# Ageing Well Series

# **Public Talk Series 2021/22**

## **Series 2021/22 - Talk 4. *Learning languages and digital technologies in older age***

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### Structure of Talk

A link between language and memory

The myth of monolingual Britain

Learning is good for you (so they say!)

Memory games I

The five pillars of ageing well and languages

Body – Breath – Mind – Memory

Stress – in a good sense

Digital tools in COVID times

The myth of the digital natives

The social side of language learning

Memory games II

Expanding your horizon (and losing your North)

Future talks

### Background: ageing and language learning

An ageing world- living longer means encountering a wide range of long term conditions, sensory, motor, cognitive and social challenges, including vision loss, poor hearing, mobility difficulties, memory loss, social isolation and loneliness.

Language learning

although the effectiveness of ‘brain training’ is contested (Simons et al. 2016), there is evidence of the cognitive benefits of language learning and bilingualism in later life (Bak et al. 2014; Li et al. 2014)

Together with colleagues (Caroline Tagg, Nathaniel Owen), I conducted a small research study amongst Open University students aged 65 and above. We asked for the role these ideas (memory aid / fighting dementia) play in motivating older second language learners, and the social benefits that learning can bring.

The myth of monolingual Britain

Rumor has it that Britons are not good at learning languages. Why? Dominance of English Shyness? Perfectionism?

… or just a false rumor?

Let’s find out

### Learning is good for you!

* For young people: adapting to the world
* Now: world is changing rapidly, constantly
* Learning is needed in older life, as well:

Life-long learning = Not a luxury but a necessity

Memory Games – Let’s Learn

Ageing well – public talk series

Dr Jitka Vseteckova: based on research - useful for all.

Central: **‘**Five Pillars of Ageing Well**’**

#### Five pillars and languages

* Nutrition: leave for last
* Hydration: remember your two phrases?
* Physical stimulation: next…
* Social Stimulation
* Cognitive Stimulation

Cognitive stimulation

### Body – Breath – Mind – Memory

* Speaking is a physical activity involves breath, shaping the mouth, tongue, facial expression and often gesture

#### Breath

* Bees’ breath: soothing and calming
* Open lips slightly, blow out a steady stream of air to make your lips vibrate.
* Sound of vvvvvvvvv
* Rolling Rs: stimulating
* Roll up your tongue to curl back to the top of your palate. Blow out air forcefully to make tongue vibrate very fast. Easier to start it with a T.

#### Sound of Trrrrrrrr Different language – different sounds

* Learning a language also means getting used to different sounds.
* Change of habit is “physical stimulation”

#### Sounds in German

* Z in German: hiss like a cat “tzzz” Zehn (10) - Zoo – Zucker (sugar) – Ziege (goat)
* R in German: growl like a dog “rrrr” rot (red) – Kraut (cabbage) – Braut (bride)
* Ü in German: Umlaut –kissy mouth Küche (kitchen) - Müsli

#### Tongue twisters

For a challenge, take a few minutes to practise:

* „Zehn Ziegen zogen zehn Zentner Zucker zum Zoo.”(Ten goats pulled ten tons of sugar to the zoo.)
* „Blaukraut bleibt Blaukraut und Brautkleid bleibt Brautkleid.”(red cabbage is red cabbage and a bridal dress is a bridal dress)
* “Erre con erre guitarra, erre con erre barril. Rápido corren los carros, cargados de azúcar del ferrocarril.”
* (R and r guitar, r and r barrel. The carts roll along quickly, laden with sugar from the train.)
* Send me English tongue twisters in the textchat.

## And if you’d like more: [Rhabarberbarbara](https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=gG62zay3kck)

#### Stress in languages

* Languages are stressed. Not in a bad sense.
* Languages have rhythm patterns specific to their type.
* Stress Timed vs. Syllable Timed
* Stress times languages, like English, take longer for parts of a word that are emphasised (The rain in Spain stays mainly on the plain.)
* Syllable times languages (like Spanish or Italian) take the same time for every syllable
* Remember: ordering beer in German and Spanish
* Plethora of online tools and options
* New tools every day
* Particularly important in times of physical distancing
* Remain socially connected

Top 10 tool types for language teaching (based on responses from 1578 English teachers during Corona Crisis)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Tool type | Examples |
| Quiz maker | Mentimeter, Socrative |
| Games app | Kahoot!, Akinator |
| Audio record/edit/share | Audacity, Vocaroo |
| Question/answer management | Moodle, Google Classroom |
| File sharing/syncing | Google Docs, Dropbox |
| Crossword puzzle creator | EclipseCrossword, LearningApps |
| Story creation | Storymaker, Book Creator |
| Videoconferencing | Skype, Zoom |
| Video record/edit/share | Screencast-o-matic, Voicethread |
| Course management | Moodle, Google Classroom |

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### Myth: digital natives

* Expression going back to Marc Prensky who described the different learning habits of young people. For example, they listen to music, type in a search on their phone, and learn vocabulary at the same time.
* Truth: The “digital” natives have grown up
* with technology as part of their everyday life.
* Myth: Their generation is more skilled or more successful in using digital tools for learning.

### The social side of language learning

#### Background: ageing and online language learning

* Remember: An ageing world
* living longer means encountering a wide range of long term conditions, sensory, motor, cognitive and social challenges, including vision loss, poor hearing, mobility difficulties, memory loss, social isolation and loneliness.
* Role of technology (Baecker et al 2012)
* empower older adults and make them more capable, resourceful and
* independent
* connect people and thus help to combat loneliness and social isolation.

### Our study

* We asked students in Open University language courses
* How they use technology for learning
* How they learn independently
* How they use the online tools for communicating with
* other students.

Here are a few examples of what they said.

#### Technology use and resourcefulness

I’m trying drama with Duolingo just for fun and I find the accent of some of the speakers are very peculiar. I can’t give you an example but not how I learned at school or from opera and so on because one learns a lot of German and Italian from opera. (Female, Focus group 2)

#### Technology use and resourcefulness

One thing, a way of getting round that I did, after about a year of Spanish was I went on a website called My Language Exchange. It’s essentially dating website you might say but without the dating. But you search or get contacted by somebody who wants to learn English whilst you want to learn Spanish. And I arranged it so that it was some or we both arranged, it was people who lived relatively close so you could meet up. (Male, Focus group 2)

#### One method mentioned: (E-)Tandem learning

* Virtual language exchanges
* Tandem “pairing agencies”
* Two language learners with different mother tongues team up to teach/learn each other’s language

#### “J’ai perdu le nord”

* I have lost the North? What does that mean? Learning another language also allows you to enter another world – different mindsets
* Language structures our thinking.
* E.g. for me all cats are female: *die Katze*
* In English you talk about “leaving the past behind you.”
* In Chinese, the future is behind you, the past before you.

### Losing your balance

#### Learning a new language also means:

* Coping with ambiguity Not being certain Having to make do
* Or losing your mental balance a bit.
* Challenging but stimulating, as well.

### From Jitka’s recommendations:

**Lifestyles that combine cognitively stimulating activities with physical activities and rich social networks may provide the best odds of preserving cognitive function in old age** (**La Rue, 2010**).

Recommendation – Make time for cognitively stimulating activities that you’ve always enjoyed

Rationale – Continuing favourite activities can ensure sustainability of cognitive stimulation. Long-term exposure to cognitive stimulation may be needed for practical functional benefits

Recommendation -Add some new cognitive challenges, as your time and enjoyment permit

Rationale -Trying new activities may enhance brain plasticity by requiring new learning or development of new cognitive strategies Music Lessons, learning a new language, AQUA

**“Is monolingualism making us ill?”**

In: The Power of Languages, A publication by the Arts and Humanities Council, 2019

Dr Bak, researcher in bilingualism and dementia, investigates the effect of speaking more than one language on the onset of dementia.

Good news: Not how well you speak a language matters but that you practise it.

### Five pillars: What we covered

* Hydration: how to stay hydrated in at least two languages
* Physical stimulation: breath and stress – the rhythm of languages
* Social stimulation: make the most of online social tools
* Cognitive stimulation: use language learning as a brain gym
* And last: nutrition

### Nutrition: Language and food

Enjoy a little virtual trip abroad with cooking recipes from different countries. Experiment and experience.

### Evaluation and Feedback

Please let me know how you experienced this talk by filling in [our survey](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/27DBWXS):

### Future talks

Series 2021/21 - 5. Disenfranchised grief in older age

Dr Kerry Jones OU 19th January 2022 -[Ageing Well Public Talks](https://ordo.open.ac.uk/collections/Ageing_Well_Public_Talks_2020-21/5122166)

Summary of related resources to The Ageing Well Public Talk Series

#### Podcasts

* [Vseteckova J & King J (2020) COVID-19 Interview podcast for The Retirement Café: ‘*Ageing Well Under Lockdown’*](https://theretirementcafe.co.uk/077-dr-jitka/)
* [Vseteckova J & Broad E  (2020) Keep Me Walking - researching with people living with dementia and their carers - Podcast – Open University in collaboration with The Parks Trust](https://youtu.be/0QHAS88C-LU)
* [Vseteckova J (2020)  Podcast - areas for research with The Open University](https://youtu.be/vE6J9J_ovOM)
* [Broad E & Methley A & Vseteckova J (2021) Podcast OU & The Parks Trust & Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust - Spotter sheet and mindful walking.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dq5OXEBk3CA&feature=youtu.be)
* [Broad E & Methley A & Vseteckova J (2021) Preventing brain decline while ageing](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=965w7K8XPdo)

#### OpenLearn Resources:

* [Vseteckova J (2020) Ageing Well Public Talk Series](https://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/health/the-ageing-well-public-talks)
* [Vseteckova J (2019) 5 reasons why exercising outdoors is great for people who have dementia](https://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/mental-health/5-reasons-why-exercising-outdoors-great-people-who-have-dementia)
* [Vseteckova J (2019) Depression, mood and exercise](https://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/mental-health/depression-mood-and-exercise?in_menu=622279)
* [Vseteckova J (2019) Five Pillars for Ageing Well](https://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/mental-health/five-pillars-ageing-well)
* [Vseteckova J (2020) Ageing Brain](https://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/health/the-ageing-brain-use-it-or-lose-it)
* [Vseteckova J (2020) Ageing Well Public Talks Series II. Plan for 2020 – 2021](https://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/health/ageing-well-public-talk-series-plan-2020/2021)
* [Vseteckova J (2020) Walking the Parks with The OU and The Parks Trust](https://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/social-care-social-work/keep-me-walking-people-living-dementia-and-outdoor-environments)
* [Vseteckova J, Borgstrom E, Whitehouse A, Kent A, Hart A (2021) Advance Care Planning (ACP ) - Discuss, Decide, Document and Share Advance Care Planning (ACP )](https://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/health/advance-care-planning-acp-discuss-decide-document-and-share)
* [Vseteckova J, Methley A, Lucassen M (2021) The benefits of mindfulness and five common myths surrounding it](https://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/mental-health/the-benefits-mindfulness-and-five-common-myths-surrounding-it)
* [Vseteckova J, Broad E, Andrew V (2021) The impact of walking and socialising through 5 Ways Café on people living with dementia and their carers: A volunteer’s perspective](https://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/health/the-impact-walking-and-socialising-through-5-ways-cafe-on-people-living-dementia-and-their-carers)
* [Vseteckova J, Methley A, Lucassen M (2021) The benefits of mindfulness and five common myths surrounding it](https://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/mental-health/the-benefits-mindfulness-and-five-common-myths-surrounding-it)
* [Methley A, Vseteckova J, Broad E (2021) Outdoor Therapy: The Benefits of Walking and Talking](https://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/mental-health/outdoor-therapy-the-benefits-walking-and-talking)
* [Vseteckova J, Methley a, Broad E (2021) What happens to our brain as we age and how we can stop the fast decline](https://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/health/what-happens-our-brain-we-age-and-how-can-we-stop-the-decline)
* [Methley A & Vseteckova J & Jones K (2020) Green & Blue & Outdoor spaces](https://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/mental-health/the-benefits-outdoor-green-and-blue-spaces)

#### COVID-19 related

* [Vseteckova J, How to age well, while self-isolating (2020)](https://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/how-age-well-while-self-isolating)
* [Vseteckova J, (2020) SHORT FILM - Ageing Well in Self-Isolation](https://youtu.be/LU4pXFgcGos)
* [Vseteckova J, (2020) ANIMATION - Keeping healthy in Self-Isolation](https://youtu.be/M9yUC-MUugA)
* [Vseteckova J et al (2020) COVID-19 The effects of self-isolation and lack of physical activity on carers](https://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/social-care-social-work/the-effects-self-isolation-and-lack-physical-activity-on-carers)
* [Taverner P, Larkin M, Vseteckova J, et al.  (2020) Supporting adult carers during COVID-19 pandemic](https://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/social-care-social-work/how-can-adult-carers-get-the-best-support-during-covid-19-pandemic-and-beyond)
* [Robb M, Penson M, Vseteckova J, et al.  (2020) Young carers, COVID-19 and physical activity](https://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/social-care-social-work/young-carerscovid-19-and-physical-activity)
* [Penson M, Vseteckova J et al. (2020) Older Carers, COVID-19 and Physical Activity](https://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/social-care-social-work/older-carers-covid-19-and-physical-activity)
* [Vseteckova J  & Methley A  (2020) Acceptance Commitment Therapy (ACT) to help carers in challenging COVID-19 times](https://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/health/how-can-acceptance-and-commitment-therapy-help-carers-challenging-times-such-the-covid-19-pandemic)
* [‘*Ageing Well Public Talks*’ Series 2021/2022 repository on ORDO Collections](https://ordo.open.ac.uk/collections/Ageing_Well_Public_Talks_2021-22/5493216)
* [‘*Ageing Well Public Talks*’ Series 2020/2021 repository on ORDO Collections](https://ordo.open.ac.uk/collections/Ageing_Well_Public_Talks_2020-21/5122166)
* [‘*Ageing Well Public Talks*’ Series 2019/2020 repository on ORDO Collections](https://doi.org/10.21954/ou.rd.c.4716437.v1)
* [OpenLearnCreate Course on ‘*Ageing Well’ 2019/2020*](https://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/course/view.php?id=5016)
* [Home exercise no equipment – no problem (](https://selsdotlife.wordpress.com/2020/04/01/home-exercises-for-older-adults-no-equipment-no-problem/)*[Blog](https://selsdotlife.wordpress.com/2020/04/01/home-exercises-for-older-adults-no-equipment-no-problem/)*[)](https://selsdotlife.wordpress.com/2020/04/01/home-exercises-for-older-adults-no-equipment-no-problem/)