PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPLES OF ALTISSIA'S PLATFORM

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LANGUAGE EMPOWERS PEOPLE

Contents

Introduction

Learning a new language is exciting. Our aim at Altissia is to keep this excitement up and transform it into long-term motivation to help learners reach their learning goals.

We are well aware that learning a language is not always a walk in the park; it requires commitment and a minimum amount of regular work. In some learning environments, even the most motivated learners experience a decline in motivation, which in some cases is replaced by disillusion, leading learners to give up without reaching their goals.

To counter this effect, we strongly believe that an effective online learning environment should always focus on the learners themselves. Our method, designed for self-study and autonomous learning, is based on the recommendations and levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). We combine the best elements of communicative and action-based approaches to ensure a smooth and effective language learning experience.

In this article, we want to show you what makes Altissia's platform so special. The first section introduces the CEFR and its recommended approaches, which are central to our methodology. The second section presents the main characteristics of e-learning and blended learning, as well as showing how Altissia's platform is suitable for both approaches. In the last section, we illustrate key concepts of our learning courses.

CEFR
COMMON EUROPEAN
FRAMEWORK

Communicative approach

Action-oriented approach

Learner
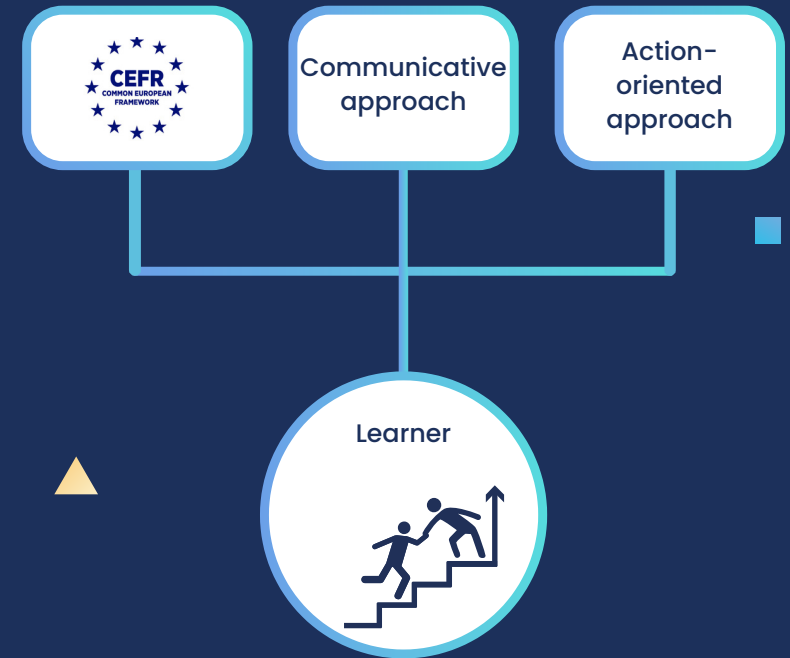
Pedagogical Principles

a. CEFR Recommendations

## Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

The Council of Europe created the CEFR in 2001. It forms a reference document for designing learning programs and assessments. Its main objective is to guarantee the harmonization of education systems in Europe and, more broadly, to facilitate geographical mobility of European citizens. Although the CEFR was originally intended for use in Europe, it has had considerable influence on language learning and teaching across the other continents. In other words, the CEFR promotes international cooperation in the field of modern languages.

Besides drawing up language syllabuses & curriculums for helping to assess foreign language proficiency objectively, the CEFR is also designed to provide a transparent, coherent, and comprehensive basis for designing teaching and learning materials. As a result, Altissia has based its pedagogical principles for the language learning platform on the CEFR recommendations.

LEVELS

The CEFR first establishes objective criteria to characterize language proficiency at 6 different levels. This has become a widespread scaling reference, allowing comparability, benchmarking, and consistency across different learning languages. On Altissia's platform, learners can first take a test, also called placement test, to guide them to the right level. This allows learners to access courses at their current level in a foreign language, and to be sufficiently challenged throughout their language learning journey. Learners can also do a self-assessment and select their proficiency level themselves.
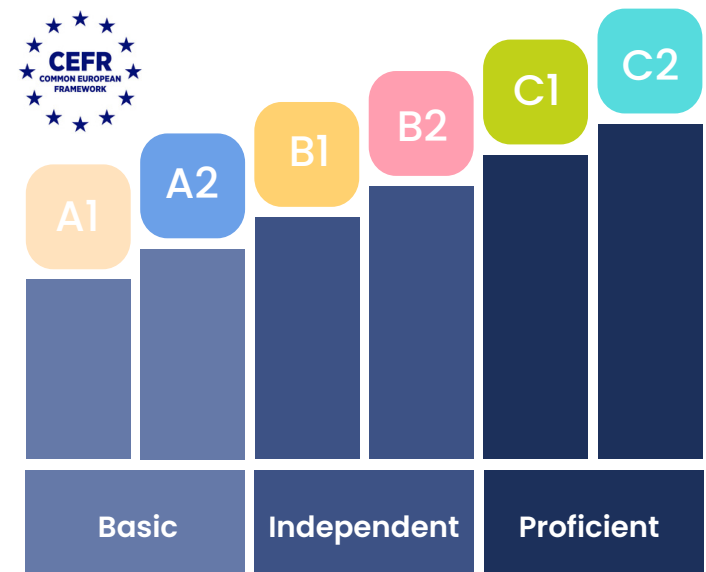
APPROACHES

Among the CEFR recommendations in terms of pedagogical principles, the communicative and action-oriented approaches are central. These approaches challenge the traditional way of learning and teaching a language, by considering learners to be actors of their learning, and social beings who interact with one another. On Altissia's platform, these approaches are implemented and reflected in different ways, as will be presented in the next section.

In the traditional method of language learning and teaching, translations and grammar exercises were the focal points. Language forms and structures were central back then, whereas in the **communicative approach**, the objective is to learn how to communicate effectively in a contextualized situation. Grammar and vocabulary are taught based on needs and objectives of a communicative, real-life situation. In the CEFR-recommended **action-based approach (also called as task-based approach)**, learners are seen as "social actors" who engage different skills to carry out tasks. To do so, learners make use of linguistic knowledge, but also master broader language skills.

b. E-learning and Blended Learning

The second aspect our pedagogical principles take into account is that we intend our platform to suit both e-learning and blended learning. Let us take a closer look at these concepts and their strengths and weaknesses:

E-learning refers to a learning method based on using new technologies that allow access to online interactive and personalized training (on a digital device such as a smartphone or laptop) in order to develop one's skills. This kind of training can either be synchronous or asynchronous.
-**Synchronous**: instructor-led e-learning (such as an online class taught in real time)
-**Asynchronous**: designed for self-study (with courses available at any time, such as an online learning platform—like Altissia—or a MOOC). As Altissia is a learning platform, we will of course focus more on this aspect.
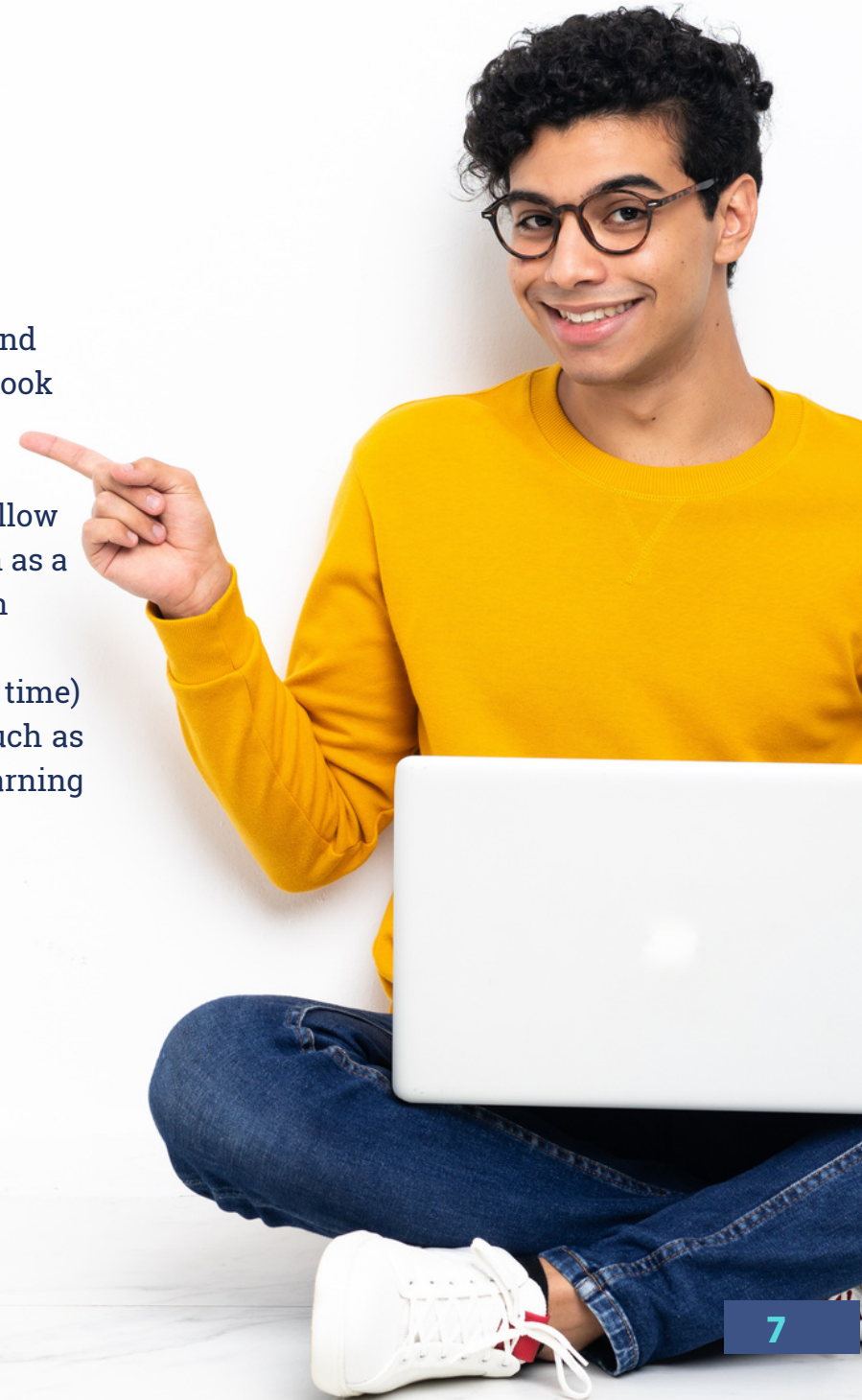
E-learning has a number of **main advantages**:

- Individualization (based on the learning needs and goals of individuals)
- Differentiation (learning at one's own pace)
- Flexibility (accessible from anywhere, 24/7, lower cost of training, more regular learning sessions and more input into learning the language)
- Immediate feedback and automatic correction of exercises
- Active teaching method (learners participate and take control of their learning)

But it also has **some limits**:

- A potential gradual decrease in self-discipline or motivation (which can be avoided through motivational strategies or supervision)
- Isolation in learning (alternatives such as forums, peer-learning, or community corrections exist)
- Limited or absence of oral interaction
- Technical issues

Blended learning is frequently considered to be the best of both worlds as, when the situation allows this method to be applied, its face-to-face component will help counter the limitations of pure e-learning. However, that is not to say that pure e-learning does not have its uses, as it remains the best way to provide teaching when face-to-face lessons are simply not an option, be it due to budgetary, geographical, or time-related concerns.

MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF BLENDED LEARNING

Blended learning is a learning and/or teaching method that combines, at various degrees:

- On-site or "face-to-face" courses: in a classroom or by videoconference.
- Distant courses (e-learning): learners are trained individually using technological tools.

Either mode is flexible, with the possibility of putting more emphasis on autonomous online learning or face-to-face learning, depending on the individual's or their institution's needs. Far from being replaced by technology, the teacher remains in charge of their teaching, they articulate learning activities, supervise learners, motivate them, and most of all connect and link both learning modes—face-to-face and online learning—to create a coherent and relevant teaching program.

Whether Altissia's platform is used in synchronous/asynchronous e-learning or blended learning, it is an excellent companion for providing qualitative language learning.

c. Learning Course: Key Concepts

This last section illustrates the main characteristics of our language courses. We will explain the structure of a typical lesson and other features that best support our users on their language learning journey.
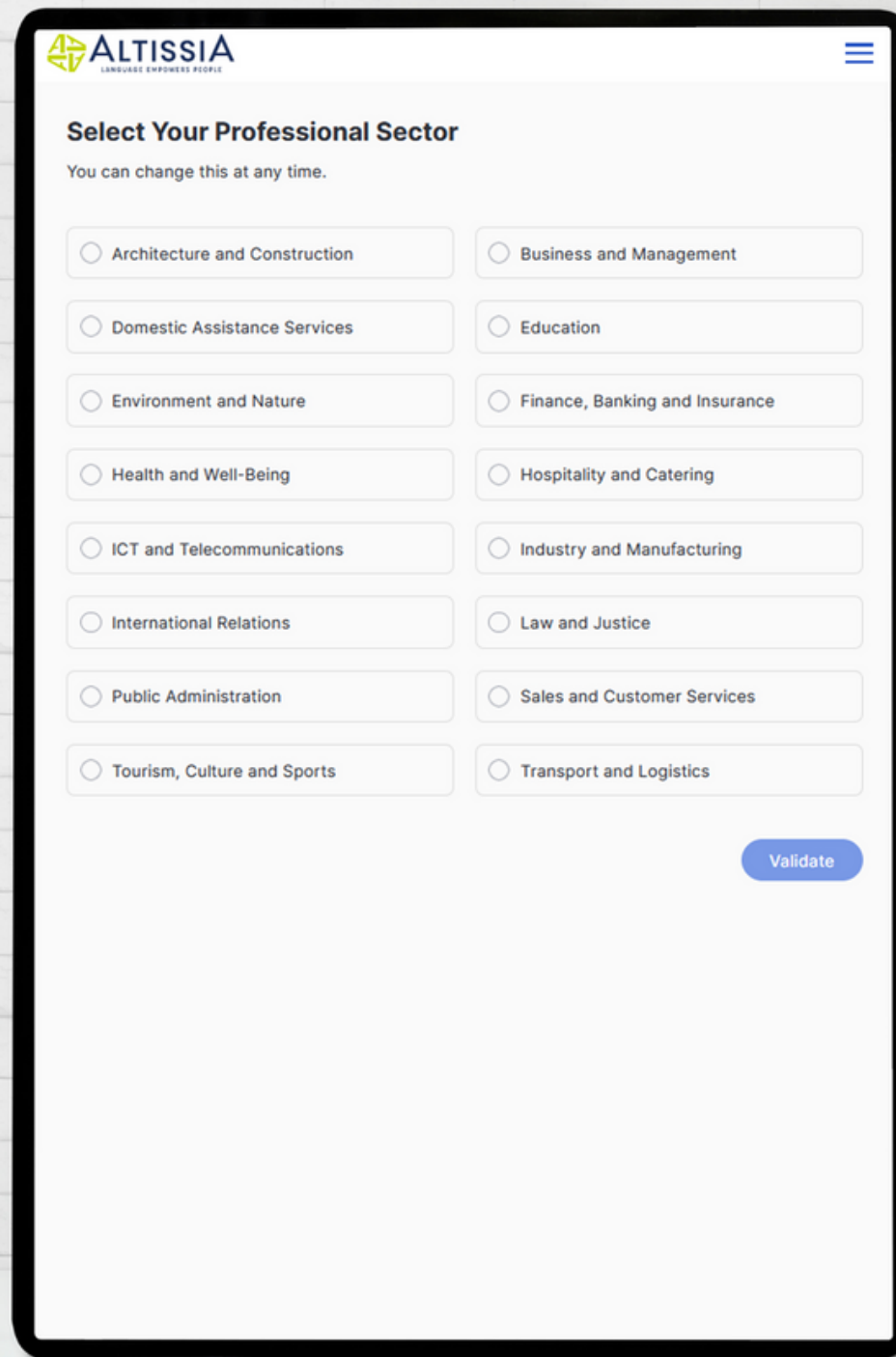
LEARNING PATHS AND MISSIONS

When connecting to the platform for the first time, a personalized learning path can be chosen according to the learner's own learning objectives. Several learning paths are available on the platform, the most popular ones being:

- Study & Work
- Progress in the Language
- Daily Life
- Explore the Culture

"Study & Work" allows for a more specific learning path linked to a professional sector:

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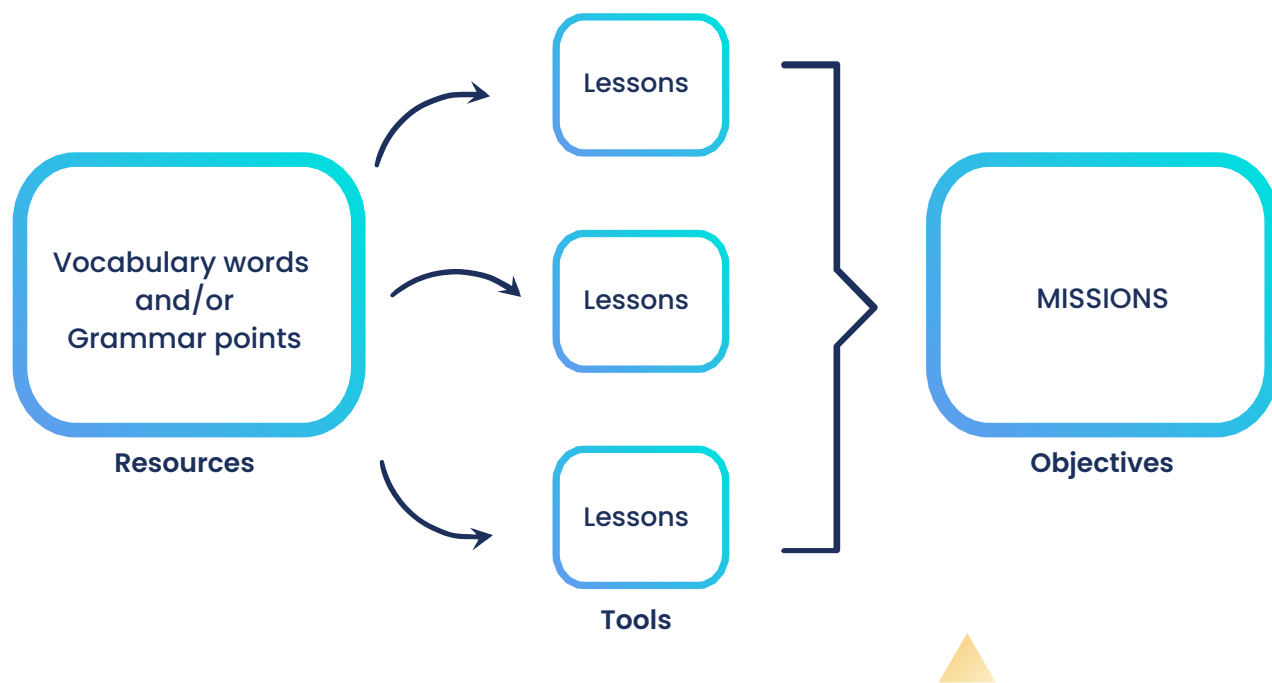LANGUAGE EMPOWERS PEOPLE

Select Your Professional Sector

You can change this at any time.

- ⚪ Architecture and Construction
- ⚪ Business and Management
- ⚪ Domestic Assistance Services
- ⚪ Education
- ⚪ Environment and Nature
- ⚪ Finance, Banking and Insurance
- ⚪ Health and Well-Being
- ⚪ Hospitality and Catering
- ⚪ ICT and Telecommunications
- ⚪ Industry and Manufacturing
- ⚪ International Relations
- ⚪ Law and Justice
- ⚪ Public Administration
- ⚪ Sales and Customer Services
- ⚪ Tourism, Culture and Sports
- ⚪ Transport and Logistics

Validate
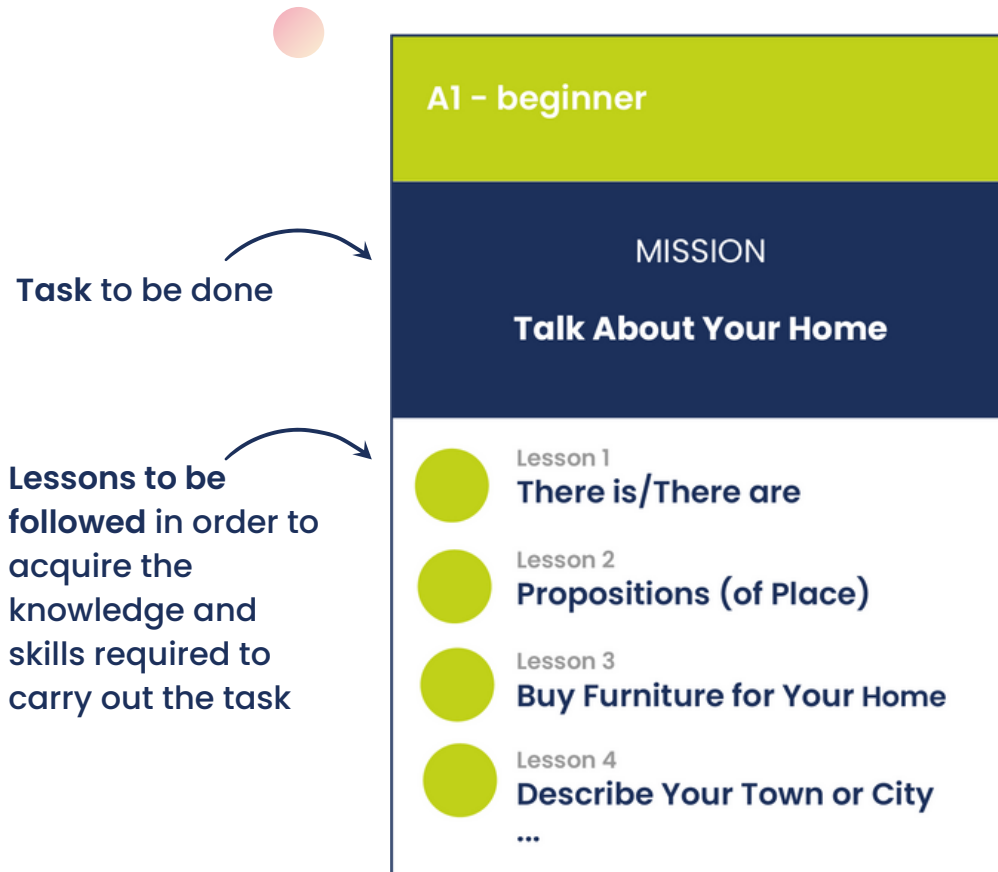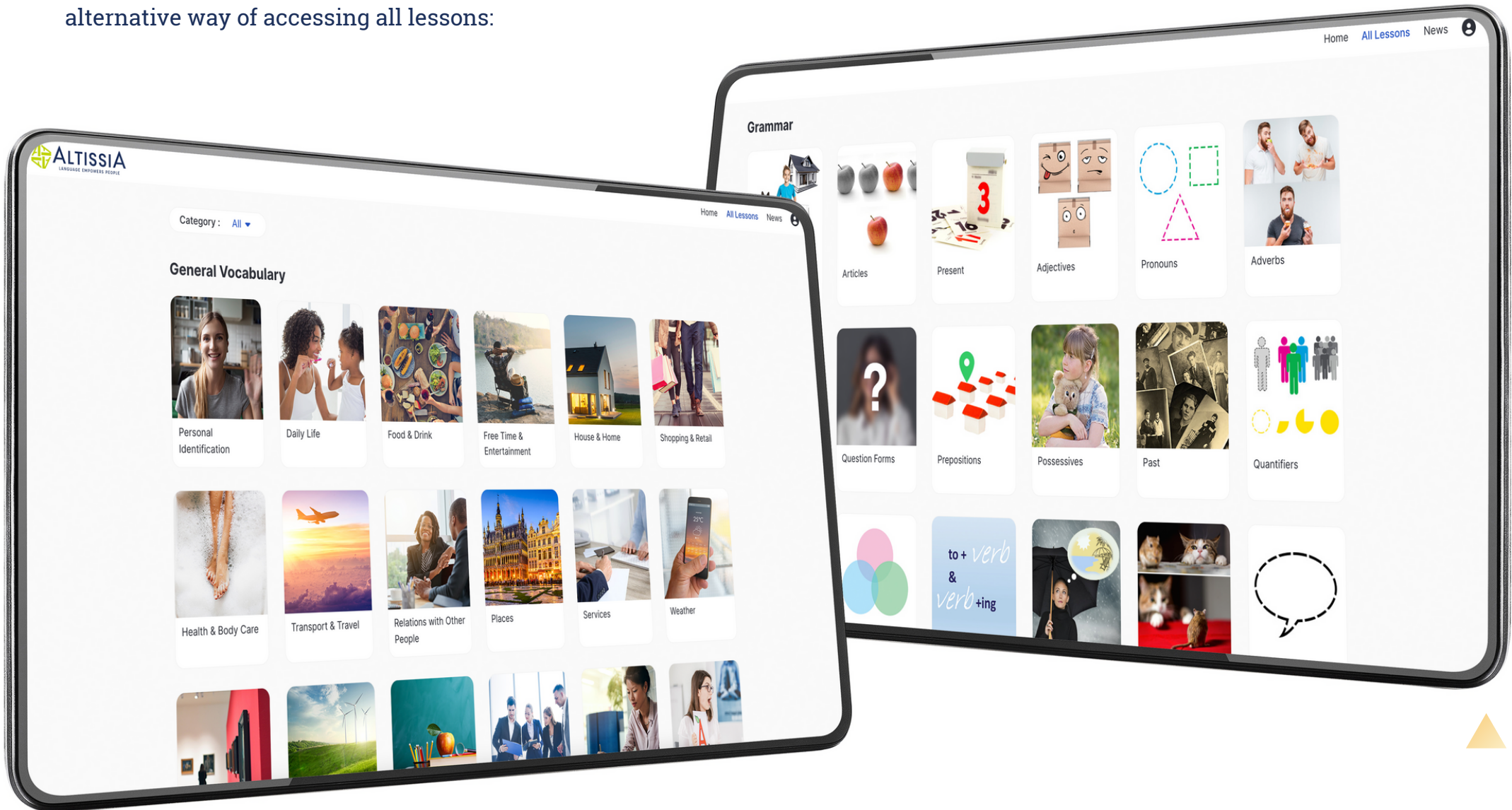
Based on the learner's level and chosen learning path, a series of missions and lessons is suggested. Missions represent linguistic objectives, which are based on real-life situations, and the lessons represent the tools needed to fulfil a mission (cf. communicative approach).

Lessons

Vocabulary words and/or Grammar points

Resources

Lessons

Lessons

Tools

MISSIONS

Objectives

The learning paths serve to guide learners through the platform and help them feel supported. The structure of the various learning paths and missions within them is consistent throughout in order to create a feeling of familiarity. As learners don't have a teacher standing next to them to give support and additional explanations, these factors are very important to avoid learners feeling lost and stressed, which, in turn, could lead them to simply turn their computer off.

Task to be done

Lessons to be followed in order to acquire the knowledge and skills required to carry out the task

A1 - beginner

MISSION

Talk About Your Home

Lesson 1
There is/There are

Lesson 2
Propositions (of Place)

Lesson 3
Buy Furniture for Your Home

Lesson 4
Describe Your Town or City
...

Free navigation of the platform is an alternative way of accessing all lessons:
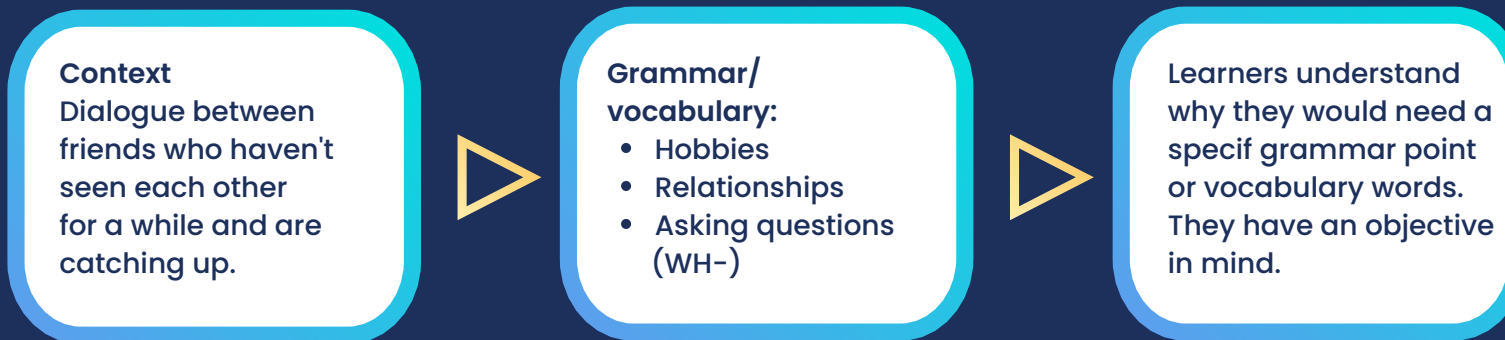
The All Lessons tab provides access to all the platform's lessons, but instead of guided learning paths, they are sorted into lexical and grammatical topics, where all lessons of all levels relating to a similar topic can be found. This section is ideal for diversifying or differentiating teaching and learning. It is also practical for teachers with diverse needs and goals in their class, and is the perfect tool for remediation and personalizing the learning process.

The other main characteristics of a typical lesson on Altissia's platform include:

- Full immersion (instructions and explanations are given in the learning language BUT there is optional linguistic help through automatic translations and interface languages)
- User-friendly navigation
- Inductive grammar explanations
- Learning by trial & error
- Structured lessons: activity, global comprehension question, detailed comprehension question, vocabulary flashcards, vocabulary exercises, summary test
- Cultural dimension (different regional accents, typical food, etc.)
- Real-life situations & contextualization

Here is an example of a real-life situation:

Context
Dialogue between friends who haven't seen each other for a while and are catching up.

▷

Grammar/ vocabulary:
- Hobbies
- Relationships
- Asking questions (WH–)

▷

Learners understand why they would need a specif grammar point or vocabulary words. They have an objective in mind.

Conclusion

We hope to have shown you how Altissia puts learners first, by providing several approaches that suit different learning and teaching needs and methods. Learners are guided through the learning process in a structured, coherent, and motivating way, with relevant and pedagogically-sound lessons.

Finally, there is one other aspect in which Altissia's platform differs from other platforms available on the market with regards to our pedagogical principles.

We have a whole pedagogical team working with teachers who are native speakers entirely dedicated to designing and creating unique lessons that allow learners to get the most out of their language learning journey. We take our pedagogical principles very seriously and always focus on learners.

We continuously work on improving our platform and the quality of our services, with the help of the user experience team and its close contact with active users who can always share their experience with us.

As a final word, we know how important language skills are in today's world. We can provide a tool that allows as many people as possible to learn a new language and reach out to each other, and we do so with passion. ▪

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