"LeTS Go" AND *LINGU@NET WORLD WIDE* PROJECTS – NEW EXPERIENCES IN THE E-LEARNING PROCESS AND ITS RESOURCES

ELZA GHEORGHIU
ANCA-CRISTINA COLIBABA
EuroEd Foundation, Iasi/Quest România

Abstract

Faced with a lack of innovative language teaching materials in the past decades, language teaching staff and institutions must face nowadays yet another challenge: how to select the adequate, high-quality resources for their learners from a multitude of resources available. This article focuses on several instruments developed in the area of linguistic materials which can help teachers replace or supplement traditional methodologies and develop language training products by using new technologies.

Key-words: language teaching and learning, online learning tools and resources.

Introduction

The aim of this article is to share some insights into the experience EuroEd Foundation currently has with the implementation of two European projects: ***Lingu@net World Wide***[1] (a project that promotes quality in the field of online learning tools and resources) and **LeTS Go**[2] (a project promoting the application of new technologies to language teaching and learning).

New technologies have changed training methodologies, introducing innovative elements of innovation that have redrawn the role of language teachers and teacher trainers. The term e-learning is generally used to refer to the use of technology in learning in a much broader sense

---

[1] Lingu@net World Wide (*504830-LLP-1-2009-1-ES-KA2-KA2MP*) is a KA2 project co-financed by the European Union under the Lifelong Learning Programme.
[2] LeTS *Go (LLP-LdV-ToI-09-IT-0503)* is a Leonardo da Vinci - Transfer of Innovation project co-financed by the European Union under the Lifelong Learning Programme.

than the *computer-based training* or *Computer Aided Instruction* of the 1980s. It is also broader than the terms *Online Learning* or *Online Education* which generally refer to purely web-based learning. In cases where mobile technologies are used, the term *M-learning* has become more common. E-learning, however, also refers to the actual learning that takes place using these systems.

E-learning is naturally suited to distance learning and flexible learning, but can also be used in conjunction with face-to-face teaching, in which case the term Blended learning is commonly used. In higher education especially, the increasing tendency is to create a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) in which all aspects of a course are handled through a consistent user interface, standard throughout the institution. Moreover, e-learning can refer to educational web sites such as those offering learning scenarios, worksheets and interactive exercises for children, and in the business sector where it generally designates cost-effective online training.

Rationale and background

Research commissioned by the European Union shows that in today's Europe, languages at the workplace and international and intercultural communication play an increasingly important role. ***Lingu@net World Wide*** project addresses the promotion of quality in the area of online language learning instruments and resources. It continues a previously implemented project, ***Lnet EU***, that was developed over the last 12 years with support from the EU (in 1998-2001, and 2003-2006). In 2007 it was awarded the MERLOT prize for being 'exemplary on-line learning material for all disciplines' (www.merlot.org) and in 2008 L'net EU was awarded the European Commission's Gold prize in the "European Lifelong Learning Awards for quality in mobility" (http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/news/news1687_en.htm).

The European Commission has financed the LeTS Go project as part of the Lifelong Learning Programme (Leonardo - Transfer of Innovation). The project LeTS Go intends to promote the implementation of the LeTS portal developed by two additional target groups - school teachers and professional trainers – in the framework of the LeTS: Language eTeacher Services project funded by the Leonardo da Vinci programme.

Target groups

The project LeTS Go focuses on the LeTS portal developed during a previous project by two additional target groups: school teachers and professional trainers.

Three core competences are necessary for language teachers / trainers wishing to make efficient use of new technologies for language teaching and training:

1. Knowing how to choose products among those on offer, identifying those that best meet their educational needs.

2. Knowing how to use and enhance the products available either as an alternative to or in conjunction with traditional methodologies.

3. Knowing how to create educational and training products that exploit the potential of new technologies.

In order to respond to the needs outlined above, the LeTS project developed the following services addressed to language teachers:

1. An online training course focusing on the criteria and instruments for the selection of language training products exploiting the ICT potential

2. An online training course based on how to use e-learning products available to replace or supplement traditional methodologies

3. An online training course on how to develop language training products by using new technologies.

Since the main focus of *Lingu@net World Wide* project is to offer access to a large number of quality online language learning resources, its target groups are inclusive, and consist of language learners interested to develop their competences in one of the 32 languages it promotes, on the one hand, and language professionals (not exclusively teachers) with a professional or personal interest in these languages.

Aims and objectives of the projects

The "**LeTS Go**" portal target groups are teachers of foreign languages. This portal aims to: promote the application of new technologies to language teaching and learning; enable the sharing and exchange of e-learning materials for the teaching of European languages. The project presents a general outline of e-learning both from a technological and from an operative point of

view. It represents an application of e-learning in the foreign language teaching/learning. The project introduces ways of collecting and evaluating the existing online material, highlights pedagogical and methodological aspects used in e-learning in the foreign language teaching / learning process. It finally focuses on contents development for distance formation on the Internet.

The ***Lingu@net World Wide*** project aims to give access to over 5,000 (currently 3,700) good quality online learning resources and to provide online support and advice for language learners in 32 (currently 20) languages from Europe and beyond.

Products and outcomes

The expected results of the LeTS Go project are:

1.   The creation of two transnational networks for cooperative online learning consisting of:

-   200 teachers of languages in schools

-   100 language trainers

2.   Improvement of the LeTS Portal

3.   Database of teachers' and trainers' experiences in the field of application of e-learning to language education and training.

4.   Database of reviews of e-learning based language teaching and learning products

5.   10 new e-elarning based language teaching mini-courses

6.   Reports on the use of the portal with students and trainees

7.   Insertion of the LeTS Portal into national education and training systems and into school and training centres' teaching sources.

As far as the ***Lingu@net World Wide*** project is concerned, the main outputs / results foreseen are: a database of over 5,000 (currently 3,700) good quality online language learning resources, online support and advice for language learners in 32 (currently 20) languages, the development of 12 new interface languages on the portal: 7 new European languages to complete all 23 official EU languages, and 5 new world languages (Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Japanese and Russian. By adding these 12 new languages to L'net Europa will: give better access to online resources for learning languages (i.e. users can access materials and support for language learning in their mother tongue); give wider access to online resources for learning these new languages by making them accessible via 32 language interfaces, support language acquisition for migrants throughout EU; act as show-case world wide for EU-produced resources; continue to disseminate

good quality results of EU language-related projects; and allow L'net to continue its work towards sustainability for the project as a whole. All these outputs are or will soon be available on the project website at: www.linguanet-europa.org.

Conclusions

This multi-fold and innovative approach will have a positive impact on the targeted beneficiaries (both institutions and individuals). The analysis of the quality assurance instruments and mechanisms developed within these European projects offers valuable support for individuals or institutions when selecting quality language learning resources to improve their international and intercultural communication competences (be it either the mere visit of an internet site or a long-term strategy to develop the skills of learners or employees). Both projects aim to develop innovative and transferable results and to raise awareness of the public on the importance quality has in education. There is an impressive number of language learning resources available especially online, and the paramount role educators play is that of assisting learners in choosing what suits their interests best.

References:

www.linguanet-europa.org
http://letsgo.pixel-online.org

Elza Gheorghiu - EuroEd Foundation
Head of the English department at V. Alecsandri High School, Iasi, Romania also she collaborate with EuroEd Foundation as a English teachers and also she is project team member in some of the national and transnational projects implemented by EuroEd Foundation since 1994 (Grundtvig, Lingua, Leonardo da Vinci, Phare, other tenders).

Anca Colibaba – "Gr. T. Popa" University of Medicine and Pharmacy & EuroEd Foundation
Anca Colibaba has over 30 years of experience in language education, especially English. She is the President of EuroEd, having a wide experience in managing and co-ordinating transnational projects in the field of linguistic education and training, adult education and LLL. She is project coordinator of over 25 (EU) projects implemented nationally or trans-nationally by EuroEd Foundation.