

SYNTHESIS REPORT ON THE USE OF NEW LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS (NLEs) FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING IN EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION – based on the national reports and steering committee reports submitted within the TNP subproject on NLEs

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1. Introduction

Over the past decade, the rapid expansion and development of new information and communications technologies (hereafter also, ICT) and increased student and staff mobility have created both immense challenges and an immense potential for all education, and particularly for language and culture learning and teaching. Societies and workplaces are more and more dependent on the use of ICT and on close international contact, and the skills related to these have become a development aim, and a right of individuals, at all educational levels. Another clear result is the increased demand for continuous professional development and lifelong learning, which, in turn, require skills, readiness and willingness for independent and self-directed study. Being able to assess one's present level and progress of expertise also in the field of language and intercultural communication in a realistic way and to make informed decisions about future learning directions is a key competence for European graduates entering the internationalised job market.

The new learning environments (hereafter also NLEs) generated by ICT and increased international contact - both virtual and real - offer enormous opportunities for the development of multilingualism and multiculturalism in Europe. They can play a key role, for instance, in promoting European co-operation, student and professional mobility, cultural and linguistic diversity and understanding, expansion of professional expertise, curriculum and materials development, and lifelong learning skills development in general. This is because NLEs can at their best

- ⇒ provide “natural”, authentic language and culture input,
- ⇒ provide a cost-effective way to offer onlineonline training in e.g. LWULT (Less Widely Used and Less Taught) languages,
- ⇒ assist in becoming acquainted with host cultures and languages,
- ⇒ provide experience in self-directed, independent learning,
- ⇒ allow for diversity and individual tailoring in learning styles,
- ⇒ develop critical thinking and other skills needed in lifelong learning,

- ⇒ foster collaboration and sharing between individuals and institutions,
- ⇒ provide reliable, comparable measures for assessment,
- ⇒ be used for effective and tailored dissemination,
- ⇒ provide a channel for carrying out surveys and studies, and
- ⇒ provide a powerful channel for disseminating research information and educational programmes.

The key issue in this report, and in the TNP subproject on new learning environments and independent learning approaches, is how NLEs could be used to their fullest potential in Higher Education language learning and teaching, thus preparing students and graduates for the European labour market and life in tomorrow's integrated Europe. The report at hand is a summarised outcome of the first and second project years, the aims of which were to survey the present situation of NLE use for language learning and teaching in European Higher Education and to produce national status reports on it. In addition, concerns and needs for future development were also addressed in the reports. All national reports are being updated as part of the project work for Year 3 and will be accessible via the NLE project websites.

The present synthesis report is the second update for year 2 of the subproject activities. In order to illustrate the perceived overall developments in the integration of New Learning Environments and Independent Language Learning approaches in Higher Education language learning and teaching in Europe, the updated section has been added to the end of the report, rather than to each section of the previous report version. This is because of the procedure followed in the updating (see Section [87](#)) below). Accordingly, the report is organised as follows. After outlining briefly how the definitions agreed upon by the subproject scientific committee about the main concepts addressed (i.e. what is meant by a new learning environment and by independent language learning in this context) were reflected in the national reports, the [thirdsecond](#) section presents an overview of existing national and institutional policies regarding NLEs in HE and the desired state related to these. This is followed in the [fourththird](#) section by a description of existing technical and other infrastructure and the development required for its optimal application. The [fifthourth](#) section deals with the question of how NLEs have been integrated into language teaching and learning approaches and what needs there are in this area. The [sixthfifth](#) section presents some examples of good practice. In the [seventhsixth](#) section, a summary of the concerns, needs and measures, as well as a first list of tentative recommendations, are presented. Finally, the [eighthseventh](#) section includes a summary of the scientific committee's views on recent developments in the area.

2. Definitions: NLE & independent language learning

Originally, the concept of New Learning Environment was defined by the scientific committee of the subgroup in the following way. The term NLE refers to two kinds of new learning contexts, each of which are extremely varied in their potential and in the approaches that they offer for language learning and teaching:

1. The learning **environment created by new technologies**, enabling e(lectronic)-learning and teaching and in the future also, m(obile) learning, i.e. ICT enhanced language learning and teaching; and
2. The learning **environment created by new human resources available through mobility** i.e. use of the presence and experience of multilingual and multicultural staff and students for language and culture learning and teaching purposes.

The national reports addressed almost exclusively the first situation, indicating that “local internationalisation” or “internationalisation at home” (i.e. using the mobility experience as a resource) was not systematically used. Some individual attempts in this direction were, however, mentioned, for instance in the buddy learning approaches used, but these were still rather scarce.

Independent Language Learning (ILL) was defined either directly or indirectly in the national reports as an approach involving one or all of the following:

1. Management of one’s own learning (also called autonomous/self-directed learning) (i.e. making decisions on aims, content and methods of own learning and assessing the learning process and its outcomes).
2. Learning independently outside the regular classroom with or without teacher guidance (e.g. in a self-access centre, abroad, at home).
3. Learning alone, with a partner, or with a support group (e.g. tandem or buddy learning, collaborative groups, etc.).
4. Using structured or unstructured (i.e. authentic, natural) materials.
5. Using NLEs for continuous, lifelong language learning.

In other words, independent language learning was seen both as a skill that the student has, or needs to develop, and as a format or method that the student follows in his/her learning. There was a tendency for countries where ILL was seen as skill to have arranged learner training for the students, in other words, there were sessions to teach the students how to set aims, monitor one’s learning process, do self-assessment, select input, and make any kinds of decisions necessary for autonomous language learning. Continuous guidance by language advisors or teachers was also available (e.g. U.K., France, Finland).

In general, the following **prerequisites for a successful use of NLEs and ILL** approaches were presented in the national reports:

- ❖ Appropriate and adequate technological infrastructure;
- ❖ Training of students and staff in flexible and appropriate use of NLEs;
- ❖ New pedagogical solutions, new learning approaches, new learning culture;
- ❖ Institutional policies and support;
- ❖ New strategic management skills, mentality and attitude change at both individual and institutional levels;
- ❖ Critical thinking and evaluation skills needed to make informed decisions;
- ❖ Close co-operation and collaboration and sharing of information and experience.

(For a more detailed discussion on issues relating to the prerequisites of using NLEs, ILL and the mobility experience for language and culture learning, see also Mackiewicz, W. (ed.) (forthcoming): *Language Studies in Higher Education in Europe.*)

3. Overview of existing national and institutional policies

The **general trends** regarding national and institutional policies on the use of NLEs and ILL in European countries at present seem to be the following:

- ❖ There is great variation between countries, between institutions, between departments.
- ❖ There is increasing awareness of the potential of ICT enhanced learning and teaching but lack of practical know-how.
- ❖ National-level policies regarding the use and integration of NLEs, ICT and ILL in education in general are more common than institutional policies.
- ❖ Language-related institutional policies and technological adaptations are still rare.
- ❖ The current trend is to transform traditional language laboratories into multimedia learning, self-access, and resource centres.
- ❖ Funding has been more available for equipment than for user support (even in institutions with a good infrastructure).
- ❖ Many virtual campus / university / network university projects are in existence or being developed, but they do not address language learning and teaching in a systematic way.

Commitment to creating an information society has resulted in many countries in establishing national strategies regarding ICT enhanced education in general and in investing in updated technical equipment for developing IT skills among the population. Specified national strategies to this effect exist, for instance, in Germany, the U.K., Nordic countries, Switzerland, Italy, and France. In other EU countries, as well as in the new candidate countries, encouragement and public funding are also available for projects addressing the integration of NLEs and ILL into higher

education, but inadequate or outdated technical infrastructure is often a restriction to this at the moment.

Acknowledging the importance of language learning and cultural awareness within the European context is the first step towards creating policies that support the development and integration of new learning environments in higher education. Countries where languages are an accredited part of the degree programmes or where there is a long tradition of multilingualism (e.g. LWULT countries) and well-developed technology tend to be much further ahead in implementing NLEs and ILL in also language learning and teaching. There are also more clarified national policies for doing this. However, it is evident that an increasing number of European HE institutions today offer students a wide range of language courses, both integrated within the academic syllabus and as an extension in the form of extracurricular activities. Many institutions are building independent language learning centres and self-access centres/facilities to cater for the increasing demand of language courses in all disciplines. This trend is most probably a result of both student and staff mobility and the general internationalisation of workplaces, both of which require well-developed IT skills, heightened cultural awareness, and multilingual communication skills.

The establishment of virtual universities and campuses (e.g. U.K., Switzerland, Nordic countries), as well as other virtual learning environments and platforms, has also contributed to the need to write national policies and strategies regarding language learning. A notable abundance of various kinds of projects, action research, and experimentation characterises the present development in most countries and there seems to be a great deal of political will to invest in providing and developing ICT enhanced language education and lifelong learning in general. Introduction and implementation of the Common European Framework of Reference for language learning and teaching is also a clear aim in most countries.

As regards actual institutional policies, then, they are still relatively vague or lacking even in countries where strong national policies exist. Often NLEs are not integrated in the curricula of language teaching in HE institutes: they are neither an objective nor a means or a strategy. If some guidelines or recommendations of language instruction are given, they are usually included as part of the general information strategy or internationalisation strategy of the institution and not as separate documents. Considerable attention, however, is given in many IT strategies and policies to the prerequisites of successful e-learning, to teacher in-service training and materials development for different languages and to network-pedagogical issues, which will indirectly also benefit language instruction in higher education.

A key role in promoting independent language learning has been played by Language Centres, which have gradually expanded from simply providing facilities and resources into service and action research units catering for the provision of languages for students of other disciplines. Perhaps for this reason, language and philology departments proper are much less represented in the national reports in

terms of innovation and development in ICT enhanced language instruction and independent language learning. There are many joint operations in research and development between language centres both at regional and national levels (e.g. U.K., Ireland, Finland, Holland, Belgium, Spain, etc.) and also at the European level (CERCLES).

4. Infrastructure

Infrastructure in this context refers to the facilities and technical equipment (hardware) available in higher education institutions and to the technical maintenance and support needed to integrate their use into the practice of language learning and teaching. In addition, it refers to the availability of appropriate software and other language learning resources. As regards the mobility experience as a resource (i.e. internationalisation at home), the infrastructure can also be seen as the extent to which this resource is strategically and systematically used for learning purposes, but as was mentioned above, there is no indication in the national reports that this kind of practice would be widespread in any significant way at present, although individual efforts do exist. It is, however, a considerable resource that should not be neglected in the future.

It is naturally clear that **in terms of ICT facilities and hardware there is a great deal of variation in their availability and level of sophistication** between the countries and even institutions surveyed here. For this reason, there is also great variation as to how ICT enhanced approaches have been integrated into the practice of language learning and teaching in each country in general. Countries with more economic resources, more technological advancement, and more clarified policies regarding their pursuit towards information societies are also much better equipped in this respect. In addition, the educational systems of these countries are more oriented at promoting self-directed learning in general, which is also reflected in their language teaching approaches. In order to incorporate learner autonomy into the pedagogical approaches, a variety of measures need to be taken. One of them concerns the adaptation of the infrastructure. Large investments are necessary in order to ensure the use of new media and new learning approaches in teaching. The facilities which promote independent learning include networked multimedia language centres/labs and typically provide, for instance, access to the Internet, online courses and reference materials, digitised teaching and learning materials, video-conferencing and interactive communication opportunities, satellite TV, VHS recorders, CD Rom/DVD players, etc.

Despite the present differences, there is a clear trend to transform traditional language laboratories into modern multimedia, self-access and resource centres in all countries surveyed so as to fulfil the prerequisite requirements for implementing NLEs in language learning and teaching. As was mentioned above, there is also a great number of national and regional projects and efforts in all countries to develop both software and teachers' skills to meet the future challenges in higher education

language teaching. Furthermore, many technologically less advanced countries with a LWULT language (e.g. Baltic countries, Portugal), are already engaged in designing online courseware for their own language in order to provide for student mobility into their institutions. These developments are well in line with the general European effort to promote diversity and multilingualism.

Even in countries where the technical infrastructure is very good for implementing e-learning and ICT enhanced instruction, like e.g. in the Nordic countries, the U.K., Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, there are still specific issues to be addressed in terms of the technical and pedagogical support that is essential for the successful implementation of ICT enhanced and ILL approaches in higher education. There seems to be much more willingness in the institutions to invest in infrastructure than in ensuring that there is enough personnel to maintain and support full use of the installations. The pedagogical aspects have been largely neglected particularly if language teaching carries little weight in the university context, and the excellent facilities are often only offered as extracurricular opportunities where the students are left alone to do their language learning activities in any way they wish. It is difficult for the staff to be committed to the development of new pedagogical approaches in a situation such as this, and it is equally difficult for students to engage in independent language learning without proper learner training or guidance. Thus, the full potential of these NLEs is far from being used in an effective way for language and culture learning and teaching, although the reports indicate that there is increased awareness of the potential. Without investing in the pedagogical side of ICT enhanced language teaching and ILL, however, even excellent facilities and equipment will remain in mechanical use only.

As a **summary of the views and concerns presented in the national reports on infrastructure**, the following points come to surface:

- ❖ Funding is more available for equipment than for user (students & staff) support.
- ❖ There is increasing awareness of the potential offered by ICT, but lack of practical know-how.
- ❖ The facilities are not seen suitable for language learning.
- ❖ The equipment is outdated or not in flexible use.
- ❖ The facilities are good but lack technical support.
- ❖ IT skills training is not geared at language learning.
- ❖ Pedagogical guidance for both students and teachers is lacking.
- ❖ Advances in NLEs are too simplistic, with a strong emphasis on economic issues.
- ❖ Tailored approaches to meet the needs of higher education students are lacking.
- ❖ Too much of the use is based on traditional models of knowledge transmission.
- ❖ Collaboration and joint strategies are missing.

5. Integration of New Learning Environments into language teaching and learning

The present situation in integrating NLEs and independent learning activities into higher education language provision was considered from the viewpoints of students majoring in languages (e.g. future language professionals – teachers, translators, interpreters, etc.), students of non-language disciplines, learner and staff training and changing profiles, and from the viewpoint of promoting multilingualism, mobility, cultural awareness, and co-operation. The general prerequisites for a successful use of NLEs and ILL approaches in language learning and teaching suggested in the national reports were listed above in the section dealing with definitions (Chapter 2). In practice, there are two main “models” according to which NLEs are implemented in language education:

1. The **ADD-ON** model, which tends to consider the new environment as additional to the existing structure and practice, i.e. no changes in the existing system are necessary; and
2. The **ADD-IN** model, where NLEs are integrated into the existing system thus causing changes in its structure and content and in professional development.

The first model is characterised by a more unsystematic use of NLEs in the sense that the use is typically based on individual initiative. Often the existing practice is transferred to the NLE as it is primarily for economic reasons. The second model is often a collaborative effort based on institutional strategies and the outcome is often some pedagogical innovation. There is a tendency for institutions to pass through the first model in their pursuit of the second, unless proper pedagogical preparation and training is available. The environments, however, are only as good as their underpinning learning ethos. Thus, many universities which emulate networked learning and the development of virtual campuses often end up trying to reproduce real university learning environments based on very traditional models of knowledge transmission. The same applies to language education. The changes in the attitudes, initiative, and approaches required from both learners and teachers in order to manage knowledge and skill construction together in a reciprocal partnership while using new technologies in a flexible way are substantial in nature and can only be implemented over a considerable time period.

Although **the use of NLEs and ICT enhanced approaches is clearly rapidly increasing** in all countries surveyed in the project, one notable problem in integrating NLEs and ILL more fully into language education is the scattered nature of relevant applied research conducted by a very diverse set of institutions and departments, which report to different research panels. This factor has contributed to making applied language research almost invisible despite the relevance of the field in relation to other developments in teaching and learning. The research field in languages is therefore diverse and fragmented, and dissemination of relevant new

research and action research findings is not efficient. Traditional specialist language departments focus primarily on the linguistic, literary, historical and political study of languages, but they still account for most of the research conducted by individuals for postgraduate qualifications. Other important areas of research relevant to our project are conducted largely outside specialist language departments. This is also perhaps one of the reasons for which e-learning approaches do not seem to be among the main focus areas of development in language departments proper. Yet, it is the future language professionals that will be in charge of advancing the skills of the learners also in this area.

The major general trends and concerns of the integration of NLEs and ILL in tertiary-level language teaching which were presented in the national reports can be summarised as follows:

- ❖ There is general increase in the use of NLEs and ILL, but the full potential is not being used.
- ❖ There is great variation particularly in attitudes and approaches – not only between countries, but also between and within institutions operating in the same country.
- ❖ Mastery of technical aspects overshadows pedagogical issues, although new approaches do also exist.
- ❖ Methodology needs much development, as does exploration into the new roles of teachers and learners.
- ❖ Integration is more common in the teaching of students of non-language disciplines and in in-service training of professionals than in pre-service teaching of language professionals.
- ❖ Learner training for ILL is very unsystematic.
- ❖ New roles of “instructors” have not been sufficiently explored (eg. advising, facilitating, tutoring vs. teaching) and this affects staff structures, but also pedagogical approaches.
- ❖ Funding and other support stops at the technical level.
- ❖ More efficient collaboration and joint development is needed at all levels.

5.1. Students majoring in languages – future language professionals

Language students, whether studying for philology, language and culture, or translation and interpretation degrees, have no doubt widely benefited from one specific NLE, namely, the increasing amount of student exchange programmes available today. In addition to native-speaker staff at their departments, which has traditionally been the main form of contact, the programmes have enabled them to visit a country where the language they are studying is spoken, complete and further their studies there, broaden their knowledge and understanding of the culture in which that language is embedded, and generally gain experiences which will no doubt personally enrich them. There is, however, still room for improvement in the

actual pedagogical use of this NLE, as has been indicated by eg. the UK Residence Abroad Project and the LARA project (Learning and Residence Abroad in Modern Language Degrees), as well as the TNP report on mobility (in Mackiewicz (ed.) .

The integration of ICT as a tool towards gaining content/subject related knowledge has also enabled language students to access a world of sources and resources on the internet, via the WWW, which was never before possible. Many language departments also have their own websites offering students learning materials, forums, useful links and information guided towards facilitating and enriching their learning process, and students are becoming increasingly involved in their own learning process. A more systematic approach, however, tends to be missing, and the integration is more dependent on independent teacher initiative or on external needs than on actual institutional or departmental policies.

As regards pre-service language teacher training, new technologies are often integrated into the curricula but equally often training is limited more to actual computer skills than pedagogical skills, and a more comprehensive view of the issue is missing. There are, however, some new developments in this area, for instance, the ICT4LT (ICT for Language Teachers) project funded by the Socrates scheme, which designed and implemented a complete course on ICT specifically for language teachers in English, Italian, Finnish and Swedish during its first phase, with French and Spanish to be added during the ongoing second phase, as well as the Language Technology programme and networked Graduate School offered by the Centre for Applied Language Studies of the University of Jyväskylä in Finland. These are examples of efforts at the European or national level, and there are naturally also regional and institution-specific efforts in this area. What is notable, however, is that – apart from a few exceptions - there seem to be less activity and fewer efforts to integrate the issue of NLE use and ILL in pre-service language teacher education than in in-service language teacher training, which is a slightly worrying state of affairs in terms of the future.

New learning environments have also made their way into the educational programmes of translators and interpreters, which at present often integrate ICT-based activities such as becoming acquainted with different automatic translators; using electronic spell checkers, thesaurus and dictionaries, grammar correctors, etc. Students are also made aware of all the resources available on the Internet such as multilingual dictionaries, specialised glossaries and corpora. Some specific corpora and concordancing software have already been designed to aid translators in their every day practice and also to help teachers to create classroom activities.

5.2. Students of other (non-language) disciplines

It is still quite common that there are no specific or obligatory language requirements for students of non-language disciplines in European university degrees, which means that students do not necessarily obtain any credits for their language studies.

Due to other demands (study abroad, international work practice, future employment), however, these students are often typical users of the self-access facilities and multimedia labs. It is particularly the Language Centres that have had an active role in serving the needs of these students, and because of the new challenges, they have also done most of the innovative development work in the integration of NLEs and ILL into their language teaching. This is clearly the case in eg. the UK, Belgium, Finland (where the language centre system has existed for over 25 years because of extensive and obligatory language requirements in all higher education degrees), and France, where RANACLES, the French branch of CERCLES (Confédération Européenne des Centres de Langues de l'Enseignement Supérieur), is an active association bringing together 40 HE Language Centres. Its efforts range from sharing and pooling ideas on how best to improve the conditions for the acquisition and development of language competence in the language centres to developing guided autonomy, distance learning, and ICT relating to multilingualism and multiculturalism. RANACLES, thus, points the way for other HE institutions in terms of new learning environments.

As regards non-language student and staff mobility (SSM), then, the European exchange programmes and co-operation between institutions and the labour market have opened up new dimensions for this group, too. This situation has significant consequences on how HE institutions now view what could be loosely termed as 'linguistic and cultural' preparation for the experience abroad particularly as regards countries, where a less widely spoken and learnt language is used as the medium of instruction and social interaction. To make mobility possible, these countries have become engaged in offering instruction in some "major" language – most typically English – which has brought about new challenges for both mobile and local students and staff. This new learning environment, as well as the total language learning space provided by the potential of integrated language and content instruction, is also a NLE under active research exploration and experimentation in many countries (eg. Hungary, Belgium, Netherlands, Nordic countries), because systematic approaches have not been developed yet.

Innovations or practices of using NLEs and ILL approaches in the language teaching of students with special needs were usually not specifically addressed in the national reports. Depending on the nature of disability, however, it is clear that new technologies and their adaptations can have a key role in making higher education more accessible for these students as well.

The integration of NLEs and ILL into the educational programmes of non-language students seems in most cases to be more needs-driven than policy-driven, in other words, there is much pressure from the outside world to develop the skills that the students need for mobility and good employability, although the actual curriculum or degree structure in the discipline has not changed. Institutional or departmental policies are most often lacking, as is formal recognition of these specific language studies. However, the introduction of the Common European Reference Framework and/or the European Portfolio, which was mentioned as a clear aim in several

reports, will serve as a good starting-point for creating strategies and policies for incorporating both IT skills and language skills as an integral part of all professional higher education degrees according to the goals of the European Commission's White Paper on education and training (1995).

5.3. Learner and staff training for changing profiles

All reports mention that, besides adequate infrastructure, lack of learner and staff training is the main obstacle preventing the introduction of new learning environments and independent language learning in a pedagogically solid, structurally integrated and fully effective way into language teaching and learning. The introduction of concepts like autonomy and spaces like self-access centres, has resulted in a general shift from a teacher-led to a more learner-centred approach. This has involved a repositioning of the teacher, and a reappraisal of the skills necessary to manage this change. Terms such as 'facilitators', 'mentors', 'counsellors', 'advisers', 'helpers', 'learner support officers', 'language consultants' and "moderators" have appeared to try to characterise this professional change. In some cases, it has meant the emergence of a new professional role which appears to be distinct from the 'teacher'. The importance of professionals who can appropriately use a variety of environments to suit the new learners' profile and needs, as well as to prepare the new generation of graduates has been repeatedly highlighted by various reports.

Most learner and staff training has concentrated more on technical computer skills than on how NLEs can be used for self-directed and independent language learning or how the learners' skills for this can be enhanced through appropriate learning tasks given by the new "teacher". The misconceptions related to ILL (e.g. learning alone, without guidance, without partners, without control, etc.), i.e. common attitudes that prevail both among students and teachers, contribute to the reluctance that some teachers feel about the use of these kinds of approaches and to the frustration of students who have attempted to engage in ILL without any preparation. Added to these are the technical skills – often better among students than among staff – and the critical evaluation skills required for selecting suitable input from e.g. the Internet. It is not surprising that implementing NLEs and ILL departmentally is often met with considerable resistance particularly in cases where there is evidence of economic reasons behind the proposal.

Attempts to overcome problems of ineffective and inefficient use of the facilities have resulted in the emergence of various solutions. A particularly striking one is the emergence of a new professional role, the language learning adviser, which was initially positioned in the self-access centre and acted as a bridging figure between resources, new learning environments and the traditional academic structures (classrooms and lecture theatres). Subsequent development of the role has called for a need to integrate some of his/her skills in traditional teaching. What seems to be the agreement is that learner autonomy and ILL are best developed parallel to the

pedagogical approaches that are taken by the teachers or advisers, in other words, the students need informed teachers in order to get guided practice and experience in learning in various NLEs before they can fully adopt the role of a self-directed and independent language learner.

Staff training courses should include specific modules/subjects to train teachers in the use and integration of ICT in the language curriculum. This should be carried out from a critical point of view giving teachers a basis on which to perform a sound evaluation of the resources available. An in-depth knowledge of the various tools available is crucial since teachers will be unable to motivate their students unless they themselves are fully acquainted with the range of learning environments that can co-exist with a more traditional learning environment. These modules/subjects need to contemplate the existence of new learning environments with and without the support of ICT, and the added value related to their introduction in practice, in order to avoid a situation where it is the equipment which provides the direction for language learning and teaching and not the pedagogically sound principles.

5.4. Promoting multilingualism, mobility, cultural awareness and co-operation

The increased use of information and communication technologies has raised new research questions whose investigation will allow a better understanding of the inter-relation between technological development, language and culture learning. The findings of this exploration will affect the way in which teachers design courses, interpret new learning spaces, interact as professionals and deal with the meaning and construction of knowledge and skill. They will also necessitate closer co-operation, for instance, in the case of expanding the opportunities of learning a less widely spoken and used language electronically. It is in this way that true multilingualism can be promoted more systematically. Suggestions were presented in the reports for resources for online learning opportunities of all European languages through a joint intranet which would offer well-accessible courses and materials and other ICT services for all institutions of higher education in Europe. This kind of an aim, however, also presupposes design of and commitment to national visions, policies and strategies regarding multilingualism, as well as acknowledgement of language studies as an integral part of future professionalism in all disciplines.

Student and Staff Mobility (SSM) has given rise to the need and desire to study other languages and cultures which were not particularly accessible in the past. It has also produced a perfect space for learning a) through the increased presence of representatives of these languages and cultures in HE institutions, b) with the help of the Internet ('study buddies', discussion groups) and satellite TV programmes, and with c) CD-ROMS and other ICT materials designed for language or culture learning. Although both the real and the virtual NLE potentially broaden the learner's exposure to target cultures and languages, it has been pointed out that working solely in a multimedia centre may present a reduced or biased view when compared with real contact with the culture - traditionally in the form of the teacher - native speaker or

not. This risk no longer exists where the programmes include contact hours with teachers and/or other native speakers. Many HE institutions in Europe include such 'contact' time, thus allowing for cultural awareness and understanding to develop in a more structured way.

6. Examples of good Practice

In every national report an attempt was made to identify examples of good practice in the areas dealt with. For each country at least a dozen were identified among the institutes that replied to the questionnaires, but within the scope of this synthesis report only a few can be referred to. The list therefore does not claim to be representative or exhaustive and should be merely considered illustrative of the topics dealt with.

In terms of national policies the Latvian Educational Information system (LIIS) may be mentioned (www.liis.lv). Its aim is to prepare students of all levels for life and work in an information society and it has led to the development of extensive teaching aid, be it mostly for sciences so far. In Switzerland The Swiss Virtual Campus projects finance about 30 projects, only one of which is a language project. In Finland (see www.virtuaaliyliopisto.fi), Sweden (see www.distum.se) and the U.K. too, similar developments can be found (e.g. the Open University: <http://www.open.ac.uk/education-and-languages/>).

In terms of infrastructure many examples could be referred too. An institute where the infrastructure is closely linked to an overall policy on NLEs for language learning is the Language Centre of Gent University in Belgium (see www.taalnet.rug.ac.be/ict4lt/). Another language centre to have invested extensively on developing the prerequisites for ILL and ICT enhanced language teaching at a departmental policy level is the Language Centre of the University of Jyväskylä. Finland is also the only European country which has, since 1975, had compulsory and fully credited study requirements in 3-4 languages as statutory parts of all HE degrees, regardless of the field of study. (see www.jyu.fi/kielikeskus, under Language Compass).

In terms of the integration of NLEs into language teaching and learning, even more references exist. Relevant websites here are those of CIEL in the UK (<http://ciel.lang.soton.ac.uk>), WELL (<http://www.well.ac.uk>) and the Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics, and Area Studies (<http://www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk>).

In terms of staff training projects such as ICT4LT (<http://www.ict4lt.org/en/index.htm>), Tallent (<http://www.solki.jyu.fi/tallent/english.htm>) and DOPLA (<http://www.bham.ac.uk/DOPLA>) can be mentioned.

On the changing profiles of teachers see <http://www.hull.ac.uk/langinst/smile/>. In the UK there is now a distance-taught qualification on language advising (see www.hull.ac.uk/langinst/ma/pg-cert.htm)

In terms of content development many efforts have been made the last few years to develop materials for both the major languages and the LWULT languages, often in the form of European projects. A major player in this respect is the Universidad

Politécnica de Valencia, which has been active in the field since the successful CAMILLE project in 1992.

Special attention should also be devoted to the International Tandem Network which is coordinated from Germany but has contributors and users from many countries (<http://www.slf.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/email/idxeng00.html>) and to the Dialang project (<http://www.dialang.org/english/index.html>), which is a European project for the development of diagnostic language tests in 14 European languages.

A major reference document regularly referred to in the reports, is the Common European Framework of Reference (<http://culture.coe.fr/lang/eng/eedu2.4.html>).

7. Summary of needs and tentative recommendations for measures

In order to improve the quality of language teaching at HE level and to meet the challenge of new developments, NLEs and ILL have to be integrated into the teaching and learning process. First of all, the **infrastructure** has to be put in place to meet these new needs and **policies** established to provide a framework for practice. Then, **teachers** will have to be trained to use it and to develop didactically appropriate materials and methodologically sound approaches to teaching and guiding learning in these new environments and to supporting students in their ILL efforts. Thirdly, **students** need to be trained in using NLEs for language learning purposes and in adopting and developing learning strategies needed in independent and self-directed language learning. Fourthly, **dissemination of information** on successful initiatives is necessary. This would promote both **co-operation** between different institutions with the aim to improve the quality of research, development and practice and to avoid the costly duplication of efforts. Interdisciplinary professional co-operation is also necessary, for instance, between language and content teachers and software and hardware designers in order to arrive at suitable applications and solutions for piloting. Finally, it is essential to **ensure that graduates are properly equipped** for the future. This focuses on the development of language graduates whose ability to communicate, teach, and interact in a foreign language is matched with the ability to do so in a variety of environments and through the intelligent use of a wide range of tools (e.g. authoring tools, computer-aided translation systems, computer and videoconferencing systems, electronic forums, online multilingual management systems, and other communications systems). Other graduates must also be equipped so that they have the necessary communication skills for internationalised workplaces and that they will be able to continue and direct their language studies on a lifelong basis in line with what their professional and social life requires.

Tentative recommendations for measures (E-European level; N-national; I-institutional)

- 1. Development of national and institutional educational visions, policies, and strategies to recognise and foster the value of multilingualism and cultural competence, as well as ICT and lifelong learning skills, as integral parts of academic and professional competence. (N/I)**
- 2. Improvement, updating, and tailoring of the necessary infrastructure (technical, strategic, staff) to guarantee baseline conditions and to serve the purposes of using NLEs in a flexible way in teaching and for independent language learning (ILL). (I/N)**
- 3. Tailored and continuous technical support for actors involved and interdisciplinary co-operation. (I/N)**
- 4. Continuous practical and methodological teacher development programmes and pedagogical support tailored particularly for the needs of higher education language teachers. (N/I)**
- 5. Reassessment and updating of pre-service education of all language professionals to ensure their future expertise in the field (N/I).**
- 6. Reassessment of qualifications and job descriptions and establishment of new qualifications programmes (e.g. linguistic engineer). (N/I)**
- 7. Systematic learner training for independent language learning (ILL) and use of NLEs and adequate support systems. (I)**
- 8. Acknowledgement of language studies as an integral part of academic and professional qualifications in all fields, and accreditation and validation of such studies as well as independent language learning achievement. (N/I)**
- 9. Establishment of common standardised platforms and learning spaces to ensure easy access of resources and expertise. (E/N/I)**
- 10. Joint institutional, national, and European projects and action research projects to evaluate existing, and to develop new**

programmes, materials and pedagogical approaches which promote multilingualism, use of NLEs and ILL. (I/N/E)

11. *Encouragement to use common European standards of reference and assessment to guarantee transparency and reciprocal recognition. (N/I)*
12. *Creation of a European language teaching and learning network, which brings together all existing activities and organisations of European higher education institutions and serves as a main port of call for coordination and dissemination of information and experience. (E/N/I)*
13. *Creation of post-graduate and professional programmes whose validation can be recognised by European institutions and be included in universities' career structures. (E/NI)*
14. *Joint evaluation of effectiveness based on common criteria. (E/N/I)*
15. *Creation of a systematic approach to facilitating internationalisation at home and inclusion of mobile staff and students into the promotion of multilingualism and intercultural experience. (I/N)*

8. Review of developments in 2002 (Update Section)

The updating of the synthesis report was done on the basis of the following procedure. The members of the scientific committee of the subproject on NLEs were requested prior to the meeting in November 2002 to engage in a reviewing process of both their own national reports and the synthesis report. This was done by some guiding questions, and the answers to these questions were to be provided both in writing to the coordinators and orally in the meeting itself. The questions were the following:

- a) Are the concerns expressed in the synthesis report still valid?
- b) Have any new positive/negative developments taken place in your country in any of the areas discussed in the synthesis report)?
- c) Are you aware of any ongoing research that may contribute to our subproject?
- d) Do you have examples of integration of ICT and contact learning and are you aware of publications concerning the relationship between the two? In your experience, what cannot be taught via ICT?

- e) Are there any new staff development and/or learner development approaches at your university/in your country?
- f) What areas would be important to work upon as more practical and concrete projects? Do you have examples of spin-off projects relating to NLEs?
- g) Are there any developments in using the second type of NLE more systematically in your country?
- h) What forms of disseminating information about the project have you used?

The same questions were used to update national reports. In addition, connections with the other TNP2 projects and other relevant European projects were discussed in the meeting to give direction to Year 3 activities and focuses of the subproject. The brief account to follow is a general summary of the review findings and the discussions that followed. The details of country-specific developments are included in the national reports.

In general, the concerns expressed at the end of 2001 were still seen as valid today, perhaps even more valid, because rapid technological development is not so easy to follow in terms of application. In many countries, previously enthusiastic teachers have been somewhat frustrated with this, particularly since there is often lack of sharing experiences and innovations even within the same department and lack of support of proper administrative infrastructures and necessary training. On the other hand, there have also been many positive developments and active efforts to promote the integration of NLEs in HE language learning and teaching. Below, a summary of these two development trends is presented.

Concerns and negative developments seem to revolve around the following:

- There are still no policies that make a difference in practice or have social relevance for the practice of the teacher.
- There is little coordination in concepts or in practice.
- There is a lack of team effort and sharing, resulting in negative attitudes and competition.
- The general attitudes towards language learning have become more negative [in some countries](#) and as a result some language studies are being dropped from curricula.
- The concept of learner autonomy seems to be completely foreign in some countries with advanced technology. Could this be due to the constraints from adopting platforms that are too inflexible to allow real learner choice?
- The range of languages has not expanded.

- There is no research to present as evidence on the impact or achievement of using ICT as a tool for language learning and teaching, i.e. research on learning outcomes.
- Students resist taking responsibility of their own learning [in many countries](#).

Positive developments reported include:

- A substantial increase and activeness in participating in various kinds of transnational and national projects related to ICT enhanced language learning and teaching and in mobility programmes is evident particularly in the EU candidate countries, but also elsewhere.
- Both off-line and online teacher development courses, seminars and workshops are being run, as well as modular diploma courses in language teaching technology, network moderating and advising, and designing materials for ICT enhanced environments.
- Online diploma courses and projects in translation studies have been launched.
- Student involvement is increasing in general, and learner training courses are becoming available. This also includes intensive learner training for both incoming and outgoing students in mobility programmes.
- Online courses are being developed for less widely taught and learnt languages in projects (e.g. Welcome) and nationally (e.g. Portuguese, Bulgarian, sign language).
- Dissemination on the TNP and other European developments in language learning and teaching is being done [in many ways](#), e.g. via students having related assignments as part of their study programme.
- European Language Portfolio and the Council of Europe Framework for language proficiency assessment are being implemented and adapted for local purposes.
- New research into learning outcomes, learner strategies, and mobility experiences in language and culture learning has been launched.
- National language policies to prevent anglicisation and protect national languages are being drawn by HE rectors (e.g. Denmark).

One of the main trends still is that individuals develop and advance but policies do not, and that there is very little communication between institutions. Apart from some

learner development courses and tandem-type courses, the language and culture learning potential created through mobility is still not used systematically, particularly in the form of integrating language and subject studies through appropriate pedagogical approaches, thus also enhancing internationalisation at home for non-mobile students and staff.

In terms of the transversal issues (lifelong learning, employability, and the European dimension) between the three TNP 2 subprojects (namely, Curriculum Innovation, New Learning Environments – the European learning space, and Quality Enhancement in Language Studies), as well as connections with other projects and developments in Europe (e.g. the Tuning project; TNP1), there are several areas where the themes and concerns are intertwined, and where new learning environments play a significant role. First of all, using NLEs for language and culture learning presupposes a learner-centred approach and the development of independent learning skills. These skills are referred to as “generic competence”, “core skills”, or “transferable skills” by the projects above. Their main implication, however, is the same for all learning: these are skills that enable lifelong learning in that they are a prerequisite for being able to assess and direct one’s learning according to new challenges of, say, mobility or an international workplace. What is often neglected, however, in discussions about subject matter learning and the development of academic expertise is that all knowledge and information are incomprehensible and inaccessible, if the language through which they are constructed and in which they are embedded is not available. Therefore, for instance, in mobility programmes, the participants must have an adequate mastery of the language of instruction in order to pursue their desired learning achievements. The same applies to becoming comfortable with technology and developing multiple expertise for international employability (e.g. skills for project and information management, synthesising and analysing, collaborating in intercultural teams, etc.). All ways in which technological skills, independent learning skills and mastery of languages can be promoted in education should be used. Thus, all investments in enhancing pedagogical expertise and in promoting learner autonomy and self-assessment are also investments in the quality of the learning outcomes and the development of transferable skills. Higher education has a crucial role in all of these as the last stage of the students’ educational careers before employment.

Optimum integration of the transversal issues in European HE curricula seems to require more co-operation and transparency at all levels. Practical measures for these include actions to increase comparability and compatibility of degree programmes, accreditation of language studies as an integral part of programmes, better monitored mobility programmes, closer links between language study providers themselves and between these providers and providers of other studies, as well as with employers. All actors should be involved in the development process. It is clear that language competence and information and communications technology are important tools for improving co-operation, collaboration, and networking between these actors. Thus, integrating NLEs in educational approaches, and the

research evidence to explain and demonstrate their added value, also becomes a prerequisite for creating a true European education and research space.

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