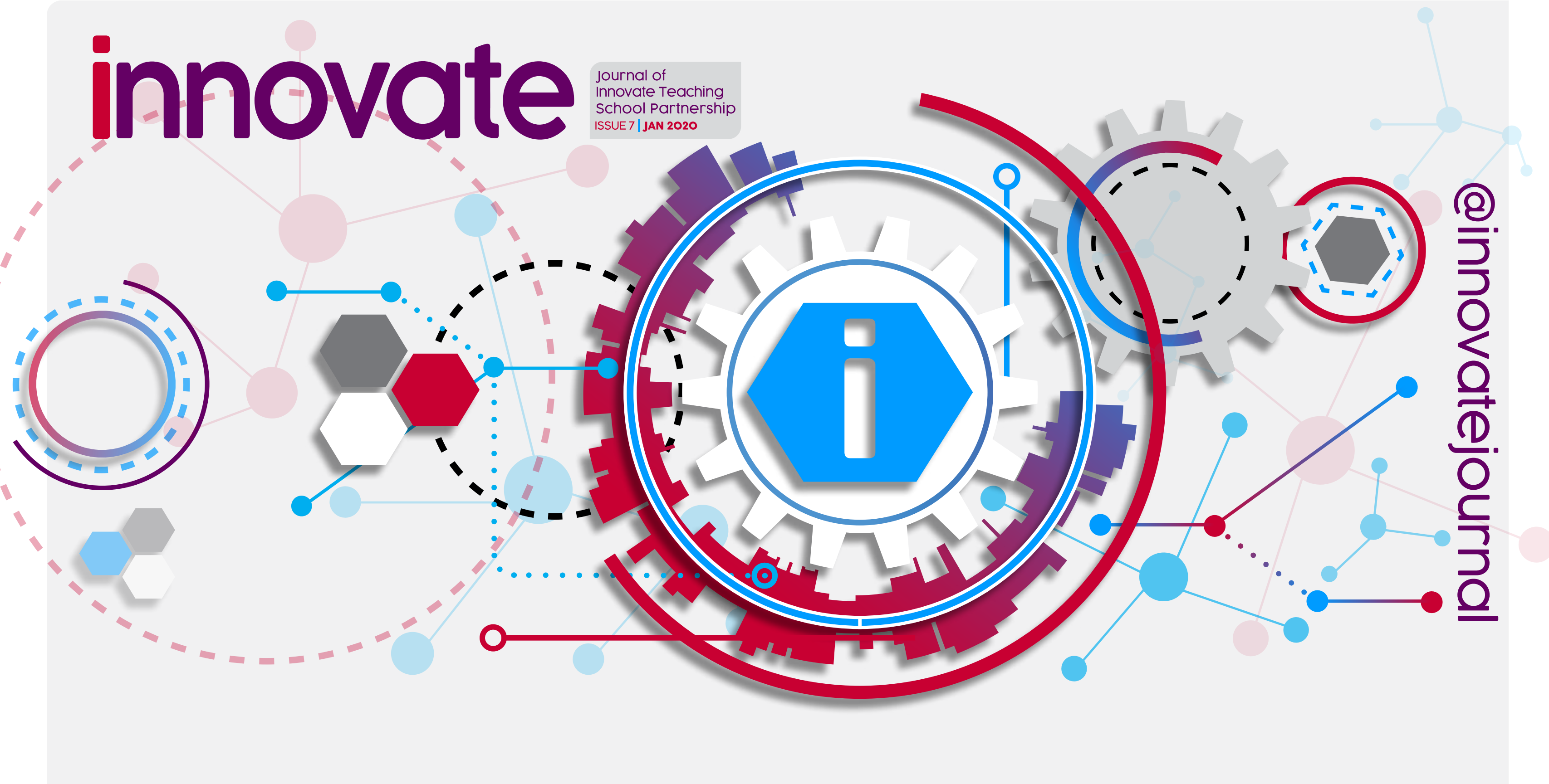


innovate

Journal of
Innovate Teaching
School Partnership
ISSUE 7 | JAN 2020

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Interview a teacher!

“Language is the road map of culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going”
– Rita Mae Brown

HEIDE FRANK

BUSINESS ENGLISH TEACHER

1. GIVE ME AN OVERVIEW OF YOUR JOB ROLE?

I started my teaching career back in 1998. After 19 years of organising language courses (mainly Business English) at various levels and settings (corporate and academic) in 2017, I embarked into the journey to teach German in the so-called integration courses funded by the BAMF (Federal Office for Migration and refugees).

The number of people needing German has arisen since 2015. This year was the year when thousands and thousands of people fled their homelands for safety; a large majority of refugees were Syrians and East Africans. From 2017 to March 2019 teaching in the so-called courses “German for illiterate people”, I mainly dealt with learners from Syria who had no knowledge of the German language. In fact, 90% were completely illiterate

even in their mother-tongue, since they never had had a chance to attend schools in their native countries (Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Somalia).

Learners needed to gain a grasp of the German language before thinking about securing employment. At the end of a year’s course students have to take the “DTZ-B1” which is equivalent to a “German test for immigrants”. Once achieved learners either try to look for a job or go on pursuing with B2 courses, which for most jobs is highly recommended if not a requisite. The hardest part in these special courses is to make learners familiar with German culture, political systems etc.

Aside from teaching, learners need language to survive. If they can’t communicate in another language, like English,

it is quite often impossible to get important information about them and their daily lives; sometimes interpreters are required to help the teachers communicate.

Later on I had the chance to dive into the so-called German for special purposes (DeuFöV) courses, aimed at learners of a minimum intermediate (B1) level wishing to further improve their level of German and heading towards B2. These courses end with the so-called TELC B2 test. For more about this test provider:

<https://www.telc.net/en/about-telc/who-we-are.html>

“If learners can’t communicate in another language, like English, it is quite often impossible...”

From April 2019, I have also been acting as a coach as an intercultural German tutor/mediator, who tries and cover job-related topics ranging from CVs and application, interviews, labour law etc. In these courses most attendees can express themselves quite well, most of them are motivated as the service bureau for craftsmanship, which launched the course, is on the constant outlook for internships and jobs to help them integrate into the German labour market. Even here the majority are Syrians, as well as a few Afghanis.

Personally this is the most rewarding teaching setting that concerns the German courses, is that I do not teach German in the literal sense, but can bring life experiences into class every topic.

2. TELL ME SOME OF YOUR HIGHLIGHTS IN TEACHING SO FAR.

My corporate Business English courses, are mostly not goal-oriented, there's no luring final exam. However, sometimes companies want to have learners tested, which is merely for the supervisor to check the level of fluency learners have grasped in class. The atmosphere

is in these classes is mostly disciplined and relaxed, with a mix of learners.

I have had great results at uni, because of this free approach, listening to so many fantastic talks. Integration courses with the refugees have been monotonous, as the nature of the final exam is hardly feasible with the long preparation after 500 hours of class. Further to this, the highlights of teaching come from students being able to find employment and really thrive in the German market and culture. When there are so many hiding factors that cause trauma and frustration - much of our work is emotionally supporting learners when there is no real psychological provision put in to place. Even showing the highest grade of empathy and resilience and creating a pleasant class atmosphere, there have been

“...bring [ing] life experiences in to every class topic...”

“A different language is a different vision of life - Federico Fellini”

few positive outstanding cases. I still recall however one outstanding situation where a deaf-mute girl managed to pass the final exam with me. She was such an example to everyone.

3. TELL ME SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOU FACE AS A TEACHER?

In this field of work, a high level of resilience, empathy and cultural understanding are the bread and butter of my daily work. A teacher can only be successful in their job, if they involve their learners, shows an understanding of their learners, is capable to develop strong relationship with the target group. They need to be approachable, be excellent communicators, at the same time be friendly and empathetic and last but not least be outstanding motivators.