

## Multilingual Pathways to Unlocking Professional Opportunities in Swedish for Beginners through Blended and Autonomous Learning

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**Research purpose (topic, problem, aim).** Online learning and teaching are not new phenomena, which have become one of the most prevailing studying trends nowadays. Online and autonomous learning and teaching are gradually substituting face-to-face learning and teaching. The classic methods are converted from a teacher-centred approach to a student-centred and blended approach, and even more of the study content is reoriented to students' autonomy in learning. More and more Scandinavian businesses are establishing their companies in the Baltic States. Naturally, they look for staff possessing the skills of one of the Scandinavian languages. Thus, one might feel the lack of teachers of less frequently taught languages, such as Swedish, in the Baltic States. In addition, autonomous learning methods might motivate students by giving them more responsibility and autonomy for their learning, i.e., student empowerment. Possessing the basic skills of the Swedish language enhances their career chances, especially in the Scandinavian capital businesses. The project is designing a blended module for learning beginner Swedish with virtual studies and an intensive programme in an immersive setting.

**Keywords:** autonomous learning, blended learning, language learning, multilingualism, online language learning, university cooperation, virtual learning, work-life competence

**Research Methodology.** The project's objective is to create 3 ECTS Moodle course and 2 ECTS IP course of the Swedish language. The Moodle course can be studied autonomously as well as integrated as a supplementary part of the Swedish Language course. The academic staff and the project researchers' group has designed a 5 unit Moodle course. Each unit includes reading, grammar, listening, and the unit assessment tasks. After each activity, students can check their progress and see what needs to be improved. The course finishes with an online exam. Before launching the course, the researcher group will pilot-test it with the help of volunteer students. All the activities are accompanied by continuous feedback, the results of which will be used for the impact report of the project.

**Results / Findings.** The consortium created a course outline for a virtual course and an intensive programme, including the basics of the Swedish language and cultural aspects. The materials in a Moodle setting comprise activities to practice reading, writing, speaking and listening. Two units of this course, Swedish from Scratch, were piloted with students in May 2023, and the feedback received was positive. Minor adjustments to contents and visuality were made. Due to technical problems to enrol on Moodle, pilot 2 and the project virtual studies are being offered on each university's Moodle. Pilot 2 is in progress until the end of 2023, and student recruitment for the project course in March starts in January 2024. The intensive programme is planned for mid-March 2024. The course developed by Haaga-Helia UAS and Tartu University was successfully integrated into VMA Moodle of Kauno kolegija HEI. For the successful course transfer, the Moodle version of the VMA was updated and extended with the necessary plugins and features. Currently, five students are testing the course. Continuous feedback is provided on the technical functioning of the course and any problems or difficulties encountered. Consultations with the course developers are ongoing. After piloting and testing the course, it will be offered as an elective course in Kauno kolegija HEI.

**Originality / Practical implications.** The course design can be seen original, as three universities are designing a virtual course in beginner Swedish. Language learning online, as a pure online autonomous course, is a novelty for Kauno kolegija HEI. Also, the outcome, the virtual course and the intensive programme can be integrated into any curriculum in any country. Additionally, the course material is flexible and can be modified and offered to students and university staff.