

ICT for L2 Acquisition by Adult Migrants: Results from a Comparative Study in the Netherlands and Sweden

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Abstract

This paper, based on a comparative study developed by the Joint Research Centre – Institute for Prospective Technological Studies of the European Commission, deals with ICT use for L2 acquisition to meet the language knowledge requirements (set by immigration laws in several European countries) and to enhance integration of adult migrants in both the Netherlands and Sweden.

More specifically, the paper provides a qualitative snapshot of the current situation in these two countries where migrant integration is regimented by opposite policy regimes (including with respect to L2 knowledge requirements), with sharp differences in their ICT provision for L2 education (a highly developed private market in the Netherlands versus a more scattered range of online free resources in Sweden). The five case studies at the base of this paper, developed through ethnographic research, highlight some driving factors. ICT provide greater choice for learners and diversification of activities. They stimulate the upgrading of some basic ICT skills for lower ability learners. They enhance personalisation and flexibility in L2 courses delivery. They foster the independence of the learner. On the other hand, our research identified several barriers that cause the full potential of ICT to remain untapped, especially in terms of: interactive capacity of the tools being used (ICT often used as a digital transposition of printed matter); possibility to bridge L1 and L2; variety of uses of ICT (using different medias and ICTs).

The paper concludes with some considerations aimed at educators and policy makers on the steps needed to better exploit the potential of ICT for L2 acquisition by adult migrants and on the needs for further research to determine to what extent and how ICT use for L2 learning can lead to a more effective enhancement of migrants' integration paths in the host society.