



Learning Experience Planning Project

THE TALKING DICTIONARY COMPANION COURSE

Garima Banerjee, Hyejin Hwang, Haley Kintner, Suzan Laubscher

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Dr. Nancy Knapp



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1. About the Project: The Talking Dictionary

The Talking Dictionary is the only audiovisual language reference tool that links keywords and phrases to detailed full-color illustrations in a comprehensive book and incorporates Callfinder® technology where readers can listen to the pronunciation of terms and phrases in different languages, using the Callfinder® device. Users have the opportunity to experience immersive language learning while limiting screen-time that other, similar tools demand. Not only does the Callfinder® provide the pronunciation of words, but there are also sound effects such as animal calls and musical excerpts to enhance understanding and language acquisition. Language learners build vocabulary and confidence as they SEE, HEAR, and LEARN. (Old Callfinder® models work with *The Talking Dictionary* – simply purchase the book and the sound files from Briza directly.)

The Talking Dictionary is written in English. Before purchasing the book, you can select one additional language to be included with the initial purchase of the Dictionary. Each standard package includes the dictionary, a language Callfinder®, and the wordlist booklet for the language selected. Every language thereafter will be sold separately as a language sticker that activates the respective language on the Callfinder®, as well as a wordlist booklet containing the spelling and translation of all English words for that language.

The Talking Dictionary is currently available in 7 South African languages: English, Afrikaans, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Setswana, Sesotho, Sesotho sa Leboa.

The Talking Dictionary features 19 main themes that are divided into topics ranging from basic concepts like home life and sports to more complex topics like science and the natural world. There are over 2,000 color illustrations and more than 5,000 words, current terminology, and common phrases.

The book is extremely user friendly for learners of any age!

2. Description of Target Learners & Context

The Talking Dictionary Companion Courses aim to motivate Afrikaans parents to see the value in being able to communicate with the native black people in their mother tongue/ language and to enroll their children in the program. *The Talking Dictionary* Companion Courses have been developed in a way that allows them to be adapted and used to teach any of the 7 languages that *The Talking Dictionary* supports. This is the first companion course to be developed, so for now we are only focused on teaching the North Sotho language to

English and/or Afrikaans speakers. “Learning North Sotho: Level One” will be open for registration to Afrikaans children aged between 6-7 years old who wish to learn the North Sotho language and the ability to interact with native North Sotho speakers. Teachers and learners will use *The Talking Dictionary* book and Callfinder® to learn the North Sotho language through observation, guidance, support, and practice both in class with the teacher and at home with parents (or any other guardians available to attend). Students are given a copy of *The Talking Dictionary* and a Callfinder® to use for the duration of the course, but are encouraged to purchase their own to keep learning, even after the classes are over.

Extramural activities are a big component of affluent South African culture. The public school system covers some sports but does not typically cover music, robotics, or art classes. Therefore, many children do extramural activities after school. The target learners for this course all come from affluent backgrounds with educated parents. The children are enrolled in good schools and are engaged in one or more extramural activities already.

The target learners all have access to a home computer, transportation to class, and family involvement. The companion courses do require the parents to pay a fee, but there is not much profit made from these courses. The fee paid by the parents helps to offset the costs of course materials that include a Talking Dictionary and a Callfinder for each student to use during the course, as well as classroom materials (e.g., props, posters, stickers, puppets, dolls) to simulate the environment that is being learned in each class. As a result of the limited budget, all classes will take place in the library or any available class space at the participating school.

“Learning North Sotho: Level 1” is a 7-week course made up of 6 formal classes and 1 Show Off Session. Each class that the student will attend is 45 minutes long to keep within the attention span of children (including 10 min before teaching commences, to settle in). Since language is learned by memorization and repetition, there will be one formal class per week with activities designed for practice at home using the Classting Learning Management System, an educational social platform where parents, students, and teachers can communicate and upload class-related materials.

3. Statement & Justification of Learning Experience Objectives

Despite the conditions surrounding COVID-19, we were fortunate to be able to virtually interview a small group of South African parents interested in this program. Based on that interview, the age of our students, the resources and budget available, and keeping in mind the high-fidelity of any skills learned during these classes, we have identified the following objectives. By the end of Level 1, students will be able to use the North-Sotho language to:

1. Students must introduce themselves and greet others in North Sotho.
2. Students must match 50 North Sotho nouns to corresponding images.
3. Students must memorize common phrases and select logical responses during role-play activities.
4. Students must memorize and recite classroom rhymes and songs.
5. Students must verbally translate numbers 1-20 to North Sotho.

Learning a foreign language has lifelong benefits. Children who master a language spoken in their area will be able to communicate with mother-tongue speakers in a more personal and effective way. This will open doors for them in their professional working life one day and break cultural barriers in future social contexts.

Research has shown that naturalistic language learning is more effective than formal language lessons due to the magnitude of exposure to the new language (Munoz, 2010). Therefore, this course will aim to create authentic opportunities to practice new words and phrases.

The course will aim to simulate naturalistic language learning by introducing topics in a natural way and provide context-related learning experiences. The predominant argument for foreign language programs for youth is based on research that supports the Critical Period Hypothesis (CHP). The CHP estimates a lower boundary of 2 years and an upper boundary of somewhere in puberty for the most effective acquisition of a foreign language. These studies were done on naturalistic learning when immigrants are introduced in a second language community. Munoz (2006) argues that the lower proven effectiveness of language acquisition in formal language programs can be attributed to the significantly less exposure to the language. Therefore, the program will be developed in Levels. Level 1 includes two learning experiences each week. The first experience

is the formal session held at the participating school. The second learning experience will be different each week and will be shared via Classting LMS.

4. Details of Prototype Learning Experience

The Facilitator and Parent Guide

The Facilitator & Parent's Guide has been created and will be available to facilitators and parents (or any other guardians of the student) once the course begins. This will enable facilitators to conduct the class and will allow parents to better help students with at-home assignments. The facilitator guide contains each of the six classes in detail. The parents' guide includes details about what was covered during the class, the list of words and phrases, what the at-home activity is, instructions for completing the activity and instructions for uploading the completed home activity on Classting, the LMS of choice for this class. As we have a limited budget, Classting provides a free platform for teachers and parents to interact and upload photos, videos, and posts. The parent's guide is posted as a class announcement weekly on Classting, and the hardcover(or pdf file) of the facilitator guide will be distributed to the facilitator(s). Classting and the Facilitator & Parent's Guide can be accessed using the link below.

How to access Classting: Click the link below and sign-in with the following ID and password

<https://www.classting.com/TheTalkingDictionary>

ID : maydayjinny@gmail.com

Password : edit6400

Facilitator & Parent's Guide (Appendix i): <https://tinyurl.com/6400appendix1>

(Side note: We noticed a minor error when clicking the links with the ctrl button. Please copy and paste the link to the browser.)

Materials

For this course to be effective for the target learners, it is important to have an assortment of carefully thought out physical materials for them to interact with. Below is a list of each of the materials required for the course, a brief example, and the location of that material within the appendix.

- **Word Hunt Cards** (Appendix ii) <https://tinyurl.com/6400appendix2>

▪ Sample:



- **Songs for ‘Recite and Repeat’ activity**

Instrumental tunes such as Vader Jacob / Frere Jacques tunes will be used. (Appendix iii)

<https://tinyurl.com/6400appendix3>

▪ Sample:

Vader Jacob Tune: <https://youtu.be/wGjKM-cbFSg>

Frere Jacques Tune: <https://youtu.be/L89nNo3pBzI>

- **Puppets and dolls**

They will be used for greeting activities and other role play activities during class.

▪ Sample:



- **Volume/ Pitch/ Speed Sliders** for ‘Recite and Repeat’ activities (Appendix iv)

<https://tinyurl.com/6400appendix4>



▪ Sample:

5. Authentic Learning Tasks Learners will be Doing During this Experience

This program will be in line with the **Cognitive Apprenticeship Model** and encompasses elements such as:

- Modeling
- Coaching & Scaffolding
- Articulation & Reflection
- Exploration

Facilitators will begin each class with an activity that they will first **model** for the class. This begins with greeting the children in the North Sotho phrase for Hello (for example: Thobela) and will gradually add North Sotho phrases for “How are you?” and “I am fine” which will serve as an entrance pass for the children. The entire process will follow a **scaffolded** approach where the facilitator gradually leads students to learn words and phrases and construct sentences by themselves using sentence formation activities by suggesting several prefabricated sentences.

The content of the course will also be based on probable real-life contexts that participants will encounter where they might use the newly acquired language. This involves role play scenarios in a grocery store or restaurant or having a conversation with a native speaker at home. This creates authentic learning situations for students and helps them use their learning in real life.

This corresponds to the **articulation and reflection** components in the cognitive apprenticeship model. A situated learning environment will be simulated with role-play activities and collaborative learning will be encouraged with group recite activities. Students will also get many opportunities to **explore** the content they are learning through Word Hunts every morning and take-home cards that are activated and respond to the Callfinder.

6. Cognitive Apprenticeship Demonstrated in the Design of this Course

1. The more-knowledgeable other (i.e., teacher and parents) **scaffolds** student's sentence formation activity by suggesting several prefabricated sentences. For instance, after learning several nouns and adjectives, learners will engage in game-like rhyme activities where they can fill in the blanks verbally while the facilitator leads the chant (**modeling and coaching**). Students will first be encouraged to use the words they are able to understand and say them out loud. Subsequently, reflecting the student's prior knowledge and Zone of Proximal Development, the teacher will provide additional words or phrases with the sharing context.
2. As the learner becomes more familiar with the expressions and acquires additional words, the facilitator (MKO) will gradually allow students to take the initiative on constructing the sentences, namely 'fading out' during the learning process.
3. While students explore the sentence formation process with a series of games and authentic in-class activities, teachers will intervene and provide feedback when semantic errors occur (**coaching**). Considering the communicative objectives of this program, teachers will avoid making meticulous grammatical corrections as far as the meaning of the student's sentence(or word) is clear. This is in line with features of cognitive apprenticeship which encourages errors as an opportunity for learning and providing **coaching** and an opportunity to **reflect** on the learning. This type of instruction aims to provide students with a learning environment that focuses on enhancing their fluency and communicational skills in a foreign language. The previously stated aspect is in a similar line with another element of cognitive apprenticeship, which is the authentic nature of the program.
4. Students can freely explore the words, phrases, and sentences using the "Talking Dictionary." After all of the prearranged activities are done, students can spend free time to use the "Callfinder" to **explore** activated words in class and at home. The Call finder is a pen-like device with the code reader at the top. Pointing the call finder to any image in the book will activate pronunciation or a relative explanation through the small speaker of the Callfinder.
5. Students will have the opportunity to work with More knowledgeable others at home (their parents, family members or other native speakers of the language). They will get activated cards that they can take home and practice with parents. This will provide parents with the opportunity to coach and practice with the students in a more comfortable atmosphere of their homes. These practice activities

will be recorded and posted on Classting, the LMS of choice for this program. This will give students the opportunity to **articulate, explore, and reflect** on what they have learned.

7. Evaluation & Assessment

As this learning environment is based on the cognitive apprenticeship model, assessments have been designed based on the authentic learning activities and practical use of the knowledge gained. After every session, homework will be assigned to all students. A note to parents will be posted on Classting after each lesson that will explain what we covered in the lesson and what tasks need to be performed, recorded (video/audio), and uploaded to Classting. **These tasks will be evaluated and will account for Formative Evaluations.**

Formative Assessments

All homework assignments will be graded and will be counted as formative assessments. These assessments will give students the opportunity to engage in “role play” and practice with more knowledgeable others the content they have learned in the class. These assignments, if possible, must be conducted in real-life settings like a grocery store, shopping mall, in a restaurant, in the kitchen, in a zoo, and/or with a native speaker of North Sotho whenever possible. This will give learners the opportunity to repeatedly practice the content that they have learned in class - greeting and introducing themselves, names of animals, foods/fruits, numbers, members of the family, and using action words to describe their actions and emotions in the North Sotho language.

Summative Assessment

The class will have one Summative Assessment which will be based on the children’s participation and involvement in activities during the Show Off Session.

- **The Show Off Session**

This session will be designed by class facilitators. Facilitators will prepare the songs, dance, and puppet routines during class, which will be enacted during the session by all students in groups. Students will be graded based on their performance during these group activities. Here is an example of what this session would encourage learners to participate in.

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- **Time allocated:** 2 to 3 hours.
 - **Day:** Facilitator(s) will decide the date, day, and time of the Show Off Session and will inform parents and learners well in advance so that they can allocate time for this activity and participate with their children for the final, summative assessment.
 - **Place:** This might be the school field or auditorium or any other place where children can move about freely. Props and performing spaces can be set up without cramping participants in a small space like a library.
 - **Sample Activities:** These are sample activities, and facilitators can come up with their own ideas for the Show off Session.

Children set up stalls and sell goods like candy and balloons: This can be done in groups of 2. Assessors will go to each stall. Children will greet them and introduce themselves (Hello, My name is _____, How are you _____, I am fine). Assessors will “buy” candy and balloons. Learners will have to “count” the number of candies and balloons and assessors will “buy” those items with fake money. This interaction will be used to grade them on assessments related to counting, greeting, and introducing themselves.

Children will play and act in a group: This could be based on words and phrases related to animals, actions, and family members using different action words. For example - Each child chooses a card and enacts the role of a family member they received on the card. Then they choose cards for animals, food/fruit, and then actions. This can be done in groups of 2 or three. One child has a dog card, the other a grandmother, and another child has the father card. They enact scenarios where the child with the dog card needs to bark (whoof whoof), and grandmother says to father to take the dog out for a walk. All these actions and scenarios will be based on what they have already done in class and at home multiple times and will not be extremely new.

Fruit Salad: Facilitators will explain that the Show Off Session is an event where everyone is invited to a fruit salad party. Various fruits will be displayed on the table, and children will be asked to identify the fruits. If identified correctly, that fruit will be used for the fruit salad. Parents will take those fruits and cut them and combine these in a bowl, and when the activity is over, everyone gets to enjoy the fruit salad.

This format will provide learners a safe and comfortable environment to display what they have learned and follows the Cognitive Apprenticeship approach of using skills learned in a real-life scenario or simulated environment.

8. Defense of Instructional Decisions

The Talking Dictionary Companion Course (Level 1) aims to motivate Afrikaans parents to see the value in being able to communicate with the native black people in their mother tongue/ language and to enroll their children in the program. Afrikaan children aged between 6 to 7 years will sign up for these classes to finally use the opportunity to learn the North Sotho language and interact with mother-tongue speakers of the said language. Teachers and learners will use the Talking Dictionary book and the call finder to learn the North Sotho language through observation, guidance, support, and practice both in class with the teacher and at home with parents. We spent a lot of time brainstorming about how to design and develop this course. We had one person who had experience in teaching a second language to elementary students while the others were from a Higher Education background. However, we all come from different backgrounds and cultures, and all of us speak more than one language which is not our mother tongue. Based on our own learning experiences of learning foreign languages and keeping the audience, budget, and resources in mind, we took three major decisions for designing and developing this companion course. We would like to talk about these in some detail here.

1. We chose the Cognitive Apprenticeship Model without any arguments because this model is rooted in the natural way of learning skills. Language, though unlike any other “concrete skill” like shoemaking or jewelry making, is learned mostly through observations and doing. Although the cognitive apprenticeship model is aimed primarily at teaching problem-solving processes that experts use to handle complex tasks, the different components of this model modeling, coaching, scaffolding, fading, articulation, reflecting and exploring work very well to learn a foreign language. Cognitive apprenticeship is also rooted in constructivism, which therefore allows learners to use existing knowledge to accommodate and assimilate new knowledge and offers the opportunity to use this new knowledge in real-life scenarios through role-play, simulations, ill-defined problems, and projects. Our Design, therefore, uses these various components and it helped us design and develop teaching/learning strategies and activities in a more learner-centered manner. We used the Talking Dictionary Book and the Callfinder (pen-like device) as the main resource and created cards (that are activated through the Callfinder) for word hunt games and exploration activities. We also discussed using the problem-based

and project-based models, but as we were neither producing any concrete product at the end of the nor solving a problem per se, we chose to focus on the cognitive apprenticeship model and how we can actualize the core elements thereof.

2. We decided to use the Classting as our LMS of choice. We chose this platform as we were working on a limited budget in that Classting was free to use for teachers and parents. It is easy to use and provides a social platform where parents, students, and teachers can interact and post photos, videos, audio files and class-related posts (such as homework details and what was covered during the class, fun activity videos from the class, etc.). This was suggested by Jinny in our group and we would like to thank her for introducing the group to this really wonderful free social platform when one is working on a budget. During this course, facilitators will be using this platform to post homework, important announcements, uploading songs, and videos from class. Parents will be using this LMS to keep track of what their student is doing in class, their homework, use the space to upload the video activity homework which can later be assessed by facilitators for formative assessments. We discussed different ideas like Google docs and drive and other social platforms like Facebook and Whatsapp but eventually decided to use Classting because Facebook and Whatsapp were argued as not appropriate platforms for children due to age restrictions and online security issues. Google Drive only provides 15 GB of free data to store photos, videos, and files of other sorts which was a handicap as this course would be video and picture intensive. Classting came out as a winner because it is free, and children can use this platform in a secure environment without any inappropriate content and advertisements. It provided a place where every member can interact, engage and communicate with posting, commenting, hitting a 'Light up' button to acknowledge their works (which is similar to the 'Like' feature of Facebook), and view all the uploaded videos. There is a 'Private Message' feature where parents and students who want to have a one-on-one chat with the facilitator regarding their concerns, questions, and request without sharing private phone numbers of the facilitator.
3. We discussed a great deal of time about what should be covered in Level One of the course and we came up with ideas like colors, planets in the solar system, counting from one to twenty, including movies and nursery rhymes, etc. We eventually settled for teaching them how to greet, introduce oneself, words for relatives and family, fruits and food names, some common action words, and counting from one to twenty. Language learning is most successful if used in constructivist situations such as using everyday life scenarios and practical use of skills learned. We decided to exclude any behaviorist component in this course as punishing learners (or rewarding them) can backfire with the learners while leading to a loss

of self-regulation and autonomous learning. This is one of the main reasons why we allocated at-home missions (e.g., uploading videos with the parents) and embedded real-life scenarios for learners to engage with. We chose to formatively assess the student's achievement with the home-made video rather than a conventional form of test, because we wanted students to stay in a comfortable and a natural setting while checking their comprehension on North-Sotho expressions. The Summative Assessment is designed as a form of "Show Off" sessions which easily endow kids with an impression of a festive event or a fun meetup where everyone is relaxed. This will in turn form an encouraging atmosphere to foster interaction, engagement and communication. The "assessment" happens in a more "covert" manner which helps students engage in the activities and not be overwhelmed with how they will be graded while doing those activities. We did this because of the following reasons.

- a. 6 to 7-year olds generally use language to communicate with family and relatives and knowing relative and family members words would help them communicate with Native speakers
- b. Learning how to greet and introduce always helps when communication with a native speaker of the language as this is an important step to start a conversation with a native speaker
- c. Knowing how to say fruits and food items helps them order food in a restaurant (Our member Suzan told us that South African parents tend to let children choose their own menu in a restaurant, so she mentioned it is worthwhile to include this topic), and in grocery stores and shopping malls
- d. Learning to count in a foreign language helps them express themselves in conversations
- e. Learning nouns, verbs and common phrases helps them form sentences in different situations using "root phrases" and adding new words that they learn from the Talking dictionary.

We decided that words related to planets in the solar system, names of colors, numbers after 20, and other words related to vehicles and transportation would be a better fit for Level 2. This formed the basis for deciding on how to greet, introduce oneself, learn the words for relatives and family, fruits and food names, some common action words, and counting from one to ten in favor of everything else and these formed the central theme of each of the six classes in Level One.

These ideas and discussions shaped the central theme of our joint discussions. We brainstormed together and we came up with some good ideas. We are thankful that Suzan Laubscher gave us the opportunity to work on this project.

9. Intellectual Property rights

The Talking Dictionary Book and Callfinder are products designed by _____ and belong to _____. Therefore, _____ have the exclusive rights to own any products or projects based on their The Talking Dictionary Book and Callfinder. The members of the team who worked on the Talking Dictionary COmpanion Course may/may not use this product/course for commercial or educational purposes but must obtain permission from _____ before doing so. If members of the team plan to use/edit/change/commercialize this course, they must mention in their course/product that they have obtained the rights from _____ to do so, and acknowledge the parent company _____ on all their products, courses, websites and any other sources where the product is advertised or used for commercial, educational or social purposes.

References

Munoz, C. (2006). Age and the Rate of Foreign Language Learning. *Second Language Acquisition. Multilingual Matters.*