

# Teaching English to senior citizens

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# Demographic shift: ageing population

The World Health Organisation - estimated that 524 million people were aged 65 or older (8% of the population)

That number is expected to be 1.5 billion by 2050 and that would be 16% of the world's population.

The Serbian Bureau of Statistics - 20% of the population consists of citizens that are 65 or older.

# Challenges

- Deteriorating health
- “Loss of status and role, and hence, social exclusion” Findsen and Formosa (2011:13)
- The poor social network - Filipović Hrast et al (2015)

# The project

Project was initiated by “Bread of Life” - the charity that works with the underprivileged

The purpose: to provide the participants with various activities so that they would use their free time to establish connections with others.

Two cycles:

- Cycle 1 - from 2009 to 2011
- Cycle 2 - from 2013 to 2015

# The study: participants

The age range: from 65+ to 90

Varied education background

Marital status: most were unmarried  
or widowed

The core group of eleven people who  
would come fairly regularly to the  
class (nine ladies and two gentlemen)

# Research questions

- What are language needs of learners and interests of students in senior citizens beginner class?
- What motivates learners to come and learn English?
- To what extent do learners feel they are making progress?

# Data collection

Observations

Informal conversations with the participants

In-depth interview with participants and with  
the program coordinator

Teacher/researcher diaries and field notes

Reflection on learners' actions in class

# Findings

## Learning

What are age appropriate activities?

Role plays

Nursery rhymes

The importance of the location

A place for ladies to socialize

few places where ladies could meet and that do not include tobacco smoke, alcohol and bad language

Reasons for learning English

to communicate with their grandchildren who moved to other countries

to spend time with other people

Desire to be involved

make an additional effort to leave their house and take part in a new experience



# Conclusions

Social networks - an important determinant of the quality of life of the elderly - de Belvis, Avolio, Spagnolo (2008)

Lifelong Education - the foreign language education of seniors - Hatar, Groficikova (2016)

In order to have a more active and healthy ageing population, it is vital to investigate ways to increase (physical) activity levels in older adults (Smith, 2017)

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