BELGIAN NATIONAL REPORT ON NEW LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS – THE EUROPEAN LEARNING SPACE

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1. General introduction

The report aims to present a survey of the present role of new learning environments in language learning and teaching at Belgian institutes of higher education (HE). It is based on information obtained by means of a questionnaire sent to all deans of language Faculties of universities in Belgium, directors of language centres and the directors of all non-university institutes of higher education. Each Faculty, centre or institute was asked to appoint a representative who would then fill in the questionnaire, taking care that he did not only represent his own situation. All in all, about 20 questionnaires were returned out of a possible total of about 70. A relatively large percentage of respondents came from Language Centres. It should be remembered though that not all institutes had extensive language departments or even offer language courses on the curriculum. In addition, the non-university HE institutes in Belgium are going through a rapid process of restructuring and amalgamation which is changing the educational scene drastically. In Flanders, for example, it is assumed that the present number of 28 institutes (down from more than 100 a few years ago) will be reduced to less than half that number in the near future, new mergers being in preparation all the time. In universities too, the Bologna declaration is speeding up a process of change that has already led to new policies and measures that would have been unthinkable only 10 years ago.

On the one hand this means that new opportunities are being created for innovation but on the other it also means that an enormous amount of energy is being spent on adapting to new organisational structures and new educational 'cultures' that require great flexibility and adaptability from policy makers, teaching staff and students alike.

In terms of the topic of this report, it should be stressed that the term New Learning Environment is by no means clear to all. It did not just emerge as a result of the introduction of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in language teaching and learning: New Learning Environments can equally well result from the availability of human resources (i.e. visiting students or staff members). Because of this, the term can include a diverse range of concepts that do not always seem easily distinguishable (from the introduction of self-access centres, videoconferencing, email and Internet based systems and other technological systems, to the buddy system for exchange students, tandem learning, informal group-based learning via foreign languages, collaborative learning (electronically or not) and total autonomous learning). In practice, however, most respondents have interpreted the term as referring to ICT based learning and/or teaching, which may or may not be webbased.

Since the author is from Flanders and information from the French-speaking part of Belgium was relatively hard to come by, the report may be slightly biased towards Flanders. It is hoped that any such possible bias may be redressed at a later stage.

2. The role of New Learning Environments in language teaching and learning

The concept of new learning environments that cater for 'learning' (often in an ICT and webbased context) rather than 'teaching' seems to have been accepted (at least in theory) by most respondents as an ideal to be strived for. In practice, however, many problems are being encountered.

Trends such as tandem learning and the opportunities offered by exchange students and visiting staff were not explicitly mentioned by any of the respondents. On the whole exchanges were seen as an ideal way to have Belgian students gain valuable experience abroad rather than offering opportunities for students staying home by introducing native speaker foreign students into the overall learning context.

2.1.   The integration of New Learning Environments in language teaching and learning

All institutes reported attempts to integrate new learning environments in a structural way into their courses. On the whole, however, the number of courses offered in this way was limited. One of the most advanced institutions in this respect is the Katholieke Hogeschool Limburg, which has explicitly integrated new learning environments in its last-year courses. Students in Business translation and interpreting are given assignments in groups of 4 to 5, and the number of frontal teaching hours has been reduced in favour of supervised working sessions, individual tutoring and 'independent learning' hours in which students can work freely in project rooms.

Most other integrated courses can be found in University language centres that may or may not cater for both the students from the own university and course participants from the community at large. Examples here include the language centres of Antwerp, Gent and Leuven, which all offer to a lesser or greater degree webbased courses in English with integrated assignments carried out by means of electronic forums.

2.2.   Policies underlying the integration of New Learning Environments

In Belgium there are two separate Ministries of Education (and even the German-speaking community has its own educational policy instruments), which are totally independent from each other One caters for the Dutch-speaking community and one for the French-speaking community. In this respect, it is impossible to speak of 'Belgian' policies, especially since Flanders (the Dutch-speaking part) is aligning itself more and more with educational policy in the Netherlands with regular meetings taking place between policy makers from both Ministries of education. Partly, this is a result of the Dutch language Union between Flanders and the Netherlands. A similar tendency does not seem to take place in the French-speaking community.

The two regional governments in Belgium have special programmes for educational innovation in higher education, e.g. the STIHO programme in Flanders, but the available funds are rather limited and no clear cut policy seems to exist as yet. Because of the traditional independence of Universities and Institutes of Higher education, a balance must always be found between ministerial policy and institutional autonomy. On the level of primary and secondary education the Ministery has embarked on an ambitious plan for practical ICT training for teachers via its RENs (Regional Expert Networks), which are in fact consortiums of institutes of higher Education, including at least one Teacher Training Institute, but this training is not (yet) available to teachers in HE.

In general, it is felt that policies underlying the integration of new Learning Environments in HE fall within the competency of individual institutions, departments and even teachers.

On the whole, the university Language Centres in Flanders (in Antwerp, Brussels, Gent and Leuven) are more advanced in this respect since they are often required to prove their quality both to the students (who are often students of other disciplines or outsiders) and the funding authorities. They all form part of the NUT (the umbrella organisation of Language Centres in both Flanders and the Netherlands), which in its turn is a member of Cercles, the European organisation of language Centres. The members are all separate administrative units with a central philosophy on language learning and teaching, they participate actively in European projects, have a policy of innovation and usually engage in the design of their own learning and teaching materials. Among the non-university HE institutes a similar development seems likely to take place in the future, and the first fully-fledged Language Centres are being set up or in preparation. In the French-speaking community too a similar tendency can be noticed (cf. the organisation ARILUF). The author was unable to collect much information in this respect, however.

2.3. New learning strategies: the introduction and promotion of independent learning

Independent learning (here taken to be more or less synonymous with autonomous learning) in Belgium often still means self-access outside teaching hours with only limited structural integration. Learner autonomy is being accepted more and more often as a goal, but apart from some exceptions, a clear integration of autonomy and e.g. language Portfolios or the principles underlying the Common European Framework of Reference elaborated by the European Council, is still a long way off.

2.4. Facilities for independent learning

The technical facilities themselves in Belgium are good to excellent. More or less all institutes provide self-access centres and have an extensive range of PC rooms, language laboratories and audio-visual centres. Often, it is not the facilities that are lacking but the staff to keep them operational and the teachers to coach the students. More and more often such centres are integrated in larger computer networks, but communication with the central network administrators and the local PC rooms is not ideal, and often leads to frustration. The technical infrastructure is often more important than the content used on it. Again, it is often the individual centres and departments that have to solve these problems, and as a result the situation varies greatly from institute to institute.

2.5. Development of learning materials

All institutes report that they are using the Internet extensively in their courses. In terms of the structural development of materials the situation is much more unclear. Several institutes have been involved in the development of CD-ROMs or have been active in other projects which required the designing of (ICT based) learning materials. Designing materials is often left to the individual teachers, and as a consequence they find it very hard to spend the required time for it. The materials that have been designed vary greatly in terms of objectives, format, techniques and philosophy.

A centre that is very active in terms of the development of materials is the CTTL of the LUC (University Centre of Limburg) at Diepenbeek. It has participated in various advanced projects, which have led to various published materials. Again, the Language Centres turn out to be more advanced in this respect. However, general authoring tools are only used in a limited way, the most frequent being Hot Potatoes, Toolbook, Perception and Director. An ongoing innovation as a result

of a wider institutional policy is the introduction of Electronic Learning Environments (or Learning Management Systems). The most popular seems to be Blackboard, with WebCT as a distant second, but actual experience with how to set up courses in it still seems limited and mainly tentative. Especially among the non-university institutes of higher education the trend towards it is clear in terms of policy, if not always in terms of practical implementation.

2.6.   Redefining the profile of the actors involved

There is general agreement that the role of the actors involved (i.e. policy makers, students, and teachers) needs to be changed, but almost no concrete information is given. Overall, the lack of training opportunities and sound didactic background information is great. The Provinciale Hogeschool Limburg has developed a "Scenario for educational innovation" with the aim of helping teachers to introduce new learning methods, but its impact remains unclear.

2.7.   Training programmes and courses for language teachers: in-service programmes, staff development

Training seems to be the major problem towards the full integration of NLEs. As one respondent put it: "… we feel that there is a lack of <u>didactic concepts</u> at the moment: How can we integrate ICT and NLEs in our present educational system? We feel that it is very difficult to orient oneself in an environment in which dozens of software packages, learning environments, … are introduced to us. What is good (and payable) for our institution? Furthermore, how can we gradually introduce these NLEs in our lessons: should we diminish traditional lessons? Of course we do, but do we still know how students are doing when we hardly see them in real-time? What about the social aspect of teaching? Will the introduction of ICT be more time-consuming than traditional teaching? Teachers are in that case probably unwilling to take the step towards ICT."

2.8.   Measuring proficiency: assessment and self-assessment

Assessment seems to have been affected only very little by the introduction of NLEs. Students often have access to computer programmes that can help them in their own self-assessment, but often this is done in a traditional way. The Portfolio and the Common European Framework of reference are being referred to explicitly in this respect at the Language Centres of Gent and Leuven, the Université de Liège and the Karel De Grote Hogeschool in Antwerp (from 2001-2002). In practice, however, the impact is still limited. The Department of Adult Education of the Flemish Ministry of Education has worked out proficiency profiles to be used by, among others, language centres, but strictly speaking, the targeted audience is not part of HE.

2.9.   Action research on the implementation of New Learning Environments

Although research is undoubtedly being carried out with respect to the implementation of NLEs, it is not mentioned explicitly in the answers to the questionnaire. In practice, the research is often carried out in connection with development work for concrete projects, and since for many teachers in e.g. language centres research is not an explicit part of their overall tasks, the results are not always published, partly because in many faculties this action research is not always considered to be 'academic' enough.

3. *Promoting multilingualism and cultural diversity*

Multilingualism and cultural diversity have always been of the utmost importance in a country with 3 official languages (Dutch, French and German). Now that English is rapidly become the first foreign language in both parts of the country, the relationship with the national languages is a tricky one, especially in terms of the language used as a medium of instruction. The debate is wide-open at the moment, but no conclusions are imminent yet. As usual the issues of cultural identity and internationalisation are often seen as incompatible. rather than complementary.

No special measures are reported with respect to multilingualism and cultural diversity, but intercultural awareness is mentioned several times as an area of great interest to many institutes.

3.1.   Promoting the learning of the less widely used and less taught languages

There is a great awareness of the problems connected with the less widely used and less taught languages and the languages of the new enlargement countries, especially in Flanders, where Dutch is spoken. In Flanders, the Ministry of Education has repeatedly promoted the idea of setting up a system of language training provision for e.g. the languages of Central and Eastern Europe, especially in terms of the linguistic and cultural preparation of Erasmus and Tempus exchange students, but limited resources and the relatively small numbers of the students concerned have kept the results limited.

3.2.   Promoting cultural understanding and intercultural awareness

Cultural understanding and cultural awareness have always been important in Belgium. Especially in connection with the Erasmus exchange students special learning materials have been developed, and these in turn have led to a better understanding of the own culture.

3.3.   Accessing authentic resources and materials

Accessing authentic resources and materials has never been a problem in Belgium. A wide variety of materials are available (especially on the Internet) and more and more people are using them in the original languages, even though that often means English, French and Dutch in practical terms. Because of the international status of Brussels and Belgium as a whole, foreign newspapers are widely available from a wide variety of countries, bookshops often stock foreign-language titles, and of course Belgium has a long tradition of offering TV channels on the cable without dubbing. The standard offer includes 14 stations.

3.4.   Student and staff exchanges

Student and staff exchanges have always been important in Belgium and even though originally the number of students going abroad greatly exceeded the number of students coming to Belgium, this tendency is now being reversed, especially in terms of students coming from southern, central and eastern Europe. The exchanges have greatly changed the way institutes see their curriculums and many changes have occurred as a result of it. The practice of sending and receiving exchange students has led to the wide adoption of the ECTS system, which in its turn has led to a close scrutiny and adaptation of many courses and programmes. Great efforts are being made to offer both outgoing and incoming students language and culture preparation courses.

4. The role of New Learning Environments in training programmes for language and language related professions

Very little relevant information was received in connection with the role of New Learning Environments in training programmes for language and language related professions. The Language Centre of Ghent University has set up a system for post-service teacher training in ICT (within the framework of the Regional Expert Centres mentioned above) and some interesting experiments have been conducted by the teacher training department of the Faculty of Pedagogy in Gent for language teachers in secondary education. In other institutes too there seem to be initiatives to create training opportunities for language teachers in HE, but information on them is sparse and did not appear in the returned questionnaires.

5. *The role of New Learning Environments in continuing education programmes or courses*

No specific information was received in terms of the role of New Learning Environments in continuing education programmes or courses. On the other hand, such continuing education is Belgium is not usually organised by the universities (with the exception of the Open University in Flanders, but their centres are in practice subsidiaries of the Dutch Open University system and in addition they do not offer language programmes). In terms of adult education, however, it is to be noted that more and more initiatives are taken by the authorities and organisations like the Employment and Professional Training agencies in Flanders, Brussels and Wallonia to set up open and distance learning systems. A case in point is Begeleid Individueel Studeren (BIS) (Guided Individual Learning, see: http://www.bis.vlaanderen.be/engelstalig/welkomeng.htm), an initiative from the Adult Education Department of the Flemish Ministry of Education, in which webbased courses are being set up to replace written correspondence courses for languages such as Spanish, Italian and Dutch as a second language. Although originally conceived as just webbased versions of the written courses, it is now clear that the end result will be both pedagogically and technologically innovative. The BIS initiative has not been set up exclusively or even primarily for language courses. Indirectly linked to this initiative are the efforts of the same Adult Education Department to standardise objectives and descriptive models for language materials design along the lines of the Common European framework.. Although this is a major initiative that could easily be used an an example of good practice, the project has suffered delays because of both technological problems and problems with regard to content development.

6. *How to use Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for promoting European co-operation?*

6.1. Using ICT for co-operation in the development of programmes

Although most institutes take part in European projects for the development of language materials (most notably the LUC at Diepenbeek and the Language centres of Leuven, Antwerp (UIA) and Gent, such development is often geared to the production of a closed CD-ROM that is often successful on the open market, but is too specific to be used widely within the institutes themselves. It is to be hoped that the advent of electronic learning management systems will change that and that it will lead to the development of materials in open webbased environments that can be accessed from anywhere at anytime.

6.2.   Using ICT for co-operation in the delivery of programmes

No relevant information was mentioned in this respect.

7. Needs in the area of New Learning Environments

On the whole, all institutes seemed aware of special needs with respect to New Learning Environments. The need for extra funding and adequate teacher training were cited most. Many respondents also indicated that the available information changed so quickly and required so much effort to obtain that it was easy to be discouraged by this. The provision of centralized information banks for educational purposes where information is given, compared, interpreted and turned into reasoned advice would go a long way to remedy this problem. This need was particularly felt in terms of overall electronic learning environments and how to put them into practice.

7.1.   Seen in relation to language teaching and learning
7.2.   Seen in relation to the promotion of multilingualism and cultural diversity
7.3.   Seen in relation to the promotion of European co-operation
7.4.   Seen in relation to the provision of language learning to students with special educational needs

8. Measures to be taken to meet the needs identified

On the whole, the respondents seemed uncertain about the level at which measures need to be taken, but they were much less uncertain about the kinds of measures. There is a great lack of training, both in technological and in didactic terms and a need for people who can combine both areas. These people should be given the explicit task to develop new materials for electronic learning environments within their normal schedule of work. Some institutes advocate co-operation with commercial partners, but the majority feels that it would be better to collaborate both within the same institute and with other similar institutes, and pool knowledge, experience and materials. At the European level the bureaucratic red tape to obtain funding for projects is considered very cumbersome, especially in cases where institutes have already proved their worth in previous projects. The various policy levels are also thought to lack a long term vision on New Learning Environments. Overall, there is a lot of frustration because of lack of funding, lack of human resources, lack of relevant information and lack of specialised training.

8.1.   At institutional level
8.2.   At regional level
8.3.   At national level
8.4.   At European level

9. Examples of good practice

The following examples are only a subset of the concrete projects that have been or are being carried out in Belgium. The author wishes to stress that he has been unable to find information about all projects.

Hogeschool West-Vlaanderen

CD-rom in French on "Smart"
Tutoring of students in foreign languages in their workplaces via Internet

Five European Institutes of Higher education, highly motivated and with a strong believe in internationalisation have taken the initiative to start up a Business Communication Project in view of the recognition of an Erasmus Project. The Hogeschool West-Vlaanderen (Belgium), Seinajoki Business School (Finland), Estonian Business School (Estlonia), the Fachhochschule Rosenheim (Germany) en the Hogeschool 's Hertogenbosch (the Nederlands) are the initiators in this project.

As the project is on the Internet, all students of the participating schools can follow easily at home or school and work together anytime. The project consists of three, possibly four parts, namely a first general part in which every participating school gives an overview of their country, with cultural, economical and political information. In the second part, which is considered to be the most important part, students are given five weeks' time to produce a catalogue and follow an intensive correspondence course between client and supplier. In the third part the focus is placed on practice and exercises in grammar, terminology, spelling…Videoconferencing is normally the subject of the fourth part, depending on the infrastructure schools have at their disposal.

The University of Oulu (Finland) has, in view of language education, developed a TELSI-pro-environment. Telsi stands for 'Telematic Environment for Language Simulations'. The 'pro' is a workgroup-environment in which educational training is developed. Students are divided in small groups working in virtual companies. They all have their own password to work within TELSI. They also have two partners in the participating countries. The set up of this project is for the students to learn to work in a professional, real live environment, in which self-employment is a very important item.

Katholieke Hogeschool Limburg, Diepenbeek

The Katholieke Hogeschool Limburg (Khlim) is an institution for higher education located in the Flemish-Belgian province of Limburg, firmly rooted in the Hasselt-Genk conurbation, the administrative and economic centre of the province. There are six departments, offering six fields of study: Audio-visual and Fine Arts, Industrial Sciences and Technology (Engineering), Health Care, Commercial Sciences and Business Administration, Teacher Training and Social Work. There are about 5,500 students and 430 staff, both full-time and part-time.

Scientific research, internationalisation and providing social services also belong to KHLim's field of operation. KHLim is a college that dedicates a lot of energy to modern and progressive education in a student-oriented setting making use of new learning environments and methods. Several projects are developed in the various departments to serve as pilot projects, two examples: AAL and CMD

AAL

The acronym AAL stands for Anywhere Anytime Learning (sometimes also Any Pace is included). The students of the final year of the teacher training programmes Commerce-Computer Science and Electricity-Mechanics-Informatics were targeted. Laptops were bought via a special programme. Soon all students had made their own websites and all their material was put on the net (preparations, notes, courses, resources, didactic material). Connectivity and synergy in a flexible programme soon proved valuable. E-mail, forums and chat programmes make it very easy to connect and give feedback. Since the hardware component of the programme has become evident we have now turned to web based learning platforms. In co-operation with Limbop, an organisation

for the three *Hogescholen* and the university in Limburg Blackboard is going to be used in these institutions and by all departments to enable a far reaching ICT integration. The students participated in a number of competitions and won prizes. Jan Schuer, a student in Commerce-Computer Science has developed a webbased distance learning platform, Smartbit, for secundary schools, to offer an alternative for students who cannot attend regular classes.

From next year KHLim will be a test centre for the European Computer Driving Licence.

Websites:

- o KHLIM: http://www.khlim.be

- o AAL KHLim: http://www.khlim.be/~vawouter and http://www.aal.be/

- o Blackboard : http://www.blackboard.com

- o Smartbit: http://www.smartbit.be

- o European Computer Driving Licence: http://www.ecdl.be/

CMD

Communication and Multimedia Design is a programme run by the Audiovisual and Fine Arts Department. The programme was developed together with Hogeschool Zuyd (Netherlands) and Fachhochschule Aachen (Germany). The training is simultaneously run in the Netherlands and in Flanders, the Germans will start next year. In the third year a transnational faculty will be created. The three partners will recognise each other's diplomas.

The course is built on five pillars: Communication, (e-) Business, Information Engineering, Audio and Video Design, Graphic Design. These students and their lecturers intensively make use of the new media and ICT, given the sheer nature of their work. They have set up an own website with course material, a forum and chat possibilities. The curriculum is divided in modules (project based) with a very limited number of introductory classes. The main focus is on the cases the students prepare and present. There are good contacts with Flanders Multimedia Valley, an organisation which represents 120 enterprises in the field of multimedia. A special programme is being developed, called e-lab, in which traineeships will be prepared. A transnational research and service institute will be set up for students who want to get a master's degree. A number of other universities and polytechnics have expressed their interest to become a member of the programme.

Websites:

- o Khlim site: http://www.khlim.be/abk/

- o Official CMD site: http://www.c-md.com

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KUL), Instituut voor Levende Talen (ILT), Leuven

Interactive Classroom Computer project

The Interactive Classroom Computer Project (ICCP) has been developing over the last four years. In the context of teaching English for academic and professional purposes to undergraduate and PhD students at the inter-faculty Institute of Living Languages (ILT) at K.U. Leuven, the teacher

has made use of available facilities to incorporate ICT into the classroom in order to enrich the learning offer and improve the productive level.

During the last two academic years ICCP has been supported by Europace which has significantly advanced the project, particularly with regard to dynamic inter-student peer learning and teacher feedback. Supported by their peers, equipped with a set of both communication tools and language learning resources, challenged by their needs, the achievements of their predecessors and expectations of their teacher; students are confronted with a virtual workshop environment unlike the traditional classroom and very like the contemporary work place. Through both 'teaching on demand' and the allocated teaching contact hours, students and teacher are able to overcome some of the problems of large groups, differing abilities and learning needs and official absence through training placements and conflicting course option timetables. The project is greatly supported by the KUL infrastructure and Europace. The ultimate test of such a model is the transfer beyond our test classroom to other classrooms and this is part of our current concern.

ICCP has been used in teacher training in Voronezh State University (VSU) Russia and The University of the North (UNIQWA), Qwa-Zulu Natal, S.Africa.

A tandem teaching project has been set up with the Institute of Living Languages (ILV) at The Université Catholique Louvain (UCL). We have tested some of the transfer possibilities and witnessed some valuable offshoots.

Visitors are welcome to download FirstClass via http://moon.europace.be/ and to use userid: ICCPGuest1 password: ICCPGuest1 – (Provisional View, not for distribution or reproduction – FULL IPR and COPYRIGHT to Caroline Greenman).

French e-dictionary

The aim of the ALFALEX- project (Active learning environment French for L2 learners) is to find a structural solution via semi-autonomous learning for a certain number of crucial problems in the teaching of French in higher education: the heterogeneous proficiency level of the incoming students, the small number of teaching classes which are scheduled, the large groups of students. Therefore the following innovative ICT-tools will be designed, developed or implemented and integrated within a powerful and highly performing learning environment: a multilingual, multifunctional, reception and production oriented L2 learning dictionary, designed for autonomous learning, vocabulary learning units, self assessment tools, a framework for a personal dictionary and a large database with authentic language resources. A student tracing system will be provided as well.

http://www.projetdafa.net

Dutch Website for e-learning

In the webbased Dutch writing course students of an intermediate level of Dutch can enhance their writing abilities (spelling, making a synthesis, writing a letter...) The course is designed in such a way that students can easily work through the several chapters on their own . After each chapter they are presented a few interactive exercises and a writing exercise to be sent to the teacher. Problems and questions are also dealt with by the teacher via e-mail. The writing exercises are corrected and sent back to be rewritten by the student. Since each student writes their writing exercises on their own level, the feedback by the teacher is highly personalised, assuring each student to get as much out of the course as is possible in their situation. Since the course is completely taught via the internet, there are no classroom boundaries. Students can work on an exercise as long (or short) as they want, when they want and wherever they are.

http://iltsrv1.ilt.kuleuven.ac.be/schrijfcursus.htm

Small is beautiful

"Small is beautiful" which is being realized in Leuven (in collaboration with Tilburg/ The Netherlands) -originally as part of a Lingua project involving nine LWULT languages - is a multi-media, CD-ROM based self-access language course for exchange students. On the basis of a needs analysis a didactic framework was developed. The course consists of two "environments": on the one hand a *multi-media story*, offering all the language material and on the other hand a *resource centre*, offering collated information on vocabulary, grammar, functions, the four skills, and explicit culture. The story-environment and the resource centre are linked in such a way that they allow for *different learning strategies*. Grammar, for example is explained both through a users' guide for students not trained in formal grammar and thorough structure models. Furthermore, the course offers a wealth of material to stimulate receptive learning, provides genuinely interactive exercises to enhance the productive skills and furthers an understanding of the cultural and linguistic varieties in the Netherlands and Flanders.

A SIB-dedicated "software engine" has been developed to allow language experts to work with the computer. The engine is in some ways a bit similar to an authoring system, but has been specially built for this project. It is a unique compromise between the convenience of authoring systems and the power and speed of lower-level approaches.

Should one want to use the Dutch SIB course in the foreign language classroom then it also allows easy practice of the latest teaching strategies (grammatical consciousness raising, noticing, focus on form(s)).

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Campus Kortrijk – Talencentrum
(http://impuls.kulak.ac.be/talencentrum/UI/hoofdmenu.html)

In Kortrijk the Catholic University of Leuven has a subfaculty of Letters with a Talencentrum, a self-access centre where language students can work individually and within the framwork of their language studies. The Centre makes an integrated use of Blackboard.

Economische Hogeschool Sint-Aloysius (EHSAL), Coördinatiegroep Talen, Brussel

Powerful Learning Environment

The language teaching at our institution, EHSAL, a business school that also integrates in its programme four foreign languages: English, French and an option between German or Spanish- is related to our more general policy of Powerful Learning Environment. Since this project stresses the selfactivity of the students, who have to carry out exploring tasks in companies (in the courses of Economics, Accountancy, Law and Theory of Organisations), the language practice tries to contribute to this priority as well.

Besides teaching and rehearsing grammar rules and (commercial) vocabulary in the first years, we mainly pay attention in the higher grade to the consolidation of attitudes and skills that are useful in business life, such as teamwork, searching for information (Internet, understanding of general and more technical texts), assertiveness (contacting of organisations), presentation (of products, companies…) meetings (as a preparation of the former), writing (reports, synthesis) and cross-cultural relations (specific aspects of countries and regions). The evaluation of these abilities is mainly done by continuous assessment.

More information and some short exercise-programmes can be found at http://www.ehsal.be

Universiteit Antwerpen (UA), Universitaire Instelling Antwerpen (UIA), Centrum voor Taal en Spraak, Antwerpen,

LINC

Interactive language courses for the 21st century. With the support of Socrates LINGUA the Centre for Language and Speech has developed LINC - An interactive Approach to Language and Culture, a software programme for all European languages on three levels (beginners, intermediate, advanced).
LINC multimedia language courses set new standards by presenting learners with authentic language materials which are embedded in the target language culture. Each language learning unit starts with a video topic which is furnished by a transcript and an explanation of cultural issues. This video sets the cultural background against which language learning takes place. Against this background each CD provides hundreds of exercises on reading, writing, listening and speaking. The four skills are extended to applied functions like: schematising, summarising, visual analysis, discussion, socialising, etc. Each exercise provides pedagogical feedback on the learner's performance. Articles from newspapers and magazines and useful links to the WWW even tickle the learners further into self-developing their learning skills and styles. The LINC Virtual Language School enables the learner to contact a language monitor or other learners.
For more information: http://linc-www.uia.ac.be/linc

TILT

Telematic Interactive Learning Technologies
Complementary to the courses which are taught at the Centre for Language and Speech two e-learning websites have been developed: TILT Nederlands and TILT English. Websites for other languages will be developed in the future.

All students get a user-ID and a password and are thus enabled to use the TILT-websites at their convenience, practising what they have learned in class at their own pace. There are two approaches to use the TILT-site since one group of exercises closely relates to the textbooks used in class, while the other group of exercises focuses on specific grammatical difficulties. All exercises are automatically corrected. Moreover, a grammar can be consulted on-line and the students can communicate with their teacher by e-mail.

Limburgs Universitair Centrum (LUC), Centrum voor Taalonderwijs en Toegepaste Linguistiek (CTTL), Diepenbeek

Actes de Base des professions CD-Rom
Mentor project
French for Flemish Speakers

Lessius Hogeschool, Dept of Translators and interpreters, Antwerpen

Building on the experience of CALL software development since the early 1990s, the *Taal & Computer* research team has started to develop a web based study centre for language learning since 1998. The ultimate goal is to provide a flexible, integrated, and highly accessible learning environment for both beginning and advanced language learning, that takes up a central position in a modular curriculum and functions as the very heart of the language learning process. As such plenty of opportunities for independent study and occasional use, as well as language teaching by a (physically present) teacher are made available.

From the early start we have chosen to design and develop all content in-house in order to safeguard the essential aspects of full control and adaptability. All developments are directed towards the web (intranet/internet), so that a seamless integration of all language learning contents can be realised. The browser based environment now integrates: an intranet which provides ample training and self-assessment materials (with robust tracking and reporting tools), electronic dictionaries, reference works and on line magazines and journals, satellite and cable television, and of course an internet connection which functions - amongst many other things - as a communication tool. Advanced language learners will also find integrated Computer Assisted Translation (CAT) tools such as; terminology databases, translation memories, corpora, Machine Translation (MT) tools, ...), subtitling tools and interpreting tools.

The Study Centre was awarded the Microsoft Digi-Student Award in 1999 for the project *De digitale studieplek*. At present a pilot research project on knowledge management (KM) is being carried out. The aim is to evaluate a KM-system that will provide powerful management possibilities of all e-learning content in a language learning platform.

Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciales (HEC), Liège

Spanish : proiect for the multimedia teaching laboratory.

During the academic year 2000-2001, three quarters of the Spanish exercises were given to a group of 28 second year students in the multimedia laboratory at HEC.

On the basis of 5 sequences (2 to 5 minutes) of the film « Tesis » by A. Amenábar (1996), we designed about 30 activities focusing on the oral and written language. All the students had an individual computer, on which they could do exercises, either individually or in groups (or conferencing). Thanks to the integrated dictionary (roughly 3,000 words), the student could look up any word related to the exercise.

The main aim in offering dynamic and ludic activities was to create an atmosphere, which would motivate the students and at the same time would reach the fixed objectives for the second year: the acquiring of complex syntax, intermediate level vocabulary and an increase in communication skills.

The results obtained thanks to this new programme will be analysed in consultation with the students.

Dutch : developing a website (made with *Dreamweaver*) for the intranet in HEC, for the students' use and partly exportable, in the short or medium term, towards the intemet.

This site is aimed at favouring access to information (in the broad sense of the word), guided self-training — multi-sensorial information (the multimedia) stimulating the students' motivation — and communication skills.The website offers the following possibilities for each academic year : a course description ; downloading of syllabi and audio documents and digitized videos ; electronic valves (operational in the near future).

The students also have access to :

-   a series of exercises (produced with *Hot Potatoes*) on the basic structures and the basic lexicon of the Dutch language.
-   numerous multimedia files: in short, they include text files, audio support and digitized videos in relation to topics or current affair issues, likely to be of interest to the students studying business administration and sciences and to a certain degree, a wider public (e.g. global economy, e-business, etc.). These files also contain vocabulary exercises and listening comprehension developed with *Hot Potatoes*.

Moreover, on the website, there are links to various websites (the press, political institutions in the Flanders and in the Netherlands, etc.).

Lastly, we are working towards the elaboration of a discussion forum.

Universiteit Gent (RUG), Talencentrum, Gent (**http://www.taalnet.rug.ac.be**)

The *Talencentrum* (Language Centre) of the Universiteit Gent has developed a uniform web-based interface for accessing language learning materials (Cocoon, a browser-based shell in a LAN environment with full individual access to the Internet), and offers its students (both from within and outside the University) a self-access study centre with digitised audio materials and specially designed multimedia desk furniture. Students can access multimedia materials and links for all courses offered (9 languages). The approach takes as a starting-point the assumption that both language learners and language teachers want more flexible learning environments.

The Language Centre is currently testing a completely interactive online language learning system (I4LL) which will enable anyone interested in learning a language to take a language course on-line. Learners have a wide range of multimedia applications and tools at their disposal, permitting them to access course materials independently. In addition, they are able to contact on-line language advisers and fellow learners. For this project the centre has developed an authoring system with templates, a scenario tool for developers, a student interface, generic webtools (e-dictionary and hyperreference), a tool for the coding of learning objects and a general procedure for working with electronic forums. These ideas are now being applied in webbased courses with additional classroom sessions of English for Veterinary Scientists and Law students at the University.

Through its language-independent coding system for learning objects (based on the specifications of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEF)) the centre is able to code all learning objects according to the IMS specifications. It is now updating its assessment and self-assessment system to bring it in line with the levels of the CEF and the principles of the European Portfolio. At the same time e-dictionaries and hyperdictionaries are being worked out.

ICT-based projects include MILOFES, an innovation project of the Ministry of education and the design of Spanish webbased courses for BIS, the open and distance learning system for adult education of the Ministry of Education of Flanders. The new Learning Environment is also used for Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, Estonian and Finnish in the Lingua project Welcome (see http://www.taalnet.rug.ac.be/description_of_welcome.htm)

In the near future the centre hopes to offer a whole range of pedagogically innovative webbased language courses with classroom support where necessary.

10. Contributors

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