

The following are the minutes of the session on *Methodology and materials development* of the TNP meeting in Copenhagen. The session took place on 7th June and was chaired by Brigitte Forster-Vosicki.

1. Willy Clijsters, Hasselt, Belgium. “Trial and error on our way to paradise”

Willy Clijsters gave an overview of the practitioners’ experience concerning ICT constructed FL learning materials from the point of view of both teachers and learners commenting on the possibilities offered and obstacles met.

First efforts to experiment on the possibilities of ICT assisted FL learning started with DOS-products that included vocabulary exercises mostly and were very complicated while at the same time sustaining existing methods of practice. This was succeeded by the production of a test software that was successful once its use gave learners credits for their final exams. The effort ended in the production of a Cdi that was a commercial failure. Since then, efforts have continued and experience has led to the production of a very successful cdrom or browser driven FL course for higher technical staff of enterprises and a large MC-database for learners of EFL is currently being tested. The above highlighted areas of interesting possibilities of application of ICT and its serious restrictions and raised environmental questions. The requirements that a good ICT product should meet are therefore presented as follows:

Interesting possibilities lie in the area of:

- Vocabulary training
- Grammar exercises
- Pronunciation (in the form of simple imitation)
- Multimedia
- Multiple choice testing

Serious restrictions lie in the area of:

- Correction of creative texts
- Written creative interaction
- Correction of oral production (e.g. pitch, speed, intonation)
- Oral creative interaction
- Voice and sound transmission (technical problems)
- Images and movie sequences (limited possibilities)

Environmental problems met:

- Haves and have-nots
- Number of computers or terminals at our disposal
- Technical support at our disposal
- Flexibility (spatial, etc.)
- Compatibility (different configurations, releases of software, etc.)
- User friendliness
- Computer reading strategies (reading on a screen is different to that of a book)
- Added value (if there is any, which that is)

The requirements that should be met by a good ICT product include:

- Environmental elements (machines, browsers, etc.)

- Maximum compatibility
- Easy accessibility (user friendly including elements such as clear and simple instructions, on-line help, ...)
- Real added value/irreplacibility (content and style compared to traditional to traditional learning materials)
- Multimedia (use of all the possibilities offered by ICT including sound, image, movie sequences,)
- Adequate content (that should be based on needs analysis and should include: 1. communicative situations, 2. corpus composition and analysis, 3. appropriate didactic scenario, 4. progressive elaboration taking into consideration the different levels of language competence, 5. continuous return possibilities, 6. authentic language and environments, 7. young and changing style comparable to the attractive computer games available)

The above demand not only a multi-disciplinary effort but also a change in the traditional role of teachers to one of teachers-coachers. The problems arising for teachers include the following:

- The production of innovative and challenging ICT-based exercises and tasks using multimedia
- Learning how to guide learners by assisting individual learning, organizing creative activities and giving creative feedback

As for learners, they have to learn how to learn autonomously (discipline and organization of their own learning), there should be regular follow-up and their intermediate and final tests should reflect the learning activities they are involved with through the whole course.

2. Ole Laurisen, Aarhus, Denmark. “The integration of ICT on a faculty-wide basis: Challenges, Problems, Perspectives”

Ole Laurisen presented the 2F Project, an attempt to create a platform for the management of the whole faculty of the university he works at, the investigation, evaluation and development of learning methods and environments, research networks and knowledge sharing and management with the help of ICT.

Web based learning experiments involving the faculty and library had shown that:

- The use of ICT would upgrade the study programs
- New learning methods were needed
- Changing learning methods would imply changes for the whole organization

The funding of the project was through the Ministry of Education and the Faculty.

The goals of the project were:

- To move from teaching (instructivism) to learning (constructivism)
- To support the individual learning process with ICT
- To replace traditional lessons and timetables with the just-in-time/just-in-place concept

What the project team felt was necessary was:

- Adequate infrastructure

- Round the clock access to learning resources
- ICT support for colleagues and students
- Look-out persons (for programs, web sites, etc.)
- Research
- Knowledge-sharing
- Co-operation

What has been accomplished so far is:

- Setting up of a learning resource center that provides 64 PCs and 10 Macs, the Office Packet, hard-disk dictionaries and encyclopedias, free web access and access to library resources round the clock.
- Setting up a portal for all students, the METRO.

Results have shown, however, that few people in the faculty use the METRO because it:

- Has a complex structure
- Includes a virtual library for the whole Faculty (includes “everything” and “nothing”)
- Is not properly profiled or positioned
- Has access limitations for dictionaries
- Has competition from “Google”

The solutions suggested by the project team have been the following:

- The contents of the METRO must be adapted to the individual user (via CampusNet). The issues of autonomy and personalization must be taken seriously
- Its structure must be simplified
- The electronic resources must be accessible off-campus
- Teachers are more active in finding relevant material for the various stops on the lines of the METRO

Further solutions that develop new learning methods are:

- Develop person/level/discipline-specific and targeted information retrieval routines made by the learners themselves and coached by the teachers/librarians
- Let the learners take ownership by creating a web site for the course for which all participants are responsible, making it dynamic so that the learners can participate in managing it without problems

All this must be done because:

- New learning methods cannot be implemented unless the learners understand the changes, since they have been brought up to be passive receptors and expect edutainment
- To introduce constructivism (coaching, autonomy, objectives of the course leading to professional and personal development, and collaboration)

Further actions to be taken include:

- The introduction and use of learning styles (based on sensation, perception and personality typology) that can be diagnosed through the use of questionnaires, observations and interviews
- The introduction of communication styles for use in conference systems (learners must be trained to the rules of communication in cyber space)

including the frequency, length, language and style of contributions and the use of emotions)

The demands made on the teachers are: readiness to be coaches/facilitators and to stimulate the learning process, readiness to interact empathetically with the learners and to undergo changes and implement ICT and self-insight.

The demands on the learners are: readiness to accept autonomy, to participate in teamwork and undergo changes to implement ICT and self-insight.

To create a well functioning learning environment technicians should “listen” to teachers and courses must be currently evaluated so that mismatches can be identified and repaired immediately.

3. Henrik Selsoe Sorensen, Denmark. “Find, Enhance, Store, Share, Information (FESSI) – Introductory course for BA students in modern languages for international business communication and LSP”

This was the outline of a face-to-face course at the Copenhagen Business School backed by e-environment aiming at giving learners ICT tools to improve their performance while studying.

First learners are requested to find information (in some resource book such as a dictionary or encyclopedia, by accessing the library or by using the advanced searches of Google, etc.)

The second step is to enhance the information found by verifying it (through number of occurrences, variations, changes, connotations, etc.)

Thirdly, information is stored.

Then, learners are requested to share this information with other learners. The didactic effect is to acquire the discipline needed for managing and updating a database. This can be significant help for prospective translators.

The first evaluation carried out for the above course showed that learners focused more on content and communicative rather than ICT skills and as a result found the course irrelevant. When the course was integrated with other subjects (in projects), learners found it useful.

In the discussion that followed it was noted that teachers’ styles should be considered as well and that unfortunately there was no cooperation with other universities.

There was the question of whether the use of the web should become obligatory for various courses to which the answer was that in such a case it should be done gradually since there is no previous experience.

A further question raised involved the explanation of the phrase “just-in-time, just-in-place”. The answer was that it meant the availability of the course any time on the web and this could solve the problem of lack of time that learners may be facing. On a further question referring to the benefit of this for the learners the answer was that this way of learning is going to be tested but it has not been done yet since ICT is part of daily life and as such there may be no need to evaluate. On being asked whether it is a tool that brings better results the answer was that learners are positive to ICT and feel they are being given attention.

At this point Wolfgang Mackiewicz noted that participants need to consider the implications of ICT and its applications and the way people can get to know these initiatives at a time when there are significant differences among EU countries in these matters. Spreading the knowledge, the level at which implementation should start, whether such efforts should be networked and the way this can be achieved, integrating all the above, shaping e-learning in Europe and the proposals to be made are issues that should be considered by the participants.

Mike Kelly, commenting on interoperability and wondering how knowledge should be shared, expressed the view that this should not be left to individual universities but that it is the responsibility of the E.U. to set the direction.

Anne Räsänen pointed that learners should be involved in such efforts because it is an issue that involves them and because it is important for dissemination reasons.

Marina Mozzon-McPherson pointed out that there are different issues involved and that this is an experimental stage. So far there has been no systematic research on which informative decisions concerning platforms, effects on learners and teachers and other issues can be based. She added that research should be supported and wondered whether the pioneers in this field are properly rewarded for what they do.

On answering this issue, Wolfgang Mackiewicz said that if funding is needed, research should be connected to the policy of the E.U. adding that languages, which are very high on the E.U. agenda and ICT, which is close behind, should meet. The E.U. should be made aware of the need for research into this field and the existence of a multilingual community within the space of universities can be used as a strong argument for directing attention and funding research in the field.