



# **Research on Montessori education and the learning methods for adults in Poland**

## **The Polish National Report**

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# Contents

## Preface

### 1. Desk Research

1.1 Popularity and current use of the Montessori method .....	4
1.2 Organization of trainings for teachers on the Montessori method .....	6
1.2.1 <i>Conferences</i> .....	7
1.2.2 <i>Workshops and courses</i> .....	8
1.3 Application of the Montessori method to adults .....	10
1.4 Application of the Montessori method to language learning .....	11
1.5 Application of the Montessori method online .....	12
1.6 Comparison of the Montessori principles with the principles of Adult Education .....	13

### 2. Field Research

2.1 Language Teachers .....	15
2.1.1 Profile of the students .....	16
2.1.2 Previous experience with the Montessori method.....	16
2.1.3 Consideration of the Montessori principles in teaching and relevance to adults .....	17
2.1.4 Most successful methodologies / strategies / practises used in language Experience .....	19
2.1.5 Weak parts of the Methodology implemented .....	20
2.1.6 The most significant problems that students find in language learning .....	20
2.2 Montessori Experts .....	20
2.2.1 Use of the method and how it has changed .....	20
2.2.2 Montessori principles adequate to language learning .....	21
2.2.3 Current use of Montessori in teaching languages .....	22
2.2.4 Parts of the Montessori method applicable to adults .....	23
2.2.5 Variations that have to be made for the application of Montessori Method to Language teaching for adults .....	24
3. Conclusions .....	25
4. References .....	26
5. List of Tables and Figures .....	27
6. Profile of the Interviewees .....	27
6.1 Language Teachers .....	27
6.2 Montessori Experts .....	27

## Preface

The Montessori methodology was developed by Maria Montessori, born on 31 August 1870, Italy, who as the first Italian woman-doctor was put in charge of the *Scuola Magistrale Ortofrenica*, or Orthophrenic School, a “medico-pedagogical institute” for training teachers in educating the mentally disabled children. Her work resulted in working out the methods and materials that were later adapted to accommodate the mainstream children. The methods were implemented in the so-called *Casa dei Bambini* (Children’s House), of which the first was opened in Rome, on 6 January, 1907. This is where the observed behaviour of the young children prompted Maria Montessori to form certain conclusions which led to the practices which became the hallmark of her educational philosophy and method, being adopted in numerous schools around the world.

In the process of children’s education the Montessori methodology addresses their individual intelligences including the musical, kinaesthetic, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, intuitive, linguistic and logical. The whole methodology is characterized by stressing independence, freedom within limits, and respect for the child’s natural psychological development. The principles that the Montessori philosophy rests upon are as follows:

- Self-confidence and self-esteem
- A sense of achievement and self-worth
- A sense of responsibility for themselves and their actions
- Independence and adaptability
- Cooperation with others and a sense of community
- Respect for the rights and a sense of community
- Initiative and self-motivation
- Concentration and persistence in completing a task

The Montessori methodology is contrived in such a way that it takes full advantage of the children’s desire to learn and their ability to develop their own competence. The whole curriculum allows the child to experience the joy of learning, the time to enjoy the process and guarantees the development of self-esteem.

*"My vision of the future is of the individual passing from one stage of independence to a higher, by means of their own activity, through their own effort of will, which constitutes the inner evolution of the individual."*

Dr. Maria Montessori

These words, accompanied by the famous sentence, “help me to do it myself”, best characterize her pedagogy, where education is understood not as shaping children’s individuality but as supporting their individual and social development. This is what the contemporary pedagogy defines as, “accompanying the child’s development”. Only in this

way by means of providing the children with experiences, the self-directed learning and gaining knowledge can happen.

This concept of children's development is close to contemporary theories of developmental psychology as well as philosophy, constructivist psychology and pedagogy. Basing the children's education on their needs, individual developmental capabilities, interests and especially, subjectivity, reveals great benefits of Montessori education since it explores such crucial aspects as the sensitive periods in children's lives. This is when, in the right environment, either individually or in cooperation with others and with the teacher's support, the development of children's personality in motor, mental, social, emotional and moral spheres is formed, which is extremely significant as activity and the children's independence are the elemental conditions of their development.

What is worth mentioning is the element of social education, where the group of children at different age resembles a natural group in the family. This is how the older children set a model of behaviour for their younger friends and in this way enter social relations that trigger cooperation and team work. This, however requires the teacher's assistance, who has to tailor his educational efforts not only to an individual child but also to a group of children of varied age. Thus, the Montessori philosophy aims at educating the person who is independent, responsible, demonstrating the clearly specified pro-social and pro-ecological attitude to the environment.

# **1. Desk Research**

The aim of this report is to demonstrate the state of the application of the Montessori method in Poland. In the following paper the author has presented the results of the research into the matter on the basis of various materials, such as web articles, films, books, post-conference materials, interviews with the Montessori experts and principles of the Montessori teaching institutions. Also, a number of questionnaires conducted among the language teachers of various languages have been a basis for the formulation of the conclusions regarding the state of the method in Poland. Owing to the fact that the “Montessori Days” are held in Poland this year, this has resulted in a number of conferences organized in major cities, featuring the presentations of the methodologists and Montessori experts from Poland and abroad.

## **1.1 Popularity and current use of the Montessori method**

Until today no research has been conducted as to the number of institutions working based on the Montessori methodology. This means that it is impossible to provide any solid data concerning their number, however it is known that it is growing regularly.

The ideas of Dr Maria Montessori were known in Poland during the interwar period, only to be abandoned later due to lack of funds to meet all the requirements. These included:

- equipping kindergartens’ with furniture and equipment, adjusted for age and growth of the child (they replaced typical benches in Polish kindergartens),
- paying bigger attention to cleanliness and proper sanitation,
- enriching the content of lessons and activities, as well as forms of work for the benefit of those that activated spontaneous creativity and inspire the child,
- disseminating of teaching aids, originally designed for the development of the various senses in children,
- drawing attention to keep everything tidy and to be systematic (all the activities both of educators and learners),
- promoting cooperation of educator with doctor and parents,
- emphasizing the importance of greater than ever care for the physical development of the children,
- transition from care and educational functions of kindergartens to the educational function with greater importance of the development of children’s senses and mind.

The Montessori methodology has been experiencing renaissance since the 1980s, which has resulted in a significant number of institutions, such as kindergartens, clubs, primary and junior high schools being established in throughout Poland. All of these facilities describe themselves as working in accordance with the Montessori philosophy, yet each of them has their own characteristics. In some cases the institutions are not in the strict sense the Montessori facilities as they adopt only part of the philosophy. This may lead to confusion on

the part of parents who are misled into believing that their child is educated in the Montessori environment.

Since the number of facilities, claiming to implement the Montessori methodology is constantly growing, there is a need to monitor them and such institutions should comply with specific conditions, such as:

- it recruits the teachers and pedagogues who hold pedagogic qualifications, the Montessori methodology certificates which they received after they have completed courses or post-graduate studies within the framework of the Montessori methodology;
- the institution is arranged in accordance with the criteria of the “prepared environment”, where the kindergarten group is equipped with the basic (key) Montessori developmental materials, embracing the knowledge holistically: that includes the practical life, developing senses, mathematical, linguistic, cultural, biological as well as musical and aesthetic education;
- the place arrangement is tailored to the children’s individual needs and sensitive periods;
- the daily and weekly timetables take into consideration the up-to-date core curriculum, children’s individual work with the Montessori materials;
- the children learn in the multi-age groups, which accommodates their social and emotional development, and enhances (in accordance with the Montessori pedagogy premises) their individual progress;
- following the Montessori pedagogy principles the teacher supports children’s individual development, records the results of their achievements in the appropriate documents and finally closely cooperates with parents.

Only after the institutions have met the-above conditions, can they be covered by the patronage of the authorized Montessori associations and receive their recommendation. However, this is a lengthy process as it involves a detailed analysis of the work of such a facility and frequent visits aimed at checking whether the place implements the Montessori principles. The obtained patronage or recommendation is an indicator of the place’s quality and compliance of the educational-didactical work with the principles of Montessori pedagogy.

At this moment in Poland there are a few major Montessori associations that play a crucial role in popularizing the Montessori educational ideas and performing a wide range of activities (conferences, workshops and courses) with the view to educating all the potential partners, interested in establishing a Montessori institution.

These institutions include:

- Polish Montessori Association, the partner of Montessori-Europe Association Education for Life, established in 1994, in Łódź,
- The Lublin branch of the Polish Montessori Association, the most active partner,
- Polish Montessori Institute, established in 2008 and situated in Warsaw,

- Polish Centre of Montessori Education and Foundation “Give me the time”, established in 2000, Warsaw
- Polish Montessori Centre which was founded in 2002 in Wrocław,
- Magnolia – The Montessori Educational Centre, Szczecin,
- Bona Ventura – I Westpomeranian Private Montessori Kindergarten, Szczecin,
- Bona Ventura – Private Montessori Primary School, Szczecin, opening in September 2013.

We are now observing that the group of institutions declaring educating according to the Montessori principles is still growing, including primary, middle high schools and even in rare cases, the secondary school (Warsaw). This clearly shows that the method has a widespread appeal to both the people responsible for education and parents as well.

## **1.2 Organization of trainings for teachers on the Montessori method**

As it has been already stated, the popularity of the Montessori method has resulted in a great number of different institutions which work based on this methodology. Poland is experiencing a renewed interest in this philosophy, which means that teachers, parents and also pedagogy students, as well as many others who are interested in this method, are invited to participate in a wide range of workshops, courses and conferences organized in our country.

Apart from the organized events, all those who want to get some information about the Montessori methodology can do so as there are a lot of materials, be it the Internet articles, or books, easily accessible to the interested ones.

### ***1.2.1 Conferences***

Conferences are the most important and spectacular way to reach the people interested in Montessori methodology, as well as wishing to learn about the experience of their international partners. Owing to the fact that Poland is holding the Montessori Days events, April is filled with conferences organized in a few big cities.

- **Polish Montessori Institute** which was founded in 2008 in response to a growing demand for courses for Montessori teachers, offers individual consultations and assistance to all those institutions to improve the quality of their work. Yet, the Institute does not confine itself to this activity only, but is aspiring to support all those who are interested in the Montessori methodology, that is students of pedagogy, parents, specialists and psychotherapists. Its annual program embraces Early Education (2,5-6 year-olds) in Polish and English as well as the Early School Education (6-9 year-olds).

As last year the Polish Montessori Institute hosts the III National Montessori Conference which is to be held from 19-21 April, 2013 in Warsaw under the patronage of the First Lady, Mrs Anna Komorowska. The title of the conference – **“Montessori – the common way”**.

- **Bona Ventura, Private Montessori Primary School, Szczecin**, in cooperation with the “Good Future” Association, are organizing a conference under the heading, **“Montessori schools – education and upbringing”**. The conference will be held on the premises of Szczecin University on 26 April, 2013.

### ***1.2.2 Workshops and courses***

Workshops and courses on the Montessori method may differ slightly as to the number of necessary hours, depending on where and by which institution they are organized. Below is a list of the institutions offering trainings and their requirements:

- **Zespół Szkół Specjalnych no 102, M. Montessori Primary School, Poznań** offers three types of trainings
  - **Training A** – two sessions, 50 hours.  
Contents:
    - rudiments of Montessori pedagogy
    - methodology of exercises of the practical day
    - methodology of developing sensorial skills
    - cosmic education workshops,
  - **Training B** - four days, 40 hours, addressed to those who have completed Training A.  
Contents:
    - methodology of language teaching
    - methodology of maths teaching
  - **Training C** – three sessions, 90 hours.  
Contents:
    - rudiments of Montessori pedagogy
    - methodology of exercises of the practical day
    - methodology of developing sensory skills
    - cosmic education workshops
    - methodology of language teaching
    - methodology of mathematics teaching

All the courses cover the theoretical as well as the practical part, where the participants observe classes conducted with the Montessori method. Certificates are awarded to those who have participated in all the training sessions, prepared a methodological book and made a practical presentation of the chosen developmental material.

- **Polish Centre of Montessori Education, Warsaw**, offers a number of workshops and courses within the framework of the **Polish Montessori Days**:



- ✓ **Block I** – courses, trainings and workshops on the Montessori pedagogy addressed mainly to the people who already have completed pedagogical courses or planning to work in educational institutions (teachers, class assistants, psychologists, pedagogues, psychotherapists, educationalists, students of pedagogy, and education institutions managers);
  - ✓ **Block II** – psychological-pedagogical assistance for the pupil – offer addressed to the same group of people, basically those who work with children on a day-to-day basis;
  - ✓ **Block III** – Montessori for parents and all-development workshops for parents, guardians and the whole families. The offer is addressed mainly to parents and guardians of the pre-school and school children. Some of the workshops in this block can be attended by pedagogy students, class tutors, teachers, class assistants, psychologists, pedagogues, psychotherapists as well as other specialists working with children and young people on a day-to-day basis;
  - ✓ **Block IV** – Health – the right diet and the way of preparing meals in the kindergarten. The offer addressed to the people responsible for the meals served in kindergartens; parents and guardians as well as everybody interested in the subject;
  - ✓ **Block V** – Training of soft competences as well as other trainings essential in teachers work. The beneficiaries of this block are: class tutors, teachers, class assistants and education workers working with children on a daily basis.
- **Polish Montessori Institute, Warsaw**, runs a whole array of workshops, trainings and projects in the whole country. Apart from being addressed to teachers and prospective teachers, they also include programs specifically designed to cover the aspects of particular age groups:
    - ✓ Montessori for the youngest children,
    - ✓ the kindergarten program (2,5 -6),
    - ✓ the pre-school program,
    - ✓ the school program (6 -9),
    - ✓ the holidays program

The Institute also offers consultations both for the local institutions and nationwide. They last eight hours and run according to the following schedule:

- The morning session which includes:
  - observation of the prepared environment at the institution; general remarks, the external appearance of the premises and the atmosphere of the place;

- detailed observation in the prepared environment (the individual children's work, meals, group meeting in a circle).
- The afternoon hours devoted to talks with the institution's administration, where the topics covered relate to:
  - the process of children (families) admittance to the kindergarten or school;
  - timetable: daily, weekly and annual,
  - the role of observation at the kindergarten / school (recording),
  - arrangement of the prepared environment,
  - meals at the institution and others.
- **Polish Montessori Association, Łódź**, comes forward with an abounding offer, which includes:
  - cultivating and development of pedagogical activity in accordance with Maria Montessori educational philosophy,
  - enhancing the Association's members knowledge of M. Montessori theory and pedagogical anthropology,
  - educating and helping to improve the professional skills of the teachers and Montessori tutors,
  - dissemination of the Montessori ideas among all the interested ones,
  - initiating and supporting establishing and arranging the Montessori institutions.

The main areas of the **Polish Montessori Association** activity are among others:

- organizing trainings devoted to special topics, courses and seminars,
- running the publishing activity (Newsletter)
- providing patronage for Montessori kindergartens and schools,
- counselling on the Montessori theory and practice.
- conducting one-year diploma courses (240 hours); introductory courses (60/65 hours).

The presented institutions and the trainings they are offering are just a few examples of the opportunities provided to all those interested in learning about the Montessori methodology, both for professional and parental purposes.

### 1.3 Application of the Montessori method to adults

At present there are no schools in Poland that are teaching adults over 18 applying the Montessori methodology. In the course of the research I have found only two secondary schools that describe themselves as working according to Montessori principles, where their program is adapted to the age and abilities of the students:

- **Montessori Schools**, Aleksandra and Marcin Sawicki, Warsaw – introducing the teacher tutor contact with the student; workshops, lectures, seminars and individual classes with the teacher instead of regular classes, working on individual projects;
- **Mary Skłodowska-Curie Private Secondary School, Dąbrowa Górnicza**, the school which does not work based on the Montessori principles but includes alternative forms of education, exploiting the method of “learning by doing”, focusing on the change of the teacher’s role, from an instructor to an observer, inspiring his students natural curiosity and activity.

Yet, as is it is evident from the research there are already some Montessori middle high schools that encourage their students to work according to their individual program which is tailored to their capabilities and interest. These, however are all private institutions, which may prompt a conclusion that at the moment only small, privately run schools are prepared to implement the Montessori methodology.

#### 1.4 Application of the Montessori method to language learning

Montessori methodology may be used effectively in language learning, which is proved by the fact that kindergarten and middle high school education include language teaching. Comparison of the traditional way of teaching foreign languages against the Montessori way leads to a conclusion that this form of teaching may be applied to various subjects, as what is important is the element of interest that is created while the child is learning

Table 1.

	Nursery 0-3	Kindergarten 3-6	Primary 6-11
<b>Montessori principles</b>	- Learning-by-doing - Visual materials - Personalized Learning path	- Learning-by-doing - Visual materials - Personalized Learning path	- Learning-by-doing - Visual materials - Personalized Learning path
<b>Montessori principles</b>		- Introduction of bilingual Montessori material - personal care: independence - the surrounding environment: clean up, tidy up, serve others, respect the nature - practical activities for daily life	- Introduction of bilingual Montessori materials - personal care: independence - the surrounding environment: clean up, tidy up, serve others, respect the nature - practical activities for daily life

<b>Montessori principles</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- full application and use of Montessori material</li> <li>- full application of “cosmic” idea</li> <li>- learning interaction among ages: the younger children learn from older, whereas the older ones learn by teaching the younger kids,</li> <li>- organized freedom and self discipline</li> </ul>
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Below a table where traditional teaching as opposed to **multisensorial cognition** (exploring the Montessori methodology) is presented.

**Table 2.**

<b>Traditional teaching</b> – boring and ineffective	<b>Multisensorial cognition</b> – effective and arousing interest
- limits contact between the children as they sit at the tables, not talking to their partners,	- fulfills the need of contact with other children, they cooperate with each other while working on a project,
- all the lessons are conducted in the same way, there is no element of unpredictability,	- harmonizes with children’s candidness, curiosity and spontaneity; students perform various tasks,
- learning a foreign language seems an endless chore of memorizing words and grammar forms, which is uninspiring and requires a big effort on the part of the student,	- learning a foreign language seems easy and pleasant, is often realized through the play,
- the child gets upset when he /she is forced to copy the material from the blackboard and	-the child is not stressed as he / she often does not realize that is learning new words

learn a lot of things by heart,	at a given moment,
- lack of spontaneity when the child produces an oral statement in a foreign language	-the child starts using the foreign language in a natural way.

However, what may be excluded from adult learning of foreign language is the element of mobility, which is a natural characteristic of children. Still, other aspects involving spontaneity, satisfying one's curiosity and pride from a successfully completed task, are elements present at every stage of education.

### 1.5 Application of the Montessori method online

So far there have been no records of how the Montessori method is applied online in Poland. Strictly speaking, no research has been done into this matter. However, a careful study of the available materials allows a statement that elements of B-learning (blended-learning) may be similar to teaching with the help of the Montessori method. Blended-learning offers the student the comfort of a direct contact with the teacher, combined with the activities performed online, where particular elements are selected in such a way so as to meet the student's expectations and the preferences of the teacher. This method is very practical as it enables both of them to conduct the course, taking the needs of the student's into consideration. At the same time, this way of contact is interesting for the student as it exploits various activities which can be performed between him and the teacher online. Also, the ability to organize teaching/learning owing to distance learning is more convenient and appealing to the student.



Fig.1 A scheme of Blended Learning Methodology

## 1.6 Comparison of the Montessori principles with the principles of Adult Education

Montessori philosophy is addressed to educate children in the most successful way in order to allow them to live in a fulfilling and satisfying way. This can be achieved when the child's development is stimulated and delicately guided, leaving him a lot of space for individual development at his own time and pace. One of the most fundamental aspects of this philosophy is the teacher's assistance, avoiding imposing oneself. Allowing the child to do something by himself /herself produces an enormous sense of achievement, while the self-correcting materials limit the teacher's interference to a minimum, which enhances the learning process. Material acquired in this way will be remembered better.

Naturally, all these aspects can be adopted to adult teaching / learning. Even repetition in the form of producing model sentences or short dialogues, when performed in the playful atmosphere can be successfully incorporated into adult education. Moreover, when the element of competition is excluded from the lessons and replaced with cooperation and team work, the effects will be clearly visible, making learning more attractive and effective.

**Table 3.**

<b>Montessori</b>	<b>Traditional:</b>
1. Emphasis on cognitive structures & social development	1. Emphasis on rote knowledge and social development
2. The teacher assists the learner, leaving him ample freedom to choose the subject.	2. The teacher dominates the learning process, while the student adopts the passive mode.
3. Environment and method encourage internal self-discipline	3. The teacher tries to enforce control over his students.
4. Individual and group instruction adopted to the individual style of learning of each student.	4. Group instruction conforms to adult's teaching style

5. Mixed age grouping	5. Same age grouping
6. Encouragement to teach, collaborate, and help one another	6. Most teaching done by teacher leaving little space for cooperation.
7. Self-teaching materials are used for formulating concepts	7. Answers are provided by the teacher which is not stimulating for the student.
8. Concentrated work time on a single subject	8. Limited time is given for work in one subject. At the end of the given time, student has to move on to another subject even if the subject hasn't been adequately covered
9. Student sets own learning pace to internalize information	9. Instruction pace by the teacher or resulting from the teaching standards.
10. Self correction of own errors through self-correcting materials	10. Errors corrected by teacher
11. Learning is reinforced through repetition of activity, internal feelings of successful repetition	11. Learning reinforced externally by tests, grades.
12. Multi-sensory materials	12. Few materials for sensory, concrete manipulation
13. Student can work where he or she is comfortable, is allowed to move around classroom as long as he or she is not disruptive to others	13. Students are not allowed to move around the classroom, which conforms to the feeling of anxiety, boredom and tiredness, negatively affecting their learning capabilities.

## **2. Field Research**

### **2.1 Language Teachers**

During the research a group of 18 teachers have been interviewed on their teaching experience and possible application of the Montessori methodology. The interviews were held via the face-to-face, on Skype and over the phone. All of these forms of contact allowed a more in-depth analysis of the discussed problem, as some of the points in the tabled needed explanation. The group included;

- Kindergarten teachers
- Primary school teachers
- Middle high school teachers
- Secondary school teachers
- Academic teachers
- Private tuition teachers

#### **2.1.1 Profile of the students**

**The age of the students:** 6 to 60.

**Sex:** Female and Male.

**Educational background:** from kindergarten to college.

**Profession:** kindergarten children, students at middle high school, secondary school, university students, professionals.

**Status:** Polish and foreign students.

**Motivation:** learn English for practical purposes, get a University Diploma, improve qualifications, for travel purposes.

#### **2.1.2 Previous experience with the Montessori method**

Most of the interviewed teachers admitted that they had never taught with the Montessori method, and themselves have not been taught. Still, they said that many aspects which are present in the MMLT are regularly used by them. In this way, not themselves being familiar with the principles of the Montessori methodology, they have already been using some of them at all levels, with the students from different age groups. However, certain elements of the Montessori principles are not applicable in organized classes, such as school or university, as this is controlled by the standards and constraints imposed by the Ministry of



Education. Hence, the element of individual planning of the classes and organizing learning in the way most suitable for the students can be experienced only in small groups outside the teaching institutions or in one-to-one classes. Although the interviewed teachers appreciated some aspects relevant to the Montessori principles, they remarked that many of them could not be incorporated into the teaching system owing to the necessity to strictly follow the curriculum.

### 2.1.3 Consideration of the Montessori principles in teaching and relevance to adults training

**Table 4.**

<b>Principle</b>	<b>YES/ NO</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Self-directed learning	YES/ NO	YES, but in privates schools or individual tuition; in public schools it is NOT applicable.
The teacher is an "observer" not a lecturer	NO	The teacher must not only observe, but he is also responsible for overlooking and monitoring the whole teaching process, so this principle is not feasible in schools and colleges which have their strict program to follow. What is more, adults would like their teacher to provide them with the readymade answers.
Sensitive learning periods	NO	This is not observed in adult teaching; the only thing similar to sensitive periods are the ones when students experience difficulties in learning, which may be caused by totally different than their age causes.
Better learning through repetition	YES	That depends on the type of repetition. Pure drilling of certain aspects of grammar may sound boring and unattractive to some students, whereas others find it quite useful and amusing (e.g. intonation). On the other hand, repetition may be realized in a

		more attractive way, as for instance, repeating short dialogues.
Suitable environment	YES	It is understood both as the physical environment, which creates good mood, but also the atmosphere that is made by the teacher. The more pleasant, not necessarily informal, atmosphere, the better results and rapport with the students.
Self-control of mistake in didactical material	YES/NO	YES, when we consider the type of material the students work with. There are some tasks (e.g. online tests) where the students must arrive at the right answer, otherwise they cannot proceed to another exercise. Another way of self-controlling the mistakes is done by the students themselves when they correct one another's test. NO - in oral presentation students are not corrected by the teacher in order not to impede their speech, however they are expected to correct their mistakes afterwards.
Choose own learning time	YES / NO	Practically not applicable in colleges and high schools, due to a overloaded program, however can be done in small informal groups or private (individual) tuition.
Learning by doing	YES	Only by doing, performing certain tasks student can learn. These may include: drama, dialogues, role playing.
Movement analysis	YES/ NO	This may be difficult to use when in the group there are students coming from different cultures. However, miming certain activities may help or make the task more enjoyable. Still, the teacher has to be cautious, as some of his uncontrollable gestures may be misunderstood or disrupting the lesson.
Silence exercise	YES / NO	Generally, this is not applicable to

		adult teaching, however there might be large and quite unruly and noisy groups when there is a need to discipline them with lowering the voice, which normally brings them under control.
Good manners	YES	This can be understood as mutual respect that the teacher and the students demonstrate, which helps work together better and more efficiently. Pleasant atmosphere, when the needs and wishes of both parties are respected is very helpful. That helps to prevent potentially stressful situations.
Tidy rooms	YES	Clean, tidy places are more pleasant and inviting to learn in.
Others?	NO	

#### **2.1.4 Most successful methodologies / strategies / practises used in language experience**

Many teachers emphasize that understanding the students' needs is the key to a success. They do realize that students may be hampered by various causes and in such a case individual approach to them is significant. A recommended strategy is to adjust the methodology and appropriate tasks to the group level.

- Communicative approach (presentations, exposing them to real-life language - listening, reading articles),
- Analyzing their mistakes, discussing them with the students,
- Learning through play (scenes, dialogues),
- Working in groups (relieves stress and fear of speaking in public),
- Repetition is the key to a success as it enhances the studied material, giving the students a sense of achievement.
- Assigning homework which should be executed by the teacher.

#### **2.1.5 Weak parts of the implemented methodology(ies)**

Naturally, not all applied methodologies are perfect. The interviewed teachers pointed out to a few problems such as:

- boredom and ineffectiveness of teaching students vocabulary taken out of the context,
- inability to root out the habit of speaking Polish, especially when students work in groups,
- too heavy reliance on grammar, rather than communicative approach,

### **2.1.6 The most significant problems that students find in language learning**

- Introducing grammar is unavoidable in language teaching, which is what most students dislike, as they do not see the importance of speaking correctly.
- They often refuse to speak as they are afraid of the group's reaction (lack of confidence).
- They refuse to do some tasks, explaining that they simply do not know how to do it, without even trying.
- Learning grammar and writing, which by most students will not be used in real life, is seen by them as less important than teaching them speaking and listening.
- At the university the level of the group may be too high for some students without offering them a chance to keep up with the group. This is frustrating and consequently they lose their motivation.
- Generally lack of motivation. Sometimes when the student is not faced with the necessity of taking the language exam, his motivation is low.

## **2.2 Interviews with Montessori Experts**

The following Montessori Experts have been contacted during the research:

- Principal of the Montessori Kindergarten
- Teacher at Montessori School (middle high school)
- Senior Teacher at the University of Technology

By and large, the teachers responded positively to the project of applying the Montessori method to adult teaching. They were also very helpful in suggesting some solutions to how the method may be used in adult teaching.

### **2.2.1 Use of the method and how it has been changed**

In Poland the Montessori method was in use between the years 1918 and 1945. After the war it was abandoned only to be reinstated in the 1980s. Over the years the method has not changed as its philosophy rests on active support of children's spontaneous and creative activity and allowing their comprehensive physical, spiritual, cultural and social development.

The Montessori pedagogy helps to foster children's individual personality features, shape their character, gain knowledge, school skills and cooperation. Like in the past the development of their independence and belief in themselves are encouraged, as well as working out respect for order, work and silence. The children educated on the basis of the Montessori philosophy are independent of a reward, willing to cooperate, respecting all social rules and learn to realistically evaluate their own capabilities.

### 2.2.2 Montessori principle adequate to language learning

The interviewed teachers agreed that the Montessori method can be applied in adult teaching with some modifications, considering the fact that their educational and emotional needs differ from those of the children.

**Table 5.**

<b>Principle</b>	<b>YES / NO</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Self-directed learning	YES	YES, the adult takes responsibility for his decisions, his goals which he sets for himself.
The teacher is an "observer" not a lecturer	YES/NO	YES, when it is carried out in smaller groups. In bigger ones, especially with college students it may result in losing control over the lesson. So this strategy has to be carefully considered.
Sensitive learning periods	NO	These are not applicable to adults since their mind is already formed and aims usually clearly specified.
Better learning through repetition	YES	YES, very important at every stage of education, however the type of repetition should be carefully adapted to the group and the character of the adults.
Suitable environment	NO/YES	NOT, in the sense of tidy, clean rooms but the atmosphere which helps in better learning. Also, equipping the classroom with

		some elements of the culture of the studied language will foster learning.
Self control of mistake in didactical material	NO/YES	NOT really if we realize that the developmental materials used in children education will be practical with adults. However, making mistakes is inevitable and is part of learning, which should be pointed out to adults, telling them not to be afraid of committing them.
Choose own learning time	YES	YES, since adults are limited by shortage of time and this aspect is especially important for them. In the university situation this is not possible as the teacher is bound both by timetables and programs.
Learning by doing	YES	This is realized through acting out scenes, repeating model sentences, role plays.
Movement analysis	YES	In a sense that the teacher's gestures and miming can help students understanding certain ideas, especially if the teacher is very expressive.
Silence exercise	NO	NOT as a rule, however lowering the tone or modulating it may be very effective and useful, especially in teaching intonation.
Good manners	YES	YES, even adult students, especially in bigger groups may sometimes cause problems, disrupting the lesson, which may affect the rest of the group.
Tidy rooms	NO/YES	NOT that important, but nice welcoming environment is beneficial.
Others?	NO	

### 2.2.3 Current use of the Montessori method for teaching languages

At present the use of the Montessori method is not widespread in Poland, although it is generally recognized and appreciated by those parents whose children are being or have been educated in the Montessori kindergartens. Almost all of these people decide to continue with their children's education in middle high schools. Teaching languages with this method is practised both in kindergarten and later in middle high schools. However, as with all the Montessori developmental materials, those used in language teaching are expensive, which means that nowadays this methodology is limited to a narrow group of children.

In Montessori schools children are placed in language groups depending on how advanced they are. The materials used in classes are concrete, offering them a hands-on experience. Such materials would not be very effective in adult education, as adults rely more on abstract notions rather than the concrete ones.

Adapting the Montessori method in the institutions where not all the teachers are convinced of its benefits means that it is difficult to convince them to experiment with alternative teaching. Moreover, introducing the Montessori method is associated with making more effort on the teacher's part as it involves careful observation of the student as well as preparing necessary materials, which is another problem (financial one). To sum up, although the method has been received with enthusiasm by many educators, it still is not so popular with those teachers who are not ready to take up alternative forms of education.

### 2.2.4 Parts of the Montessori method applicable to adults learning

Here are some Montessori principles that are regarded by both the language teachers and Montessori experts as applicable to adult teaching.

Table 6

Principle	YES / NO	Notes
Self-directed learning	YES	This is essential in Montessori training of adults.
The teacher is an "observer" not a lecturer	NO	The teacher's principal role is to help his students attain their goals, which means that they cannot be left on their own. Though not regarded as a "lecturer", yet he should be able to offer explanation at all times.
Sensitive learning periods	NO	Not applicable
Better learning through repetition	YES	Yes, however used in various situations in order to avoid boredom.
Suitable environment	YES	YES, it has been proven that a

		friendly, welcoming environment creates favourable conditions, which combined with the elements of the culture of the studied language foster better learning.
Self- control of mistake in didactical material	NO/YES	This should be carefully monitored during the student's oral production, avoiding interruption which might discourage the student. Still, students can try to correct each other's written works.
Choose own learning time	YES	Almost impossible in public high schools due to the tight lesson schedule and packed program. It is the teacher that choose the lesson time, not the student.
Learning by doing	YES	Role play, dramas, dialogues.
Movement analysis	YES	It may prove difficult in the groups with the students coming from different cultures. However, in some cases miming, gestures may be helpful.
Silence exercise	NO	.....
Good manners	YES	YES, they are very important as good rapport with the students is crucial in every teaching education.
Tidy rooms	NO/YES	NOT in sense of clean places, but definitely friendly and pleasant.
Others?	NO	.....

### **2.2.5 Variations of the Montessori method that have to be made for the application to language teaching for adults**

At the time when Maria Montessori developed her philosophy of pedagogy, language teaching was not part of the curriculum. In present Montessori schools learning languages is strongly emphasized. However, application of this method to adult teaching will require taking different aspects into consideration, owing to the profile of adult learners:

- Different motivation
- Different expectations



- Different learning ability
- Different time that can be devoted to learning
- Different educational experience
- Lack of self-confidence.

Both the language teachers and the Montessori experts emphasized the importance of creating suitable conditions for adult learners so as to:

- Increase their motivation
- Adapt the teaching to students' needs
- Limit the students' tendency to use their mother tongue
- Offer them a lot of positive feedback, which is very important, especially with adult learners.

The differences in learning styles and the ensuing results arise from age difference. Children obtain better results since they are not inhibited by the fear of making mistakes, which is something that creates a barrier in making progress. Adult learners are limited by their inner apprehension of making mistakes. Naturally, this effectively prevents them from learning and unless they accept making mistakes as part of a learning process, acquiring the language will always pose difficulties.

### **3. Conclusions**

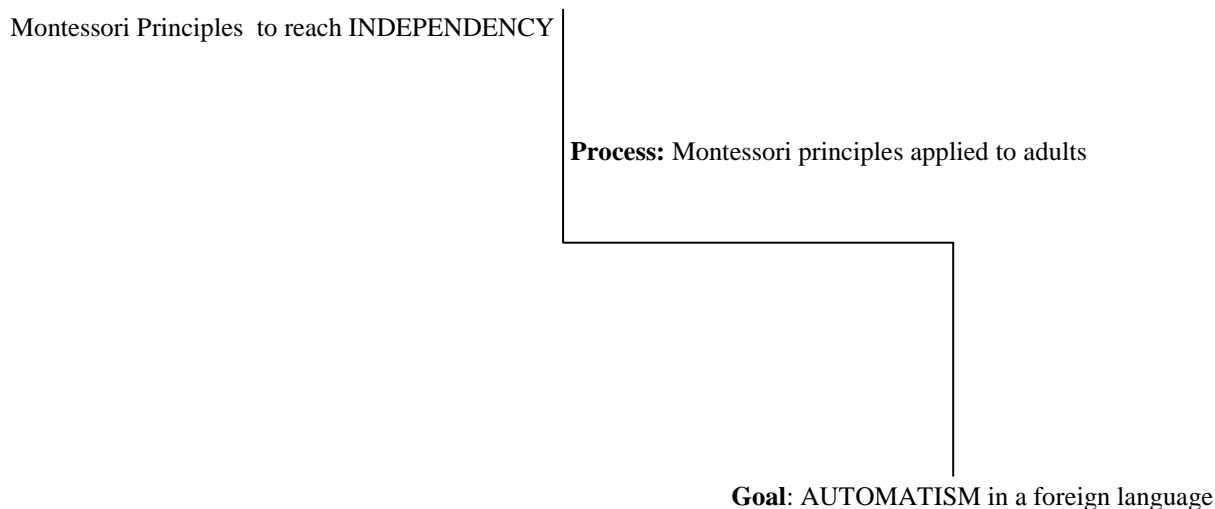
The conducted research has shed some light on the use of the Montessori methodology in Poland. Although the methodology is quite known and popular among the kindergarten and primary schools teachers, the high school and academic teachers have a rather limited knowledge about this approach.

At the moment there is no school in Poland that runs courses for adults, employing this methodology. However, the interviewed teachers indicated some principles of the Montessori methodology that could be transferred into adult teaching. The principle of "Learning by doing" is the rudiment of the learning process, yet should be approached differently than in children's learning and understood as the abstract, rather than literal meaning.

Choosing the independent path of learning is another of the crucial principles of the Montessori philosophy. By realizing the importance of setting oneself a goal and consequently working towards accomplishing it is a key to a success. This is where the concept of Work Chart (planning the goals to accomplish) may be very helpful. Completing the respective tasks leads to absorbing the knowledge on certain aspects (e.g. grammar), supported by reading and listening regularly, resulting in achieving the state of automatism in a foreign language acquisition. This state of automatism is the ultimate goal that all learners are striving for as using the language automatically, without reverting to grammar, is the most important aim to be achieved.

**Table 7**

**First step:**



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## 5. List of Tables and Figures

Table 1 - Application of Montessori method to language learning

Table 2 - Comparison of traditional teaching vs. multi-sensorial cognition

Table 3 - Comparison of the Montessori principles vs. traditional teaching

Table 4 - Comparison of the Montessori principles with the principles of adults' education

Table 5 - Montessori principles applicable to adult teaching for language teachers

Table 6 - Parts of Montessori method applicable to adults

Table 7 - MMLT challenge

Figure 1 – Blended Learning Methodology

## **6. Profile of interviewees**

### **6.1 Language teachers**

- Teacher of German (private College and state middle high school -Szczecin)
- Teacher of German (private College, primary and middle high school Szczecin)
- Teacher of German (University of Technology – Szczecin)
- Teacher of German (University of Technology – Szczecin)
- Teacher of English (Private College – Szczecin)
- Teacher of English (University; middle high school – Szczecin)
- Teacher of English (Private College – Szczecin)
- Teacher of English (University of Technology; courses – Szczecin)
- Teacher of English (University of Technology – Szczecin)
- Teacher of English (University of Technology – Szczecin)
- Teacher of English (University of Technology – Szczecin)
- Teacher of English (private tuition)
- Teacher of English (private tuition)
- Teacher of English (University of Technology – Poznań)
- Teacher of English (University of Technology – Poznań)
- Teacher of English (kindergarten – Szczecin)
- Teacher of English (kindergarten )
- Teacher of English (middle high school – Szczecin)

### **6.2 Montessori experts and teachers**

- Principal of the Montessori Kindergarten – Szczecin
- Teacher of Spanish (primary/ middle high school- Warsaw)
- Senior teacher at the Poznań University of Technology

## **ANNEXE “A”**

### ***Confidential***

#### **List of interviewees**

##### **Language teachers**

- Ms. Magdalena Magiera – Teacher of German (Private College; state middle high school –Szczecin)
- Ms. Izabela Mikiewicz – Senior teacher of German (Westpomeranian University of Technology -Szczecin)
- Ms. Joanna Widawska - Teacher of German (Private College; state primary and middle high school – Szczecin)
- Ms. Iwona Drzeniewska - Teacher of English ( Private College – Szczecin)
- Ms. Anna Węglarek - Teacher of English (Westpomeranian University of Technology – Szczecin)
- Ms. Jolanta Koczalska - Teacher of English (Private College – Szczecin)
- Mr. Kamil Majerski - Teacher of English (University; middle high school – Szczecin)
- Ms. Małgorzata Zajkowska - Teacher of English (Westpomeranian University of Technology – Szczecin)
- Mr. Krzysztof Potyrała - Teacher of English (Westpomeranian University of Technology; courses – Szczecin)
- Ms. Sylwia Zawadzka - Teacher of English (Westpomeranian University of Technology – Szczecin)
- Ms. Blanka Mancewicz - Teacher of English (private tuition)
- Ms. Jadwiga Wolak – Senior teacher of English (University of Technology – Poznań)
- Ms. Wiktoria Tyszka – Senior teacher of English (University of Technology – Poznań)
- Ms. Magdalena Saletra - Teacher of English (kindergarten – Szczecin)
- Ms. Magdalena Trela - Teacher of English (kindergarten - Szczecin)
- Mr Paul Bańdur – Senior teacher of German (Westpomeranian University of Technology – Szczecin)
- Ms. Alicja Lata – Teacher of English (private tuition –Goleniów)
- Ms. Małgorzata Wellman - Teacher of English (middle high school – Szczecin)

##### **Montessori experts**

- Ms. Hanna Matuszczak – Senior Teacher (University of Technology – Poznań)
- Ms. Martyna Cegiełka - Teacher of Spanish (primary/ middle high school- Warsaw)
- Ms. Agnieszka Kowalewska – Principal of the Montessori Kindergarten – Szczecin