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**Applying Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
in Adult Education: A Practical Guide**

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1. Introduction

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a scientifically grounded educational framework aimed at enhancing the learning experience of all individuals, irrespective of their abilities, backgrounds, or learning styles. Developed by CAST (Center for Applied Special Technology), UDL is grounded in neuroscience and emphasizes three core principles: providing multiple means of engagement (the why of learning), representation (the what of learning), and action and expression (the how of learning) (CAST, 2018).

In adult education, where learners are often highly diverse in language, culture, digital skills, and cognitive backgrounds, UDL offers practical strategies to build more inclusive, flexible, and empowering learning environments. This guide presents insights collected through job-shadowing activities at LFI – Learning for Integration, Finland, and translates them into practical tools for adult educators.

2. UDL Principles in Practice

The Finnish model of adult education, as demonstrated at LFI and partner NGOs, embraces UDL as a guiding pedagogical approach. Participants in the Erasmus+ KA122-ADU mobility observed the following practices:

Multiple Means of Engagement: Teachers encouraged participation through tools like Padlet and Kahoot, allowing learners to interact anonymously, vote, and reflect. Motivational diversity was respected by giving learners autonomy in choosing learning tasks and pacing.

Multiple Means of Representation: Lessons integrated video content with subtitles, infographics, tactile materials, and multilingual handouts. Educators made use of plain-language summaries and culturally relevant metaphors to improve understanding.

Multiple Means of Action and Expression: Assessments were flexible—learners chose between writing, speaking, or visual expression (e.g. mind maps, recorded oral reflections). Assistive technologies such as screen readers, speech-to-text tools, and digital portfolios were commonly available.

This approach not only addressed learning differences but also reinforced learners' confidence and agency—especially critical for migrants, older adults, and persons with disabilities.



3. Case Example: UDL in Multilingual Classrooms

On Day 3 of the mobility, the team attended a multilingual support class for adult migrants. The facilitator combined visual storytelling, bilingual projection (Finnish and Arabic), and pictograms. Learners worked with tablets equipped with text-to-speech tools and language switch features. The class atmosphere was collaborative and safe, allowing learners to communicate ideas in hybrid forms—speech, drawing, gesture, and digital annotation.

"When a learner can choose how to receive and express knowledge, their confidence grows. UDL is about dignity, not just access." – Educator at LFI

This session exemplified how UDL, combined with digital inclusion, can offer a transformative experience for learners historically marginalized in traditional classrooms.

4. UDL Checklist for Educators

UDL Dimension	Reflective Questions
Engagement	Do I offer multiple paths to engage learners' interest?
Representation	Is my content accessible in various sensory formats?
Action & Expression	Can learners demonstrate understanding in different ways?

Educators can use this checklist during lesson planning or post-activity review. A printable version is available via the project's EPALE repository.

5. Recommendations for Implementation

- **Start Small:** Select one lesson or module and redesign it with UDL principles. Observe learner reactions.
- **Use Free & Open Tools:** Try [Book Creator](#), [Read&Write](#), and [Google Jamboard] for collaborative visual learning.
- **Peer Collaboration:** Co-develop lesson plans with fellow educators to share strategies and reduce effort.
- **Reflect and Adjust:** Use learner journals, digital polls, or quick reflection cards to assess what worked.
- **Micro-Credentials:** Offer recognition through Europass-compatible digital badges for learners and educators who engage with UDL modules.

6. Summary: The UDL Integration Cycle

The UDL Integration Cycle can be described through the following five interconnected stages:

- **Observe Learner Needs** – Identify learning styles, challenges, and strengths across the group. Use surveys, interviews, or classroom observation to gather insights.



- Apply Multiple Means – Integrate UDL principles by offering varied forms of content delivery (visual, auditory, tactile) and engagement (group work, individual tasks, gamification).
- Co-create Resources – Involve learners in designing learning materials and selecting relevant tools. Foster ownership and inclusiveness.
- Implement & Assess – Use flexible instructional approaches and allow diverse demonstration methods (written work, videos, oral presentation, visuals).
- Reflect & Share – Facilitate joint reflection sessions, gather feedback, and share results and best practices with peers.

This cycle is iterative and adaptable across different course types, learner groups, and institutional contexts.

7. Licensing and Acknowledgements

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