



**Montessori Principles  
in adult education and training:**

**is the Montessori Methodology suitable for  
adults?**

*The Italian experience at Lingua Più - Città di Castello*

# **PREMISES of Montessori approach with adults**

**We will quote Maria Montessori  
to better explain  
*why*  
Montessori Methodology  
can be applied to adults :**

***“This book of methods compiled by one person alone,  
must be followed by many others.***

***It is my hope that, starting from the individual study of  
the child educated with our method, other educators  
will set forth the results of their experiments.***

***These are the pedagogical books which await us in the  
future”***

**(Conclusion (Chapter XXII) to first Montessori’s publication in English, *The Montessori Method*, Montessori, 1912, p. 374).**

**Lingua Più started to  
pilot the application with  
adults  
in foreign languages a  
few years ago**

WHY?

**BECAUSE OF  
MARIA MONTESSORI 'S STRONG  
CONNECTIONS WITH CITTA' DI CASTELLO**

***IN FACT:***



**Maria Montessori printed her first book, “Il Metodo della Pedagogia Scientifica” in Città di Castello, in 1909**



**Still in Città di Castello, in the same year, Maria Montessori held the first training course for teachers**



**Later, Maria Montessori started some primary schools in Città di Castello where she applied her methodology, together with her friend, the local Baroness Alice Franchetti**

*Laura Gastaldi and Roberta Marsili*, teachers at *Lingua Più*, started testing the basic **Montessori principles** in adult training,

because:

- we needed to find new effective approaches for teaching adults during our lessons
- those principles match with our methodology, soft skills and teaching attitude
- Maria Montessori represents for us a model as a woman and as an educationalist

*How?*



**Studying and adapting the 12  
Montessori principles that we  
considered suitable to adults**

- ➡ **Self-directed learning**
- ➡ **The teacher is an "observer" not a lecturer**
- ➡ **Sensitive learning periods**
- ➡ **Better learning through repetition**
- ➡ **Suitable environment**
- ➡ **Self control of mistake in didactical material**
- ➡ **Choose own learning time**
- ➡ **Learning by doing**
- ➡ **Movement analysis**
- ➡ **Silence exercise**
- ➡ **Good manners**
- ➡ **Tidy rooms**

The full application of these principles could revolutionize adult teaching and training, fostering:

✿ **Self – confidence in learning**

✿ **Autonomous learning**

through

**the *elimination* or at least the alleviation of the major causes of stress and inhibition in adult learning**

**FOR A FASTER  
LEARNING**

The good results we reached by applying the Montessori principles strengthened our opinion that, even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the **Montessori Method** is still *an effective* approach adaptable to a different target group:

***ADULTS***

# **Our good practice resulted in two European projects**



Lifelong  
Learning



## **“Frojol – Free Style Montessori on the Job Learning”**

**target group :**

- ✿ VET teachers/ trainers**
- ✿ Trainees’ tutors at companies/job agencies, etc..**



**Participant countries:**

**Italy**  
**The Netherlands**  
**Poland**  
**Spain**  
**France**  
**Austria**



## **“MMLT – Montessori Methodology in Language Training”**

### **target group:**

- ✿ Language teachers/ trainers to adults 20+**
- ✿ Language trainers of trainers**
- ✿ Students of language teaching**
- ✿ Language students**



### **Participant countries:**

**Italy**  
**Greece**  
**Romania**  
**Hungary**  
**Poland**  
**Great Britain**

# HOW WE WORKED WITH



## FROJOL – Freestyle Montessori on The Job Learning

We adapted **the 12 principles** to the **six Montessori characteristics** selected by the Dutch Montessori Association:

- ✿1 Head, heart and hands
- ✿2 Learning by choosing
- ✿3 Reflection
- ✿4 Social learning
- ✿5 Integrated learning
- ✿6 In and outside the school building

**Manual available**

# HOW WE WORKED WITH



## MMLT – Montessori Methodology in Language Training

### *1st step: the “band-aid”*

The **12 Montessori principles for the resolution or alleviation** of the main stress causes that adult learners usually face:

- ✿ Fear of teacher's expectations
- ✿ Need of immediate results
- ✿ Difficulties in memorization
- ✿ Need of grammar structure before starting speaking a foreign language
- ✿ Fear to make mistakes
- ✿ Peer pressure (from class mates)
- ✿ Time pressure due to scheduled programs
- ✿ Sense of loyalty towards own native language and culture
- ✿ Difficult in using the target language avoiding literal translation
- ✿ Lack of self-confidence

***2<sup>nd</sup> step: the full implementation*** to avoid stress

## **Main features of the methodology :**

<b>For STUDENTS</b>	<b>For TEACHERS</b>
<b>“Diary” → personal course book → final syllabus</b>	<b>Get to know each student → inner motivation</b>
<b>Free Spot</b>	<b>The teacher is a facilitator and not a lecturer</b>
<b>Silence (or a kind of) exercise</b>	<b>The teacher adapts didactical material to match the student’s needs and characteristics</b>
<b>Listening → speaking → writing</b>	<b>The importance of the environment</b>
<b>Students ‘checklist to self monitor improvements</b>	

# **Peculiarity of Montessori teachers for adult training:**

- are respectful**
- cultivate honest relationships**
- get familiar with their students**
- are informal and in constant evolution**
- their teaching is based on the exploration of the environment**

# **The 3 Maria Montessori's maxims**

In “The Child in the Family” (1950), Montessori lists **3 maxims**:

- 1. Observe all the reasonable activities of the child and try to understand them**
- 2. Satisfy as much as possible the child's desire to act: do not serve him, but educate him to become independent**
- 3. Since children are more sensitive than we think, act honestly with them**

## **...translated into adult's training...**

- *Really* understand students, from the inside
- *Really* help them become autonomous
- *Really* establish a relationship of honesty and trust

**And *thus* be open to teach like that!**

...that is...  
**No**

institutional programs

individual pre-set learning programs

....**but**

✱ *evolving research that starts with questions that students feel as urgent*

**No**

textbooks

exams

....**but**

✱ *a series of tasks, the sum of which will be the program*

✱ *self-evaluation and group evaluation, with remedial resources available*

***KEYWORD:***

***Self-liberation***

***The first task for a future Montessori teacher***



**So...**

**Do teachers accept to teach like this?**

**If they do,**

**then their role will change and will be:**

- ✗ not to teach**
- ✗ not to judge,**
- ✗ not to correct homework**
- ✗ not to correct exams,**
- ✗ not to “program” course syllabi,**
- ✗ not to look up answers to student questions, all the time (they should learn to do it themselves, most of the time),**
- ✗ not to motivate students,**
- ✗ not to discipline students,**
- ✗ not to do anything during a lesson *except* present the materials and then observe how they are used, in order to know what to eliminate, change or introduce for the next time**

Most teachers, when interviewed or during seminars, said they are already applying some of the **Montessorian principles** thinking of the **12 principles**....

**...but...**

what about the internal maxims (the **3 Maria Montessori's maxims**) that should guide their behavior?

➡ **So, we challenged teachers if they really apply these three, asking the following questions, for a self reflection:**



- ✿ Do you really understand your students, from the inside? (also doing things with them?)
- ✿ Do you really help your students become autonomous (meaning self-directed)?
- ✿ Do you really establish a relationship of honesty (questioning things with your students)?

**The main result was...**

*NO!*

And now a question to you:



- ✿ am I applying the 12 Montessori principles and the 3 Maxims ?
- ✿ do I really know you, your inner needs, aspirations and expectations?
- ✿ am I fostering your autonomy on the matter?
- ✿ am I really establishing a relationship of honesty and trust with you?

*NO! Not fully*



Erasmus+

**Lingua Più organises refresher courses  
for teachers and trainers also financed  
under Erasmus+ Program KA1**

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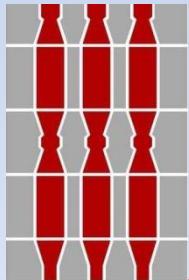
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