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E-VOLLution: Exploring cutting edge applications of networked technologies in Vocationally Oriented Language Learning

Edited by Anthony Fitzpatrick and Robert O'Dowd

European Centre for Modern Languages
Centre européen pour les langues vivantes
Europäisches Fremdsprachenzentrum

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E-VOLLution: Introduction

Anthony Fitzpatrick and Robert O'Dowd

This publication presents the outcomes of the collaboration and work carried out in E-VOLLution: Exploring Cutting Edge Applications of Networked Technologies in Vocationally Oriented Language Learning, which was one of the series of projects organised by the ECML within its third medium-term programme, 2008-11. The volume also aims to provide an up-to-date overview of how new technologies are currently being applied in the area of vocationally oriented language learning (VOLL). However, before outlining in detail this project and its aims, it is perhaps appropriate to begin by clarifying what is meant by VOLL and how new technologies are related to this fascinating field of activity.

The term VOLL was originally used to denote the use of foreign languages in vocational rather than professional contexts, as this area was earmarked for special attention by the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the early 1990s when the Council of Europe workshops in this area were initiated. In the summary publication which emanated from the "ICT VOLL Impact" series of workshops of the European Centre for Modern Languages, the authors of that publication stated:

> For us, VOLL is language learning which is oriented towards a wide range of vocations and professions: e.g. nursing, the transport industry, a large number of engineering and crafts areas as well as various areas of the business world. All of these vocations differ from one another, demanding different (language) skills, and we believe that foreign language learning should be based on these differences in order to meet the immediate and long-term needs of the learners
>
> (Fitzpatrick 2005)

In the meantime, the importance of foreign languages in tertiary education for non-language specialists has grown commensurately with the growth of the European Union, and this area of language teaching/learning has attracted considerable interest amongst language professionals in universities and other institutions of higher education. Hence the expression "VOLL" has now been expanded to consciously embrace a wide range of professional fields, and this has enriched exchange and content, attracting the interest, not only of practitioners in the field, but also of an increasing number of researchers.

At the turn of the new millennium, a series of highly successful Council of Europe workshops were held throughout Europe to explore the integration of new technologies in the area of VOLL. The workshops, held in Graz (2000), Innsbruck and Moscow (2001), Essen and Graz (2002), brought together experts in the field of new technologies in foreign language education with VOLL practitioners from all over Europe who were interested in exploiting the emerging set of online technological resources and tools for their own particular teaching contexts. The series of workshops (entitled "ICT VOLL Impact") produced a motivated group of practitioners who were to go on to spread their newly acquired knowledge in the area, as

well as a CD-Rom of reference material on the area and a website where practitioners could find downloadable resources and materials for their teaching.

While many of the materials and information provided in the different ECML project areas are inevitably destined to become outdated as years pass, this has been particularly the case for the materials developed in the original ICT Voll Impact project. A change of paradigm in communicative activities in modern society as a whole, and in the educational community in particular, brought about by the integration of online digital media in everyday exchanges, has radically affected the practice of foreign language learning and teaching and how this activity should be carried out in the vocational sector. In the field of foreign language education and training, the following significant developments related to the use of new technologies can be identified:

First, there has been a significant increase in the availability of and access to online technologies in educational and training contexts around Europe brought about by cheaper computer hardware and widespread access to high-quality Internet connections. VOLL institutions at secondary and university level, as well as training providers, are now able to provide more learners with computers, laptops and to use interactive white boards at relatively low cost. The European Commission's report on the use of ICT to support innovation and lifelong learning reported that in 2006 there were 15.6 computers per 100 pupils in vocational schools across Europe, while 67% of schools reported having broadband connections in their schools (European Commission 2008: 23-34). One recent example of this development can be found in Spain, where in 2009 the ministry of education announced that all upper primary and secondary pupils were to be provided with their own individual laptop computers for studying at home and in school. For most universities throughout Europe, high-speed wireless Internet access is now a reality in all classrooms and across campuses.

The past decade has also seen the emergence of Web 2.0 tools such as blogs, wikis and podcasts as an essential part of foreign language education. Web 2.0 is a very broad concept which will be discussed in detail in this publication. For the time being, suffice it to say that it depicts the shift in the perception of the Internet as merely a tool for information consultation and consumption to one which enables users to create, share and publish content and also to take part in and create online communities. The increasing user-friendliness of these Web 2.0 tools has meant that VOLL teachers can now engage their learners in online networking and publishing without their possessing a great deal of technical knowledge or ability.

A third, significant development in the past decade has been the acceptance of the importance of culture in foreign language education and also a recognition of propensity for structured online intercultural interaction to support the development of learners' cultural awareness and skills of intercultural communicative competence. The importance of the role of culture for foreign language learners had been highlighted regularly in foreign language circles during the 1990s (Byram 1997), but it was the advent of the new millennium which heralded the entry of intercultural competence into state curricula and evaluation schemes. For example, tools for the evaluation of intercultural competence can be found in the Council of Europe's European Language Portfolio and the "Autobiography of intercultural encounters". (See Little

and Simpson 2003 and Byram 2008 for discussions on the role of culture in these tools.) Recent years have also seen an important growth in the literature exploring how online intercultural exchange or telecollaboration can contribute to the development of intercultural competence (O'Dowd 2007, Guth and Helm 2010). Telecollaboration is the application of online communication tools to bring together groups of language learners in geographically distant locations to develop their foreign language skills and intercultural competence through collaborative tasks and project work. This activity has come to be considered as one of the main pillars of online foreign language education and it was clear to the E-VOLLution project team from the outset that any further work on VOLL in technological contexts would need to take this area of learning into consideration.

However, of all the developments which have taken place in recent years, probably the most significant has been the way in which the areas of foreign language competence and e-competence have merged inextricably as integral components of the new skills required in emerging labour markets. The growing importance of online technologies for the ways in which we work and learn in global networks has meant that today, instead of using technologies simply to learn foreign languages, learners in VOLL contexts need to learn how to combine both foreign language skills and e-skills to be able to work and collaborate in new contexts where the borders between the virtual and the real, and between the distant and the proximate are increasingly blurred.

This tendency is clearly reflected in the policy documents currently emerging from the European Commission, the Council of Europe and elsewhere which highlight the need for European citizens to be engaged in learning scenarios where they can use both their intercultural communicative competence and their e-competence. In the European Commission's document "Key competences for lifelong learning: European framework document" (2010), three of eight key competences mentioned are foreign language competence, digital competence and cultural awareness and expression. These are seen to entail integral, interrelated skills which are essential prerequisites to achieving employability in a knowledge society. Furthermore, educators are being challenged to create learning scenarios which integrate the tools and communicative practices which learners will later face in their working lives. In the United States, the National Educational Technology Plan 2010 has the following to say about how and why online technologies should be integrated across the curriculum:

> How we need to learn includes using the technology that professionals in various disciplines use. Professionals routinely use the web and tools such as wikis, blogs, and digital content for the research, collaboration, and communication demanded in their jobs. They gather data and analyze it using inquiry and visualization tools. They use graphical and 3D modelling tools for design. For students, using these real-world tools creates learning opportunities that allow them to grapple with real-world problems – opportunities that prepare them to be more productive members of a globally competitive workforce.[1]

1 "Transforming American education: Learning powered by technology", National Educational Technology Plan 2010, Office of Educational Technology, US Department of Education.

Similarly, the European Union's document "New skills for new jobs: Action now" (2010) also calls for educators to develop new methodological techniques which facilitate the development of digital, linguistic and intercultural skills and competences. This, it is suggested, is best achieved by integrating "more cross-curricular and innovative approaches, such as, learning-by-doing or project-based learning".

The texts in this publication stem from this new understanding that the Internet is no longer simply an environment in which languages can be learned, but is also the context in which learners will later have to use their foreign language skills in order to collaborate, create and communicate with partners, collaborators, customers and clients in distant locations and blended contexts.

The contributions in the chapters of this book

The chapters presented here stem from the collaboration and interaction which has taken place in the various meetings and events related to the ECML project E-VOLLution. During the project meetings in Graz in 2008 and 2009, the core project members worked together to produce an overview of how online technologies had developed in the past number of years and how this could contribute to VOLL contexts. From this work have emerged the main chapters by Fitzpatrick, Namuth, Moro, O'Dowd and Smoliannikova. However, our collaboration has also shaped much of the background content which is available on the project website (www.ecml.at/projects/voll/evollution/index_announcement.htm) based on the themes of testing and assessment, blended learning, the social web and data-driven learning. Our work has also been shaped by our collaboration with VOLL practitioners at the Graz workshop organised in 2009. The work carried out in this workshop between co-ordinators and practitioners has led to various case studies appearing in these pages on the topics of online exchange, blogging and interactive whiteboards. The two keynote presentations at this workshop by the experts Bernd Rüschoff and Andreas Lund also appear here as the opening chapters of our publication.

The chapters in this volume cover a diverse number of themes related to online VOLL education in the new millennium, but a number of key themes can be seen to emerge repeatedly through the chapters. First and foremost, there is an underlying belief that all activities in this area should be informed by a principled approach to the use of the new technologies, ensuring coherence through the alignment of purpose and action. Also, the authors recognise the importance of the merging of audiovisual and text content, and underline the necessity to develop learners' digital competences which will enable them to interpret and create multimodal content in their working contexts. A change of paradigm is also heralded by the conviction that there has been a shift in the theory of learning. The theory that knowledge is seen as something that is not just consumed and transmitted, but actually produced or constructed in social interaction permeates all contributions in this publication. Ownership and appropriation of content and media are now seen not as the prerogative of the

teacher, but of the learning community as a whole. Indeed, the role of the teacher is redefined as facilitator and guide, as mediator, researcher and fellow learner, acquiring the new literacies (scientific, digital, critical, linguistic and cultural) that teachers need to understand and master alongside learners. It should, perhaps be emphasised at this point that the contributions were written in the first quarter of 2009 and that some of the contributors are painfully aware of the fact that what seemed "new" or even revolutionary at the time has now become commonplace and passed into everyday usage. Nevertheless, we believe that the guiding principles which inform the contributions retain their relevance for future developments in the field.

Chapter 1, "What's VOLL got to do with it? Sociocultural perspectives on ICT in language learning", looks at sociocultural perspectives on ICT in language learning, and Andreas Lund explores some underlying principles in activity theory. He shows how recent trends in working life have radically changed our ways of communicating and how there has been a shift from mass production and mass communication towards mass collaboration. In addition, he surveys the relationship between the human mind and cultural context and emphasises the need to base all ICT activities related to language learning on a principled approach which is firmly anchored in a theoretical framework.

In Chapter 2, "Digital media, Web 2.0, and process-oriented language production", Bernd Rüschoff observes that knowledge construction rather than simple instructivist learning is now widely accepted as an appropriate paradigm for language learning. He maintains that the output hypothesis, which argues that learners should actively engage in the negotiation and creation of 'comprehensible output' in order to develop linguistically and cognitively, best explains the success learners experience when engaged in project-based and task-oriented scenarios. He discusses the principles of output orientation in language learning with particular focus on writing activities and considers the new level of dynamics and interoperability afforded by some of the tools available in the "new" Internet.

Bernard Moro's contribution in Chapter 3 on e-publishing is devoted to reflections on how Web 2.0 technology has changed the parameters for (web) publishing. He argues that the new media allow anyone to create a web presence, upload any content and make it available for all interested parties. This, he believes, has led to a tremendous empowerment, creating a new community of amateur "webbers". However, he warns that this "deprofessionalisation" is a double-edged sword. He shows how easy access to and use of the new media can be profitably exploited for VOLL, mirroring future use by learners in their chosen vocation/professional contexts. Drawing on his dual background as a graphic artist and language educator, he warns of some the pitfalls to be avoided in the creation of web publishing materials, using examples taken from the professional press and the work of VOLL teachers in training.

Chapter 4, by Robert O'Dowd, is concerned with telecollaboration – online interaction and collaboration in VOLL contexts. Preparing learners to use networked technologies to communicate and collaborate with others in geographically distant locations is, he points out, one of the chief tasks of vocationally oriented education and training today. He underlines the

fact that being able to work and collaborate in such contexts inevitably involves not only being linguistically proficient in more than one language, but also being sensitive towards cultural differences and having an ability to mediate between different cultural perspectives. He proposes that engaging VOLL learners in telecollaborative intercultural exchange with learning partners in other countries provides such learners with a valuable basis for later professional proficiency in this area of vocational activities.

Chapter 5 looks at VOLL, the social web and implications for teacher training. Kerstin Namuth reminds us that the World Wide Web has changed from a huge information bank to a vast social space where we meet and communicate in our leisure time and at work. Web 2.0, she says, is increasingly becoming a place to be in because the "real world" and the "virtual world" are increasingly merging into each other. She insists that VOLL trainers must understand their learners' work situation and the linguistic needs that arise from it, and that it is essential that they are familiar with Web 2.0, that is, their learners' virtual working environment, and appreciate its impact. She identifies the new key questions for VOLL trainers and teacher trainers as how Web 2.0 affects language, communication and working life and highlights the consequences for VOLL learning and teaching. She lists the new literacies VOLL trainers require and indicates how professional development can be designed for this particular target group.

Chapter 6, contributed by Irina Smoliannikova, presents the possibilities which data-driven learning offers for focused, online research in chosen vocational and professional fields. She argues that traditional methods and skills of retrieving, storing and processing information are no longer adequate to promote the level of professional performance demanded in today's networked world. She proposes an approach to engage learners in specific, discovery-based activities online or off-line and to provide them with tools that will facilitate language awareness and culture acquisition. She believes that data-driven learning may help to establish a sound methodology for language learning that focuses on authenticity in contents, context and task.

The planned chapter on testing and evaluation in VOLL contexts by Anthony Fitzpatrick has been integrated into Case Study 4, which looks at how demands are being voiced for assessment and appraisal of language competence and skills to be measured in accordance and congruent with the new requirements of the workplace rather than with traditional, schematised procedures of testing which are often concerned merely with formal aspects of language mastery.

The case studies

The central workshop of the E-VOLLution project, held in Graz at the ECML in February 2009, spawned a number of activities and projects amongst the participants which are, in the view of the workshop animators, well worthy of emulation. They are reported here to illustrate the way in which a number of the principles and approaches outlined in the chapters

of this publication may be converted into activities and undertakings which will promote good practice in the deployment of ICT in VOLL.

Case Study 1 – Intercultural collaborative learning: creating and marketing an EFL online application
Kosmas Vlachos, Hellenic Open University, Greece, Aušra Netikšienė, Vilnius College of Higher Education, Lithuania, and Pilar Concheiro, Reykjavik University, Iceland

Case Study 2 – Learning through blogging: a case study with business Spanish students at Reykjavik University
Pilar Concheiro, Reykjavik University, Iceland

Case Study 3 – Riga-Durham webinar on using Smartboard technology in VOLL
Steve Mulgrew, University of Nottingham, and Natalja Cigankova, University of Latvia

Case Study 4 – Evaluation, testing and assessment
Anthony Fitzpatrick with Inge-Anna Koleff, Verband Wiener Volkshochschulen, Manfred Thönicke, Hamburger Institut für Berufliche Bildung – HIBB, Germany

The contributors

The contributors to the main chapters of this book represent almost a microcosm of those working and collaborating with the European Centre for Modern Languages, both in terms of personal biographies and fields of activity: a German national working in adult education in Sweden, an Irishman teaching at a Spanish university, an Englishman working in Germany for a European language network, and French, German, Norwegian and Russian nationals employed in their respective countries. They have all been directly linked to activities and workshops of the E-VOLLution project and its predecessors in different ways – some from the very beginning of the Council of Europe VOLL workshops in the early 1990s, and some who joined the team when the focus shifted to the use of ICT in VOLL. The work in the E-VOLLution project brought them together in mind and spirit, and all benefited greatly from the close co-operation demanded by an undertaking of this nature.

The contributors, in alphabetical order, are:

Anthony Fitzpatrick, former Director of the International Language Network (ICC), textbook author and teacher trainer. He has been active as an expert in various Council of Europe activities related to modern languages since 1977, and has organised over 20 Council of Europe workshops in this field in various European countries, including many workshops organised by the ECML, where he led the initial workshop in 1995.

Andreas Lund is an Associate Professor in the Department of Teacher Education and School Research (ILS) at the University of Oslo (http://uv-w3prod01.uio.no/staffdirectory/singleview/v1/index.php?user=andlund). A former secondary school teacher who specialised in VOLL, his research interests are now collective cognition, human interactions in technology-rich environments, sociocultural perspectives on learning and didactics, language, speech communities, and communication change. And also wikis as a way of bridging individual, small group, and larger collectives engaged in thinking, learning and working.

Bernard Moro, initially a professional illustrator, is professeur agrégé and Director of the Centre for Modern Languages at the Université Pierre Mendès France, the University of Social Sciences in Grenoble. A former secondary schoolteacher, he has produced software applications for language classes, co-authored language learning textbooks for upper secondary pupils, designed and built didactic websites for the ECML and his university (http://web.upmf-grenoble.fr/clv/), and acted as webmaster for his Language Learning Resource Center (http://languagelearningresourcecenter.org) as well as for the ICT in VOLL and E-VOLLution projects at the ECML (www.ecml.at/projects/voll).

Kerstin Namuth works for Folkuniversitetet, the leading provider of modern language teaching in adult education in Sweden. She is based in Gothenburg where she works as regional co-ordinator for pedagogical development. She is responsible for distance/mobile learning and the deployment of virtual learning environments and resources across the range of adult and continuing education within her organisation.

Originally a language teacher (German as a Foreign Language) and teacher trainer, she has, over the years, been responsible for a large number of projects in ICT, VOLL and teacher training at a local, regional and national level. She has published in these areas and been involved in a number of Council of Europe projects since the early 1990s.

Robert O'Dowd (http://www3.unileon.es/personal/wwdfmrod) teaches Foreign Language Methodology at the University of León in Spain and also works as Secretary for International Training at the university's Section for International Relations. He has a Ph.D. on the development of intercultural competence through the use of networked technologies in the foreign language classroom and has run many teacher training workshops on themes such as intercultural learning, online technologies in foreign language education and online intercultural exchange. He is the founder of the EUROCALL SIG on Computer Mediated Communication and has published widely on the themes of online foreign language education and on the role of culture in foreign language learning in journals such as *ReCALL*, the *Calico Journal* and *ELT Journal*. His most recent book is *Online intercultural exchange: a practical introduction for foreign language teachers*, published by Multilingual Matters.

Irina Smoliannikova is a member of staff of Moscow State Linguistic University, where she teaches Foreign Language Methodology and EFL to students of Law and Data Protection. Her Ph.D. concerned the development of communicative competence through the use of ICT in the foreign language classroom. She is involved in a number of research projects related to language and culture acquisition in vocationally oriented exchange. She worked with a team to design and implement a portal for the International Institute of the Languages Spoken in the

Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), created at Moscow State Linguistic University. The portal provides online resources and a didactic environment for language teachers and students in the CIS.

Bernd Rüschoff (www.uni-due.de/anglistik/applied_linguistics_didactics/rueschoff_bernd.shtml) studied English, Slavonic Languages, Philosophy and Education in Germany and Canada. He obtained a Ph.D. in Russian Linguistics and at the University of London. Since then, his research focus has been in applied linguistics and second language acquisition as well as technology-enhanced language learning (TELL). He is currently chair and head of the didactics section of the Department of English at the University of Duisburg and Essen.

He has wide experience in developing and assessing technology-enhanced learning systems and multimedia resources for language learning as well as the integration of technology-enhanced language learning (TELL) into language learning. He has been involved in a number of European projects (LINGUA, TEMPUS as well as SOCRATES and LEONARDO) and contributed to various Council of Europe and ECML activities. Most recently, his research has been focused on aspects of e-learning and virtual learning platforms for applied linguistics as well as the use of authoring tools for language learning. He was President of EUROCALL for a number of years and is at present (2010) Vice-President of AILA.

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Chapter 1

What's VOLL got to do with it? Sociocultural perspectives on ICT in language learning

Andreas Lund

1. Introduction

The German scholar Kurt Lewin (1890-1947), often referred to as the founder of social psychology, once observed that "Nothing is as practical as a good theory". Lewin's research focused on group dynamics and organisational development. It is tempting to assume that it was his research into such complex and dynamic phenomena that prompted his observation and, if so, his words ring especially true when we today are facing increased complexity and rapid change in social organisation and in working life. Labels such as "the networked society", "the information society", and "the knowledge society" amount to a view of the world where distributed knowledge and collaborative knowledge advancement challenge traditional educational practices. Traditionally, educational practices have relied on learners' individual accountability towards a defined curriculum and exams where learners typically are disconnected from peers and cultural tools (textbooks, Internet, etc.).

For educators the current situation may seem daunting; we are to prepare learners for a world where new infrastructures (digital networks), new settings (online modes of work), and new tools (for example, Web 2.0 applications) are mainstream and not exotic features of work as well as in public and private life. But how do we cope? How can educators respond constructively and reflectively so that we can analyse the phenomenon and design productive and future-oriented learning and teaching activities and practices? When such practices materialise they represent a substantial expansion of teachers' and learners' repertoires.

In this situation, we need more than an aggregation of examples of best practice (although they are, of course, invaluable in their own right). We also need more principled approaches than what can be gleaned from examples or intuition and gut feeling about what constitutes "good learning". We need analytic and conceptual tools with explanatory power for complex phenomena, we need to reconsider what we mean by everyday terms such as "work", "learning" and "communication", and we need to systematically develop educational practices so that they are aligned with what learners encounter in the many social arenas outside educational institutions. Hence, the invocation of Kurt Lewin's reflection.

2. Theory

A theory can be said to hold some fundamental assumptions about a phenomenon. In the learning sciences such assumptions can be very different; behaviourism would see learning as an individual's automated response to repeated stimuli in an experimental setting, cognitivists would place greater emphasis on individual problem solving, and the sociocultural community would emphasise learning as something that happens between minds rather that within minds (this is an extreme simplification for illustrative purposes only). From fundamental assumptions, a theory seeks to build a framework or a paradigm where everyday terms such as learning, teaching, reading, writing, etc. are conceptualised and amount to a structure that has analytical and explanatory power when we seek to make sense of a series of observations. But theories may not just help us explain the world; they may also be conducive to changing it. This latter aspect is especially important when we today see rapid societal change. Theories may help us think reflectively, critically and creatively about how to develop educational practices that prepare learners for societal change. The purpose of the present chapter is to facilitate such efforts.

Sometimes, the notion of theory is linked to a very much identifiable set of assumptions and concepts; the simplest possible tool to use. Sometimes, we find that theories are related; they share some fundamental assumptions but may have slightly different foci or priorities. In the latter case, we use the term perspective. In the following, I will seek to present and discuss one such perspective, often referred to as the sociocultural perspective (hereafter referred to as SCP). The following sections will first present the roots and some fundamental assumptions of SCP and with a slant towards foreign language learning. The next section discusses some recent trends in working life and how this challenges our ways of communicating, using the concepts of mediation, artefact, and context. Finally, I will use principles in activity theory (one of the many theories under the sociocultural "umbrella") to show how theory can guide teachers in designing learning environments and activities conducive to VOLL.

3. Sociocultural foundations

3.1 Meaning making

In essence, SCP seeks to understand and explain the relationship between the human mind and our cultural context. This means that thinking and mental development are not just recognised as something that happens in the individual mind but are inextricably linked to our social organisation, institutional settings, and use of cultural tools or artefacts. The implication for studying thinking is that we have to look beyond mental activity and examine how humans act in the world, including how they talk, respond to and transform their immediate contexts, and exploit and produce artefacts. This aspect of SCP is interesting when we think of the many profession-specific settings we encounter in VOLL.

One consequence of the assumptions referred to above is a view of knowledge as something that is not just consumed and transmitted, but actually produced or constructed in social interaction, in talk (and in written genres). Language as a meaning-making device takes priority over language as a fixed system of rules to be mastered. Lantolf and Thorne (2006) summarise this SCP position as follows: "There is no underlying sentence. There are only people engaged in the activity of communicating in concrete material circumstances with specific intentions" (p. 8).

We can recognise these perspectives in the titles of two books by one of the founding fathers of SCP, Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934). *Mind in society* (1978) emphasises the relationship between cognition and context, and *Thought and language* (1986, sometimes translated as *Thinking and speech* to emphasise the mental processes) demonstrates how language mediates thinking and evokes ideas; language use is not an end product of mental activity but actually shapes our efforts to make meaning. However, while SCP in many ways has become synonymous with the theoretical work of Vygotsky, Valsiner and van der Veer (2000) show that similar perspectives can be traced throughout the 19th century in Europe as well as in American pragmatism. Today, it represents a robust and multifarious approach to learning and development and is commonly found to have explanatory power when we examine technology mediated communication.

3.2 Interaction

But how to actually develop meaning through language use? The key here is social interaction, but not just any kind of social interaction. The articulated activity needs direction and one or more knowledgeable peers to assist the learner in improving her or his competence. Also, we know that when seeking to make meaning in a foreign language, we rely on social support (for example, interlocutor assistance in finding the right words) as well as material support (for example, consulting dictionaries, spellchecker) in order to move beyond our current and limited level of competence. In other words, we can accomplish something more than we can achieve on an individual and unassisted basis. Vygotsky refers to such potential as the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and gives the following definition:

> It is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more intelligent peers.
>
> (Vygotsky 1978: 86)

Implicit in the above quote is the emphasis on the teacher as perhaps the most important support factor for learner development. In SCP, the teacher is not a "guide on the side" nor a "sage on the stage" but an informed participant who assists in and mediates the learner's progress. This principle is often found in vocationally oriented learning, operationalised as apprenticeship where the novice through interaction with masters of the trade attain expert status over time (see Lave and Wenger 1991, for an influential account of such practices).

3.3 Mediation, context and artefacts

So far we have seen how SCP approaches language learning as meaning making in social interaction where a knowledgeable peer (teacher, classmates) assists in language development. The consequence is that there is no direct relation between the individual learner and the foreign language encountered. Rather, this is a mediated process where the learner makes use of whatever available means (social and material) the situation affords and the teacher brings into the learning environment.

Mediation is a process in which learning is afforded and sustained by external factors. But this is not just a process of the context acting upon the learner in a unidirectional or deterministic way. Rather, it is a process where the learner engages with contextual factors in order to overcome limitations of the individual mind. For example, how much Vietnamese relevant for oil industry development would you be able to learn if you were isolated on an island without any knowledgeable company, textbooks, Internet connection, a guide to Vietnamese phonology and intonation, negotiation practices, etc? Learning, including language learning, is a mediated process in which we bridge the gap between current and future competence by engaging with artefacts. Artefacts may be material (for example, using the Internet, electronic dictionaries, spellcheckers, etc.) or conceptual (for example, cultural-historically developed conventions for negotiations, applications, etc.). But at the same time, artefacts are not fixed entities; they are adopted in different ways by dissimilar cultures of use. This is one reason why engaging in, for example, multicultural online exchanges proves to be challenging beyond mastering the purely linguistic or technological features in such a venture (see O'Dowd, Chapter 5, this volume).

So, artefacts are basically social in nature. They connect the mind with the world and they connect the individual with the social. Applied to language learning (vocationally as well as generally) in a networked world we see how artefacts such as the Internet have the potential to connect actors to traditional as well as emerging practices and (thus) mediate language development. However, this relies on an understanding of the social nature of artefacts, and on learner agency as well as teacher (and peer) participation and support.

The SCP concepts of meaning making, interaction, and mediation all involve a view of the individual learner as more than a self-sufficient entity. It is the relationships between the individual and the speech community (and the learner and the contextual affordances) that beg attention. Such relationships can only emerge in interactions where we actually produce language and engage in interactions. To put it simply: language use mediates language development.

So far, we have examined some mediated processes that link the individual to the cultural context. Let us now briefly examine the relationship between the individual and the collective before moving on to the more specific VOLL relevance.

3.4 The individual and the collective

Strictly speaking, language does not make sense on an individual basis. When we use language it is nearly always with the purpose of connecting with one or more interlocutors (agreeing, disagreeing, supplementing, deviating, arousing emotions, etc.) in order to increase intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity is not identical to monolithic agreement but a process of creating a shared horizon in which we acknowledge different positions while sharing a common goal. Dialogue is essential in such an endeavour, whether it takes place in real-time communication (for example, telephone conversation, online chat) or delayed mode (for example, e-mail, blog comments). Dialogue and intersubjectivity connect with the meaning-making aspects of language use discussed in 2.1, thus emphasising thinking and development as primarily social phenomena. When the language theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (1986/2004: 143) writes that "I live in a world of others' words and my entire life is an orientation in this world", it is a statement that identifies dialogue as constituting a communal existence.

For education, the implications are that it is insufficient to assess a learner's competence based on the individual's decontextualised output. We need to relate the individual's contributions to the common goal of the relevant speech community whether it consists of classmates, a specific craft community, business relations, or a distributed network of emerging expertise in some technological domain. This has consequences for how we design tasks and how we develop assessment criteria and assessment practices. These pedagogical concerns are beyond the scope of this book chapter, but represent important (and exciting) challenges for educators (see, for example, Hampel 2006, Lund 2008a, Lund and Rasmussen 2008, for detailed discussions).

To summarise, SCP conceptualises languages as cultural conventions and sets of resources and as cultural tools that serve to invoke and share attention (Tomasello 2003, Watson-Gegeo 2004). Such processes are mediated by artefacts and always involve more than the individual mind. Consequently, language learning is not conceptualised as a decontextualised "thing" or lexico-grammatical system to be acquired. Rather, it is a highly contextualised and multi-voiced practice in which we invest our identities in order to make meaning. In the following section we will see how such a framework may prove useful when we encounter emerging communication practices in networked environments.

4. What's VOLL got to do with it?

4.1 Mass collaboration

When Manuel Castells in 1996 published his seminal work on The rise of the networked society (1996) he had systematically analysed the global informational capitalism. As the title of his book suggests, he found that the network metaphor served to capture profound changes in how we organise societies including the rise of corporations whose activities are distributed

across several nations. Interestingly, in the very same year, Gee, Hull and Lankshear showed how this recent transition of global capitalism was accompanied by a discourse that reflected flat structures, individual tailoring, and distributed activities at the heart of such change (Gee, Hull and Lankshear 1996). Coincidentally, in the previous year (1995) the idea of the Wiki – a truly collective and multi-voiced activity space on the Internet – was conceived and developed (Leuf and Cunningham 2001).

These three little vignettes can be taken as an indication that working life requires people to increasingly communicate across space, time and cultures, and increasingly on a scale that far surpasses group work where a limited number of people work on a clearly defined project. This trend can be said to signal a change from mass production and mass communication towards mass collaboration. Prime examples are the online encyclopaedia Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org) with its more than 10 million articles in about 230 languages written by thousands of contributors all over the world. Another example is the Open Source Initiative (www.opensource.org) for software programming that harnesses global expertise for the good of the community. In the wake of such pioneering examples we find, for example, Creative Commons (http://creativecommons.org) based on the principle of "share, remix, reuse – legally". What is more, this kind of extended collaboration is gradually making its way into various business enterprises, manufacturing industries and knowledge advancement in general. Let us briefly check a few examples that illustrate this trend:

- TakingITGlobal (www.tigweb.org) is an online community that seeks to identify and do something about global issues that will affect us in the near future. Whether it is education, health issues, human rights, or the environment, participants from all over the world can communicate and take action.
- InnoCentive (www.innocentive.com) is a company specialising in customising solutions for other companies by using their "marketplace" of more than 160 000 available minds distributed worldwide.
- Cambia (www.cambia.org/daisy/cambia) is an initiative for "open innovation" including the BiOS Framework, which "focuses on development and sharing of life-sciences technology through new collaboration and licensing tools and norms".
- IDEO (www.ideo.com) is an online and global consulting design agency for innovation and with a discussion forum on Facebook (www.facebook.com).

Similar as well as different examples of collaborative working and thinking through linking minds, hands (and even hearts) in new forms of communication can be found in a rapidly increasing literature on the topic (see, for example, Sawyer 2007, Tapscott and Williams 2006, for examples and extended discussions). Add to this the many Web 2.0 applications designed as social software (MySpace, Flickr, Facebook …) and we see how new forms of language use constitute and become part of societal change. To verify that this trend is also to be found in academia, check, for example, Academia.edu (www.academia.edu), a combination of Facebook and Twitter for researchers, or the Open Courseware Consortium (www.ocwconsortium.org).

4.2 Theory and practice

This is where VOLL meets SCP. SCP emphasises that learners' strategies are closely connected to the practices they engage in, how humans communicate and act with and on their environment through the use of cultural tools. This opens up for designing language learning environments and activities that afford processes and tools typically found in the workplace. Let me give an example where appropriating specialised vocabulary in English is the aim:

The United Nations operates an educational website called Cyber School Bus. At http://cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation3 we find InfoNation – statistical information on all member countries and from a plethora of fields such as economics, ecology, health, education, etc. By choosing countries and categories, learners can quickly and easily compare countries with regard to everything from, for example, infant mortality to CO_2 emissions and gross domestic product per capita. Here, learners are exposed to and invited to actually make use of advanced terms (for example, educational expenditure, primary energy production, or urban growth rate) from a number of vocational areas. InfoNation invites learners to actively engage with this sort of information, using the trade terms that constitute a particular vocation. Activities can be designed in a number of ways:

- learners can write down hypotheses on a number of issues and immediately check whether their hypotheses were correct or had to be revised, what connections they found, what surprised them, etc. and then present their findings to the rest of the class;
- learners can design and exchange tasks with classmates;
- for developing speaking skills, the teacher can use one Internet-linked PC connected to a projector in order to use InfoNation interactively as learners hypothesise, discuss and suggest connections and causes;
- for developing writing skills, learners can use InfoNation to address issues where several types of statistics add up to a larger picture, for example, what the future will look like in different parts of the world (by checking consumption, production, population growth, etc.) and summarise their findings;
- for a combination of spoken and written development, learners can use their InfoNation hypotheses and findings in a presentation tool to give short talks for the rest of the class;
- findings can be brought into a Wiki in order to develop a collectively generated resource on a vocational topic.

In sum, the example shows how the language learning classroom can be reconfigured through material as well as social mediation towards a language learning community. Tasks become more dynamic and negotiable and contexts emerge as a vital aspect of the situated activity (Clarke-Midura and Dede 2010). Similar designs can be also developed around online simulations of diverse work procedures, some multiplayer games, and virtual worlds such as

Second Life. While other perspectives may help understand the mind of the individual, SCP makes it possible to conceptualise the mediated relationships between agents (Donato and McCormick 1994).

In the introduction, SCP was referred to as an "umbrella" term. Under this label we find related approaches that have fundamental assumptions in common but that emphasise slightly different aspects of the perspective (for example, dialogism, situated learning, distributed cognition and cultural psychology). In the final section of this chapter, I make use of one specific theory in order to make visible how a theory can assist educators in analysing as well as designing language learning activities. Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) is one of the neo-Vygotskian approaches that is currently extending our understanding of learning and development, language learning included (for example, Blin 2004, Lantolf and Thorne 2006, Lund 2006, 2008b).

5. Activity theory: analysis and design

CHAT is basically a theory about transformation and development which connects the human mind to the cultural and historical conditions under which it works. From its Vygotskian roots the theory has been substantially developed during the last couple of decades (Engeström, Miettinen and Punamäki 1999). CHAT takes the concepts discussed in the previous sections (mediation, artefacts, etc.) and arranges them so that the relationships between them become visible. Let us gradually build the model of activity through three illustrations.

First, we have the basic situation of mediated action; an individual (for example, a learner) constructing an object (for example, competence in a foreign language) by making use of cultural tools or artefacts (dictionary, the InfoNation website, study techniques, etc.). In other words, there is no direct relationship between the subject and the object nor a separation of individual and contextual factors.

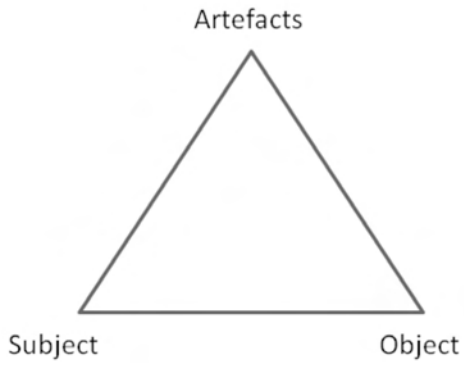

Figure 1: Mediated action

However, such mediated action is embedded in a complex system of social activity. Figure 2 (below) seeks to visualise this process. If we stick to our example of a learner aiming for competence in a foreign language, this effort is regulated, supported and constrained by several elements – "nodes" in the triangle. The rules or conventions involved may pertain to formal, stylistic and cultural elements as well as the many institutional rules associated with schooling, exams, assessment, etc. For example, today, English as a global language is in flux to the extent that we see a plethora of variants in orthography, grammar and style – not least as a result of languages increasingly going online.

In SCP and CHAT, an individual is always in a social setting and in Figure 2 this is captured by the "community" node. This can be a small group or a school class, a team of skilled workers, or a looser network of interested parties. The important thing is that they share an object-oriented activity. This activity requires collective action but one that involves some sort of distribution of labour. The classic example is how a teacher will adopt a leading role in assorted learning activities. But with networked learning environments, we see how teaching and learning often become two inseparable aspects of the object-oriented activity as learners increasingly can assist each other and even the teacher. Still, the teacher needs to exercise a presence of authority and competence in order to keep the activity on track. The result is the outcome of the object-oriented activity; for example, a report, an e-mail exchange, a presentation using a domain-specific vocabulary, etc.

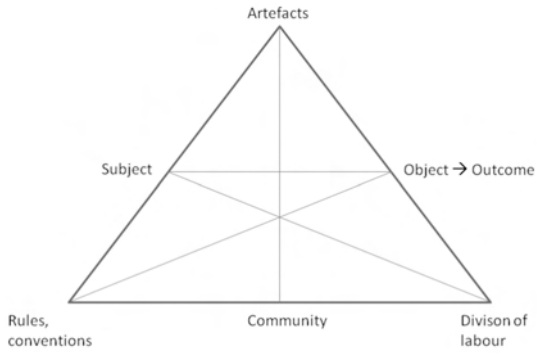

Figure 2: The activity system

All models give the impression of being static. Therefore, it is important to stress the dynamics and social life that constitute the model. Social life is always full of tensions and even breakdowns, and this is very much the case with the CHAT model. For example, the introduction of the Internet, electronic dictionaries, and social web applications sometimes result in a direct conflict with the traditional rules for tests and exams where the learner is cut off from social and material support. Also, some types of digital literacy found in, for example, SMS and chat sessions will violate the traditional and accepted ways of spelling and syntax. At other times, there is friction between participants. From many studies of digitally mediated learning we see how the artefact that was supposed to mediate the learning process instead takes on characteristics of a parasitic object, causing the original object to dissolve.

Tales of learners who spend their time playing solitaire or strategy games, engaging with Facebook friends or surfing aimlessly are many and disturbing. However, such tensions and breakdowns can often hold potential for new types of activities, they are "germ cells" of future-oriented practices. CHAT makes it possible to identify and analyse such processes.

Finally, it is important to pay attention to the fact that we do not belong to one activity system only. Schooling is just one of many. In our private lives, we take part in activity systems that are constructed around family, interest groups, social leisure activities, and we come from different cultures and subcultures where we relate to different conventions and maybe use different cultural tools.

This takes CHAT into the multicultural dimension (not restricted to ethnic aspects). CHAT always aims to activate the learner's lifeworld in order to more productively mediate development. Consequently, we need a model where we see how different activity systems are involved and how they jointly construct a shared object or how they fail to do so. One example may be the kid who spends a lot of her/his time in online gaming communities. The competence developed for actually taking on very complex strategic problem solving together with others (often unknown and with only a "virtual" presence) can obviously benefit this learner when s/he tries to, for example, articulate a plan for medical assistance in a foreign language or suggest ways to combat uncontrolled oil spill.

Figure 3 (below) illustrates how, for example, school (Activity system 1) and the gaming community (Activity system 2) may be mutually constitutive in constructing the learning object. The bigger the overlapping sector of the object, the more probability for success. On the other hand, the two ellipses may also lose contact, leaving the two systems separated and even at odds. It is in the contact zone between activity systems, so-called "third spaces", that we may find some of the more interesting educational opportunities for 21st-century education.

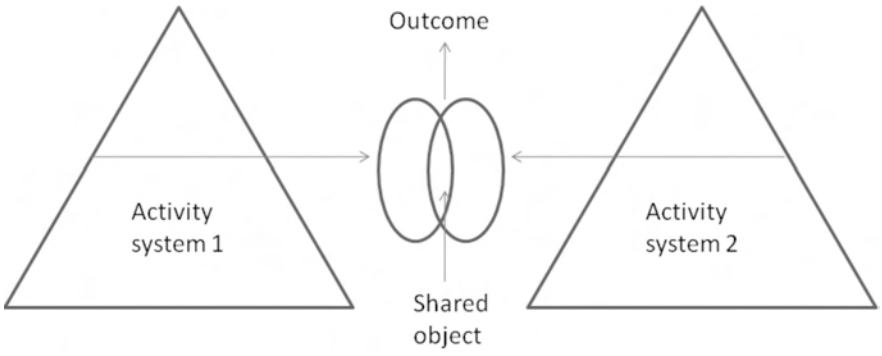

Figure 3: Different activity systems and a shared object

In conclusion, I would also recommend that educators do not just regard CHAT as an analytical tool. Try using the concepts (and the "nodes" in the models) and the relations

between them to actually design learning environments, learning activities, and the relations between participants, tools, contexts and possibly more than one activity system. A good place to start could be to frame the many excellent examples of learning activities in this volume through the lenses of CHAT.

6. Conclusion

A main argument in this chapter has been that taken together sociocultural perspectives and the rapid growth of collectively oriented, networked technologies converge in a considerable need for practices that pay attention to collaborative and mediated language learning. We need to map the contextual affordances and social interaction in order to understand the linguistic conventions as well as opportunities that emerge. These conventions and opportunities are driven by rapidly emerging and expanding communicative change. VOLL is an especially interesting field to study and develop emerging practices since the distance between emerging communicative conventions and actual use is short and can be operationalised in a variety of networked Web 2.0 applications.

SCP and CHAT with their fundamental assumptions about language learning as social, mediated and context sensitive would seem to offer much in the way of informing educators as to what is actually happening, how it can be understood, and how we can make educational designs conducive to language development. In theory, there should be no difference between theory and practice.

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Chapter 2

Digital media, Web 2.0 and process-oriented language production

Bernd Rüschoff

1. Introduction

Current thinking in SLA methodology favours knowledge construction rather than simple instructivist learning as an appropriate paradigm for language learning. Within this context, project-based and task-oriented scenarios have often been regarded as the real forte of digital media and technology-enhanced tools. Such approaches to learning are also rooted in the output hypothesis, which argues that learners should actively engage themselves in the negotiation and creation of "comprehensible output" in order to develop linguistically and cognitively. Following the apparent upgrade of the Internet to Web 2.0, expectations are running high as to the innovative potential of this (supposedly) new set of tools for technology-enhanced language learning (TELL). This chapter will discuss the principles of output orientation in language learning with particular focus on writing activities. It will also consider the new level of dynamics and interoperability afforded by some of the tools available in the "new" Internet as well as how such tools can be used to support the learners' active engagement in productive and reflective processes when creating text-based output in language learning. It is felt that the focus on text production and writing processes is particularly relevant for vocationally oriented language learning (VOLL) as written text plays an important role in professional and vocational contexts. Furthermore, process-oriented learning of the kind supported by Web 2.0 tools, in addition to linguistic and functional communicative competencies, fosters the development of strategic competencies, another aspect which is an important factor in VOLL. Strategic competencies, for example, analytical/thinking skills and the ability to deal with and process authentic materials in a foreign language, are very important in a globalised professional world. Consequently, learning contexts in which a certain degree of cognitive development is fostered, and through which learners can reflect and evaluate methods and ways of learning by communicating and presenting learning results, have become an integral part of current methodological paradigms for language learning. As shall be demonstrated in this chapter, process-oriented writing in wikis is very greatly supportive of such approaches.

As far as learning theory is concerned, an aspect also to be addressed briefly in this chapter, knowledge construction as a paradigm for the theoretical underpinning for curriculum design and classroom practice has found its representation in numerous, research-based deliberations

on the principles of teaching and learning a foreign language. Merrill Swain's "Output hypothesis" is an example of this, as it focuses on the role of producing output in the target language and refers to the importance of the processes involved in language production for learners' linguistic, cognitive and meta-cognitive growth. In Swain's own words:

> Through *languaging*, defined as the use of speaking and writing to mediate cognitively complex activities, an individual develops cognitively, and … affectively. The act of producing spoken or written language is thinking in progress and is the key to learners' understanding of complex concepts.
>
> (Swain and Deters 2007: 822)

It is now widely accepted that digital media have a lot to offer in support of such approaches in their function as dynamic and cognitive tools, and Web 2.0, as a truly participatory platform for collaboratively constructing and sharing knowledge via social software and similar tools, is seen as offering new impetus to learning scenarios which focus on communicative and collaborative learning. In addition, the new levels of user friendliness afforded by Web 2.0 tools such as wikis, blogs and social networks – often referred to as "transparent technologies" (Wheeler, Kelly and Gale 2005) – allow learners to focus more closely than ever on solving a problem without the impediments of technical barriers. In 2007, Parker and Chao stated that "these tools afford the added advantage of reducing the technical skill required to use their features, allowing users to focus on the information exchange and collaborative tasks themselves without the distraction of a difficult technical environment".

In order to put the potential of new digital platforms and new options for learning into perspective, this chapter will briefly discuss the characteristics of the "new" Internet embodied in the concept of "Web 2.0". In view of the manifold options for co-operative authoring and global networking on the web in its current form, this will then be followed by reflection on the importance of collaborative, socially contextualised forms of language learning. Such contexts do not simply focus on developing skills and competencies on a linguistic level, traditionally at the forefront of aims defined for language learning, but also strongly foster strategic competencies and language awareness by integrating elements of reflection on learning and on processes of language use into classroom and learning practice. Such approaches will be briefly contextualised in the light of current understanding of the theoretical framework of language learning. Co-operative writing, that is language production, in a process-oriented mode supported by digital tools can have positive effects on quantity and quality of writing products and process, thus helping to improve writing skills and strategic competencies alike (c.f. Pennington 1999). Ideas and suggestions for wiki-enhanced language production in VOLL contexts, linking theory to practice, will be found towards the end of the chapter.

2. Technical considerations: digital media and Web 2.0

Even today, when blogs, Twitter, Facebook, forums and other forms of social networking and communication have become common practice for the new generation of digital natives

(Prensky 2001), the term Web 2.0 still stimulates discussion. Obviously, the Internet has always been – and was originally intended as such – a platform for communication and making information available. However, until more recently, information was produced and published by a relatively limited number of sources and digitally minded individuals. Electronic communication was also organised in the form of more direct and personal contacts. Therefore, the original Internet is often referred to as a web with the focus on a "one-to-one" or "one-to-many" flow of information. As far as language learning is concerned, apart from offline and tutorial applications, the focus was on e-mail communication with clearly defined partners in addition to using the Internet as a source for researching information or including authentic materials in the learning process. Internet projects with publicly available products were mainly restricted to those groups of learners and teachers with the technical skills and infrastructure needed to overcome mental or attitudinal and technical barriers.

In contrast, the current web presents itself as a platform for real "many-to-many" communication, and most technical concerns and barriers in Internet use are a thing of the past. Web 2.0 consists of numerous social applications and tools not just for accessing but also producing and sharing (that is, collaboratively compiling and publishing in public spaces) information as well as new forms of communicating and networking. Server space is publicly available, and tools can be used by simply logging onto the platforms and creating one's own digital "digs" like the gold miners of yesteryear to signal a degree of personal transparency and public involvement in the new web. Wikipedia, for many the synonym for the new web and the "mother of all platforms" for socially constructed and collaboratively created and published knowledge bases, has the following to say about Web 2.0:

> The term "WEB 2.0" … is commonly associated with web applications which facilitate interactive information sharing, interoperability, user-centered design and collaboration on the World Wide Web. Examples of WEB 2.0 include web-based communities, hosted services, web applications, social-networking sites, video-sharing sites, wikis, blogs, mashups and folksonomies. A WEB 2.0 site allows its users to interact with other users or to change website content, in contrast to non-interactive websites where users are limited to the passive viewing of information that is provided to them.

Amongst the many terms used in this definition, the use of the term "interoperability" hints at the fundamental impact this incarnation of the Internet has on social, political, and organisational levels as a web that supports the "ability of diverse systems and organisations to work together", that is, interoperate, as Wikipedia defines this concept.

These new options to not simply co-operate but also to truly actively interoperate via platforms such as wikis are also gradually becoming common practice in language learning. Collaborative writing tasks supported by wikis, maintaining classroom blogs, publishing video or audio clips generated in class on YouTube, amongst others, or even via school radio in the form of podcasts, but also using such materials produced by others as authentic and topical sources for teaching are reaching educational grass-root levels. The amount of publications and reports on the use (and usefulness) of Web 2.0-supported language learning, such as Platten (2008), Caeton (2008), and Cummings and Barton (2008), is indicative of this. Teachers appreciate the ease with which they can access and make available collaborative

tools in their classes and learners are encouraged to share and pool resources and efforts, and this increases their motivation to participate. A fuller and more detailed description of all aspects of the new web can be found at www.go2web20.net and in the *Handbook of research on Web 2.0 and second language learning*, where the chapter on "Output-oriented language learning with digital media" (Rüschoff 2009) is of particular relevance.

3. Didactic considerations: digital media as dynamic tools for language learning

For communication and collaboration in language learning, web-based tools seem to offer special forms of learner co-operation, which – in line with process-oriented principles – may well lead to even greater strategic competence and learning awareness. Therefore, the term "dynamic", already referred to in discussions in the early days of TELL, needs to be revisited and discussed against this changing background. From the early, pioneering "digital" days, colleagues defined the potential of digital media as dynamic and cognitive tools for learning (cf. Rüschoff and Wolff 1999). Obviously, from the outset the computer and the Internet provided tools and templates that facilitated access to, as well as the compilation, organisation and processing of linguistic and factual information for language learning. This added a whole new dimension to learning processes. As far as Web 2.0 is concerned, the tools available now necessitate a fresh look at the concept of dynamic processing and cognition in language production and communication. Web 2.0 tools undoubtedly enhance dynamicism in the form of constant changeability of text in content and construction. This dynamic quality of traditional word processors and similar applications was identified as potentially having a positive effect on language production in written form as early as 1991 (c.f. Legenhausen and Wolff). For electronic and telecollaborative communication on the Internet, Donath has repeatedly documented how digital writing leads to better learning, even using earlier tools for telecommunication (for example, Donath 1995). In a paper on the impact of electronic communication on writing, Abdullah (2003) documents research results on this topic as follows:

> Word processing and e-publishing have brought about interesting developments in the way writers write. In general, the malleable nature of electronic text has made the physical process of composing more "elastic" in that writers are quicker to commit thought to writing and to reorganize content because it is simple to make changes on the electronic screen.

Dynamicism in the sense of elasticity of text and flexibility of text production is still an important factor in digital writing. This is also very much in line with the didactic principles of process-oriented writing referred to above with a special emphasis on establishing "authentic" purposes for learning and writing. This last point is, in fact, where the concept of dynamic text production and effect of text needs to be expanded as far as Web 2.0 is concerned – writing on the web combines aspects of changeability, co-operation, interoperation and – above all – purpose through immediate and constant visibility as an added quality.

The German website of Wiktionary (http://de.wiktionary.org) defines "dynamic" as "voll innerer Bewegung" – full of inner motion – and terms such as "lively" or "effective" are repeatedly mentioned in connection with the term dynamic (the equivalent English site lists "energetic" and "powerful" as synonyms). From my point of view, a higher degree of "inner motion" comes into play in collaborative language production as – particularly when working with Web 2.0 platforms such as a wiki – learners experience processes and contexts of text production which differ from other, more traditional forms of co-operative learning and text production. The interoperation of discursive as well as textual actions are characteristic features of writing in a wiki (cf. Platten 2008: 9). The different phases of compiling a text, the "inner motion" as well as the "liveliness" and "effectiveness" of the creation process itself are experienced in "collective authoring" through co-operative teams in a much more direct and immediate manner than is the case with traditional word processors (cf. Parker and Chao 2007). Frequent complaints about writing in the language classroom maintain that "The process of text creation itself and decomposition of the sub-processes remain opaque to learners" [2] (Siepmann 2003: 25). In other words, learners often do not have a clear understanding that text production is in fact a process, and that writing has to be seen as the processes of drafting, revising and reflection before final production. In this respect, writing and publication tools available on the Internet in its current form appear conspicuously more dynamic. According to Kessler, "a wiki-based text is in a constant state of potential collaborative change" (Kessler 2009: 80), and this, together with the fact that such texts are created in a public space, contributes to more dynamic ways of experiencing writing processes as well as the immediate impact of texts written co-operatively by the authors themselves. One might be tempted to say that the dynamic quality in such digital environments lies in the constant interoperation between the learners' intramental and intermental processes at individual and group levels. In addition, both learners and teachers can use the "history" function in wikis to gain immediate insight into their own writing process and potential collaborative changes, that is, the changeability of text in general as well as the various steps of text production. As this function saves all of the previous versions and alterations of a text created in a wiki space, learners can trace back and reflect on the emergence of their texts as well as their particular production phases and processes so that this can be subsequently incorporated into the writing process. As a result, I would like to propose extending the concept of technology-enhanced writing tools to embrace not only dynamic tools but also tools which foster interoperability of the multitude of mental, creative and productive processes (at meta-cognitive and cognitive levels) involved in text production. Furthermore, interoperation at the levels mentioned here is supported not just by the kind of writing processes afforded by wikis but also by the history function. Moreover, this function is a powerful tool for research into writing and language production. Platten (2008) describes this as an option for research into writing processes which affords insights into text production from planning to product. It is also our experience that this option of accessing and reviewing a full documentation of the versions and revisions wiki texts undergo when writing

2 Original: "Schülerinnen und Schülern … die Prozesshaftigkeit der Vertextung und ihre Zerlegbarkeit in Teilprozesse verborgen [bleibt]."

teams collaboratively negotiate their output is extremely helpful when trying to understand the strategies and skill used by learners dealing with a writing task.

In short, we can now maintain that, thanks to technical features as well as attitudinal aspects, wikis lead to writing processes which greatly differ from writing in more traditional environments.

> [wikis] … structurally invite collaboration and yet tolerate dissension. Wikis are not blogs or Web spaces where one user writes and all others read. … these spaces create communities of inquiry around topics, they facilitate [a] gradual move toward a more singular comprehension …
>
> (Cummings and Barton 2008: viii)

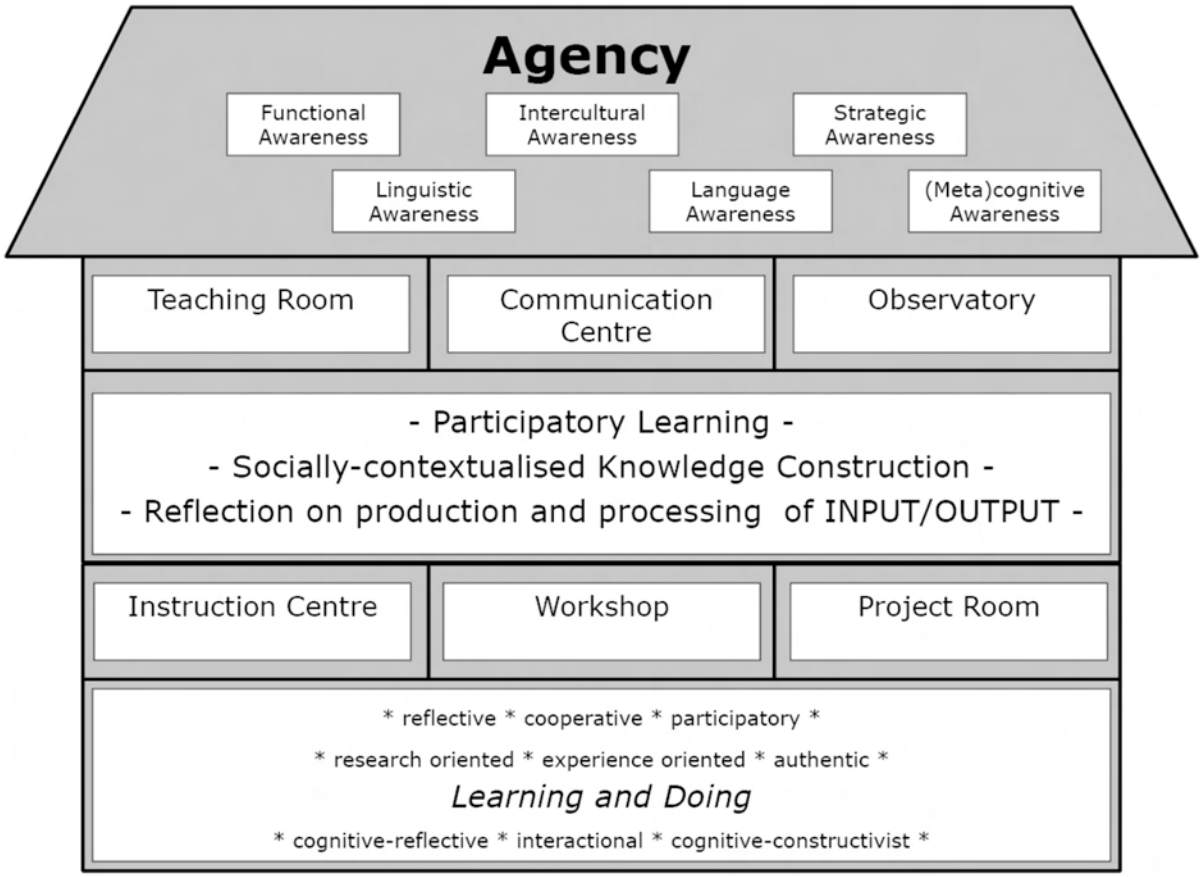
So learners co-operating and writing in a wiki truly develop into so-called "communities of inquiry". Wikis also offer procedural support, a fact already observed in the day and age of traditional word processing in offline modes. Initial case studies also indicate that collaborative writing in, amongst others, wikis tends to lead not only to better results, that is, products, but also to a more highly developed level of strategic and meta-cognitive competencies.[3] Wikis have more recently been referred to as "negotiating mechanisms",[4] which support the development of an understanding and awareness of the mechanisms involved in discourse and text production. According to McDonald (2007), learners are encouraged to use and fine-tune their "critical skills of process writing", and the experience of collaboratively writing in wikis leads to what West and West (2009: 27) refer to as a set of "constructive editing skills", in addition to the skills involved in writing more commonly referred to.

4. Learning theory: process-oriented and output-oriented approaches

Despite the fact that it is impossible here to enter into an exhaustive discussion of current positions on learning theory and approaches to language acquisition, I would nevertheless like to draw the readers' attention to a few key principles which appear to have found consensus within the scientific community. And this is particularly true with regard to the integration of digital technologies into language learning. In support of this brief overview of principles of language learning, I would like to propose the following graph representing the "house of learning":

3 Cf. Forte and Bruckman (2006).

4 Caeton (2008: 132).



The foundation provides the theoretical underpinning in the form of current "buzz words". All these terms are rooted in a cognitive-constructivist paradigm, complemented by an interactionist paradigm with a focus on participatory and collaborative forms of learning, adumbrated in Larsen-Freeman (2000). This foundation is highly congruent with current approaches to the use of Web 2.0 technologies, as collaborative knowledge construction in socially contextualised and experience-oriented learning scenarios corresponds closely to such a paradigm.

> Indeed, they [participatory approaches] give priority to process over predetermined linguistic content. In these approaches rather than "learning to use English", students "use English to learn it".
>
> (Larsen-Freeman 2000: 137)

This paradigm, together with the approaches listed in the main "living quarters" of the house, has also led to a more refined and differentiated definition of the aims of foreign language learning. These are highlighted under the roof, representing the aspects which provide focus to learning and hold things together, so to speak. Awareness is a key term in this context, as the aims of learning can no longer be defined in terms of explicit knowledge, factual information, or language skills, but also need to encompass the cognitive growth and knowledge developed and gained through learners' own perceptions and reflections on language, language use and learning processes. These are represented here by terms such as "linguistic", "functional", "intercultural awareness" but also "strategic and meta-cognitive

awareness". Terms which describe succinctly what language learning should aim for. Awareness is often described as being knowledgeable combined with being alert, cognisant, sensible and mindful, which are the kind of qualities needed in competent language use.

To my mind, a term which encapsulates all these competencies would be the term "agency", that is, the "ability to make choices and to act accordingly" or, in Murray's (1997: 126) terms, the "satisfying power to take meaningful action and see the results of our decisions and choices". The aim of language learning can be defined in terms of a multitude of competencies needed in language use as well as language learning which enables learners to act appropriately in a given context. In other words, "agency" focuses on the idea of empowering the learner with the skills and competencies needed to interact and communicate in a meaningful and appropriate manner in a given context (cf. Rüschoff 2009: 44). The term also includes what O'Malley and Chamot (1990) referred to as abilities in "planning, monitoring and evaluating" often referred to since the 1990s as the "specialized portion of a learner's knowledge base … which consists of what learners know about learning and … language learning" (Wenden 1999: 435).

Contexts and organisation of learning I have represented here as rooms depicting the potential "classroom" following Legutke's (1999) model. The edifice includes rooms for "learning by doing" as well as participatory, co-operative and collaborative language production in line with the "workshop" or "project room" metaphors.

Finally, scenarios involving participation and process orientation at individual and co-operative levels, allowing for "negotiating meaningful output", are key principles of Merrill Swain's "output hypothesis" (*supra*: Swain and Deters 2007: 822). The use of the term "output" has often led to misunderstanding, by sometimes simplistically opposing Swain's approach to Krashen's "input hypothesis", but also by placing too much emphasis on the output in its actual form, that is, on the product. However, shifting attention from the product to the processes involved in language production – the real driving force behind cognitive and linguistic growth in learners – has always been Swain's intention, encapsulated in her concept of "languaging" (*supra:* Swain and Deters 2007: 822).

Digital Web 2.0 technologies now offer a wide variety of tools and platforms for "languaging". And this is particularly true for collaborative text writing, where the idea of interoperation at intramental and intermental levels supported by Web 2.0 digital media complements current learning theory.

5. Wiki-supported text production in VOLL contexts

As far as language learning in general is concerned, collaborative, socially contextualised, process-oriented and reflective learning based on paradigms of the kind discussed above is gaining in acceptance. Furthermore, process-oriented writing in groups, supported by digital tools, has been identified on the basis of numerous case studies as more supportive of

developing writing skills and improving product than writing individually (cf. also Legenhausen and Wolff 1991). Swain and Lapkin (1995) stated that collaborative learning in general encourages learners to reflect on their language use at a very high level. As far as digitally supported writing in the pre-Web 2.0 era is concerned, Pennington in 1999 presented a comprehensive overview on writing in an electronic medium, which focused extensively on research with language learners. The studies discussed in her volume, both qualitative and quantitative in approach, on writing with word processors, written communication via e-mail as well as the creative and communicative processes involved in publishing on the web confirm that digital environments and tools tend to support strategic development as well as improved (written) performance. Such tools, she states, "facilitate the generation, revision, and dissemination of text [and] create the conditions for quantitative and qualitative effects on language learners' writing process and products" (Pennington 1999: 1). Sotillo in 2002 reports that collaborative writing leads to more complex and elaborate products as well as to an increased willingness on the part of learners to consider peer feedback, and a case study referred to by Storch (2005) reports that teams in general produce better texts "in terms of task fulfilment, grammatical accuracy, and complexity" when compared with texts produced individually. As far as writing in a Web 2.0 environment is concerned, Ware (2004) observed that web-based writing has a motivating and strategy-supporting effect on learners, and wiki-based writing is often referred to as a way of actively supporting learners in their striving towards productivity, co-operation, and interaction as such environments offer "agency in an environment rich with opportunity and necessity for purposeful language use" (Murray 1999: 296). Such claims, though made for language learning in less special-purpose oriented contexts, can also be transferred to language learning in vocationally oriented contexts.

Process-oriented writing always begins with a suitable and potentially real-world relevant task, where groups jointly collect first ideas and resources, proceed to compile notes and plan and write a first draft. This is then followed by collectively and collaboratively revising and editing the text into its final published version. With regard to this, wikis are no different, with the exception that the writing platform is constantly available to all members of the group and the product evolves in public. This, as said throughout the chapter, is part of the special quality of wiki-based writing. Against the background of a number of projects undertaken with secondary schools in our region, we are currently in the process of setting up similar activities in co-operation with secondary vocational schools, that is, schools referred to as *Berufskolleg* in a German educational context. The interesting thing about such vocational colleges is that at a secondary level they combine regular school up to high school graduation level with special tracks such as dual courses with professional training integrated into school. Consequently, language learning with an almost content-language-integrated professional focus is part of the profile of the institutions we work with.

It would be beyond the scope of this chapter to describe such projects in detail. However, a few aspects concerning task design and setting need to be mentioned. We have undertaken a number of wiki-based writing projects over the past few years, and we were able to identify a number of issues to be kept in mind when designing frameworks for writing processes. Therefore, I would like to briefly refer to one aspect which we consider most important.

Originally, it was felt that the Web 2.0 tools themselves would almost automatically lead to creative co-operation. However, it became evident from very early on that simply setting a task in terms of "Here is the wiki, this is how you use it, now write!" is not sufficient to initiate creative and co-operative writing per se. Such a simplistic approach does not work because it is no different from traditional writing assignments where students are instructed to sit down and write for half an hour. A more appropriate context for writing as well as a framework which encourages, even necessitates, co-operation needs to be set.

With regard to this, we are currently experimenting with a number of options and alternatives, and one of these is what we label pyramid writing. The setting is somewhat similar to the kind of opening activity or warm-up that is sometimes used at workshops, when one first asks each individual in a group to put together a list of items relevant to a topic, and then in successive steps – with the task to narrow down the lists and merge the aspects into five points accepted by all team members at each step – group participants into pairs and subsequently into teams with an increasing number of members. This can be transferred into a wiki-enhanced writing activity, and we have found that a frame modelled on this kind of process works very well. In wiki-based writing, it almost naturally helps to move the writing process from the initial individual effort of collecting ideas via the collaborative process of restructuring and focusing information and interim drafts to the final product jointly created. One example where this is put into practice is a wiki version of the so-called "Headmaster Game", in which learners need to think about their school and about what they would do to improve it if they were headmaster. The final result is a collectively compiled "business plan" for school development. We feel that such a project is very much VOLL oriented as it emulates the kind of co-operation needed in the professional world. Another example following a similar pattern is concerned with defining real business plans based on a business simulation used in the bilingual track of the *Berufskolleg* mentioned above.

A final example to be mentioned at this point is The "Needs and wants" unit which is offered as part of a bilingual track labelled "bi-conomics", integrating economy, social sciences and language learning into a CLIL context. This unit is interesting as other Web 2.0 tools such as podcasting and vod-casting – that is, video-casting – were integrated into the process of writing in a wiki. The kick-off task was that learners exchanged their views as to what sorts of needs they have and what influences they feel on their needs and wants, for example, advertising, peer-group pressure, etc. The teams were also asked to search the web for advertisements and to select one they considered most effective or influential. The results were then shared via the wiki and comments were exchanged. As a follow-up, learners were then instructed to script and ultimately produce their own radio or video advertisement for a product of their choice. It was quite interesting to observe how teams analysed existing advertisements and then collaboratively put that knowledge into the creation of their own product. Again, the need to share and co-operate intensively as a natural ingredient of the task automatically led to using the wiki as an authentic platform as it was perceived as an important tool to facilitate task completion.

As far as ideas currently being discussed with the teachers participating in this initiative are concerned, the following have been upgraded to the "project under consideration" stage. In

the technical teaching sector it is planned to engage learner groups in jointly compiling a manual or set of instructions on a piece of equipment or machine. For more business-oriented classes, it is planned that they will concentrate on the design of a business plan and subsequently set up a company profile and wiki presence for their fictional company. This is to be flanked with an online advertising campaign. The point of departure will probably be a business simulation game entitled "Investor Industry", originally developed for vocational schools by the North-Rhine Westphalian Teacher Training Institute in Soest in the 1980s.

6. Final comment

In summary, the term "interoperability" seems to best embody the key contribution of Web 2.0 digital tools to language learning. It neatly encapsulates the concept of co-operative and collaborative learning expounded in current discussions of language learning theory. (See, in this context, the definition of "interoperability" at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interoperability.) As co-operative or collaborative learning represent a major focal point in discussions related to translating current paradigms of learning into teaching and learning practice, the term appears even more appropriate. Amongst other aspects, such as authenticity of learning context, task and materials, current paradigms suggest that learning should encourage interaction, co-operation and, above all, reflection on processes of language production and not merely the products resulting from these processes. In this chapter, we have seen that, on a technological level, social software and other "new" Internet tools support such processes, as they afford interoperability between technical systems and mental processes involved in "languaging" or "negotiating comprehensible output" (c.f. Swain, op. cit.). Such processes, at individual and group levels which lead to additional interoperation between the intramental and intermental thought processes that learners become engaged in during collaborative knowledge construction and text production in wikis, are given a more dynamic and truly co-operative platform on Web 2.0. This, I believe, is the true forte of online digital media in the service of language learning.

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Chapter 3

How Web 2.0 technology has changed the parameters for (web) publishing

Bernard Moro

Until very recently, members of the educational and teaching community interested in using the web have been constrained by the fact that their ideas had to be mediated, edited and floated online by a professional webmaster. Fortunately, this is no longer the case.

Web 2.0 technology has changed the parameters completely, allowing anyone to create a web presence, upload any content and make it available for any interested parties. This has led to a tremendous empowerment, particularly in the educational field, creating a whole new community of amateur "webbers". This "deprofessionalisation", of which blogging is the most visible aspect, is, however, a double-edged sword.

Whether paper- or web-based, published material in the press and in the media are, for the most part, created by highly trained professionals. Language trainers are supposed to be good writers and speakers, but few are illustrators, layout specialists or web designers. Nor are many used to finalising documents for publication. As a result, online production risks being either inadequate graphically or the use of graphics may be unethical, if users are not very strict with regard to what they put online. And this is becoming more and more relevant because, in an increasing number of situations, graphic elements form an integral part of content.

Beyond this prime asset that Web 2.0 represents, that is being able to upload valuable content on the web for students, there is also the possibility – and we have barely skimmed the surface at the moment – of getting our students to interact with one other under our enlightened supervision. This is an area in which I have had a certain amount of experience, and feel that I have made enough errors to be able to draw up a list of strategies for navigating a pathway that has, to date, remained poorly paved.

In this contribution, I intend to address the main issues related to using Web 2.0 technology in vocationally oriented language learning/teaching, in order to help fellow-teachers successfully build interactive environments for their students.

So with minimal training you can now upload content on the web for the benefit of your students. Of the examples given below, which one seems most suitable for a learning environment?

(for copyright reasons the images on this and the next page are illustrations rather than exact reproductions of the original pages)

Clearly, some progress has been made from the traditional paper page of the popular tabloid, the *Daily Mirror,* to its web-based version. However, the basic ingredients remain: large, splashy and sensation-mongering headlines, meaningless visuals with virtually no written copy. The *Economist*'s page stands in sharp contrast, with far more textual information, fewer and smaller visuals accompanying informative copy.

An appropriate graphic chart

The first lesson (and a first rule) to draw from the samples – the text-to-visual ratio – is a crucial clue to the document you are dealing with. The smaller it is, that is, the smaller the text on the page as opposed to the size of visuals, the poorer the content.

Second rule: the bigger and splashier the typeface, the more vacuous is the content. The size of the font is also critical. Most people know that writing in capitals in e-mails is tantamount to shouting. But this works as well with web content.

Size – typeface size that is – matters, but negatively.

Third rule: the connection between the visual and the information conveyed. Typically, the *Daily Mirror*'s visual below does not add anything to the message conveyed.

The Economist, Jul 4th 2009

By way of contrast, the *Economist*'s cover page, showing Barack Obama climbing the steps straight into the mouth of the Russian bear, says it all. A great amount of content is conveyed through the montage, allowing for greatly enhanced anticipation of the reporting inside.

The fourth rule: the *people-isation* of content. Meaning no longer matters, what sells is celebs with their antics and their image. The more people portrayed on a page, the less valuable content it provides.

Colours are important, too. Rule number 5: violent contrasts and strong primary colours (here black, red and white) are used, not surprisingly, by aggressive websites, either X-rated, very right- and left-wing or, as is the case here, deliberately striking hard at both the eyes and the mind, to appeal to emotions rather than reflection. By way of contrast, look again at the cover of the *Economist*. The explicit threat is softened by the use of subtle nuances in gray, blending with Obama's suit, the red of the steps is linked to both Obama's tie and the magazine's logo, and the irony is softened by the relatively small typeface used in the headline.

Typically, had the *Daily Mirror*'s press room been inspired by an idea of this nature, a very loud red would have been applied to the bear's mouth. The *Economist* did not succumb to this temptation, as that would have been cheap and unnecessarily anxiogenic. Instead, the whole montage is conducive to reflection, not to evoking hatred or fear, not to stirring emotions.

Bearing in mind what was said above, let us take a look at the web resources a team of colleagues created using the blog generator Edublogs in the very short period of time they had during a Grenoble-based workshop in June 2008.

Before exercising easy criticism of the work done, please remember that they created this material within some four or five hours at the end of a very strenuous week in which they had been introduced to the tools they used in the creation of their materials.

Let us take a look at this example.

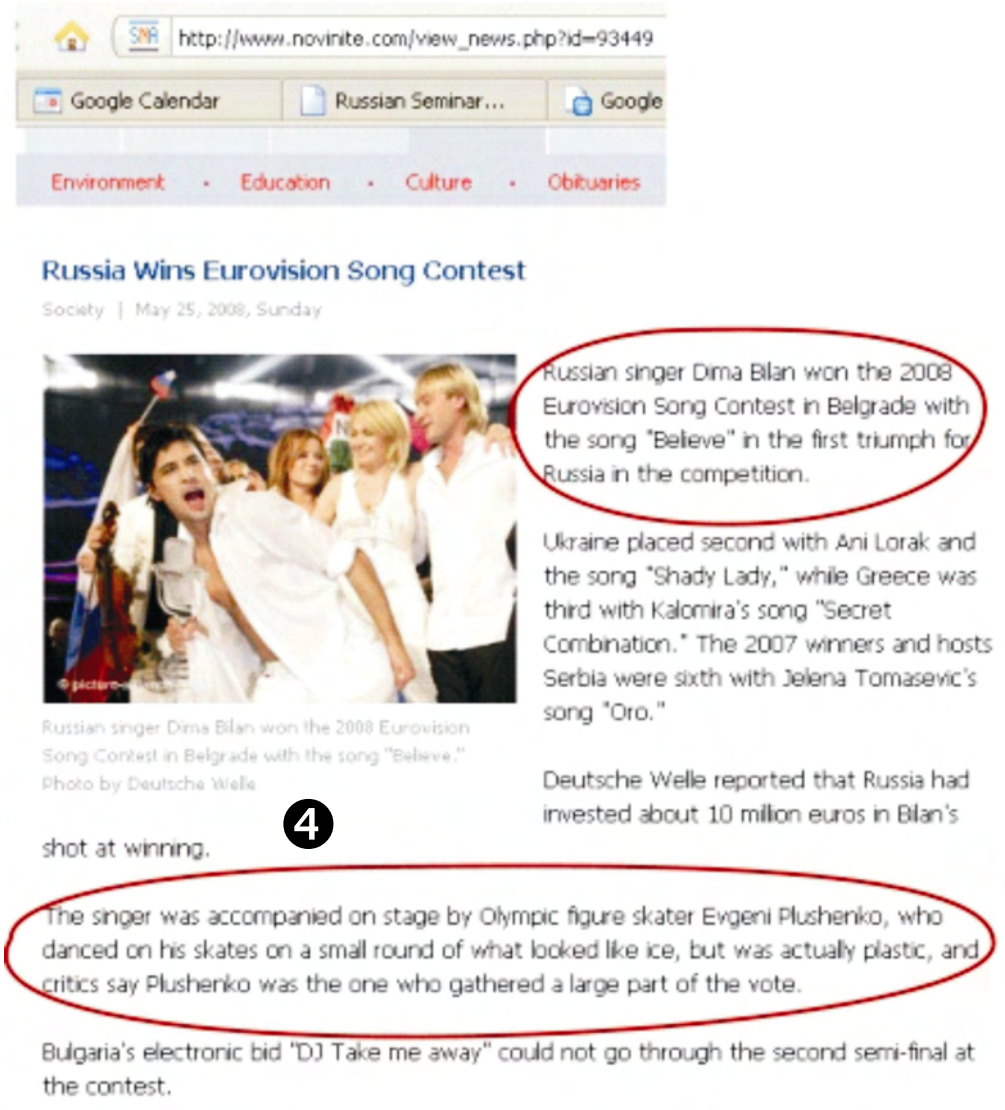
Immediately evident, the ratio of text to visual content is clearly unbalanced.

If we examine the surface problems, we see that a major issue is the blog template selected, which demands using a preset visual at the top of the page (2), a meaningless feature in the context. The main image (3), the official Eurovision poster, obviously copied from its original site, is used without acknowledgement of source, as if it belongs to the blogger. This is, of course, not only patently untrue, but actually illegal.

Now, if we examine the title more closely, we conclude that learners are expected to appropriate the motto "Knowledge is power, so power yourself" for themselves. The question is, does reporting on the Eurovision song contest represent knowledge? This is definitely open to discussion.

Finally, the typeface is huge, almost as large as that used in the headlines. Comment No. 1, a ruse that is part of the original template but easy to appropriate, reads: “Another excellent Edublogs.org weblog”. Discarding this to avoid biting comments from learners might well have been advisable.

Now let us examine the content.

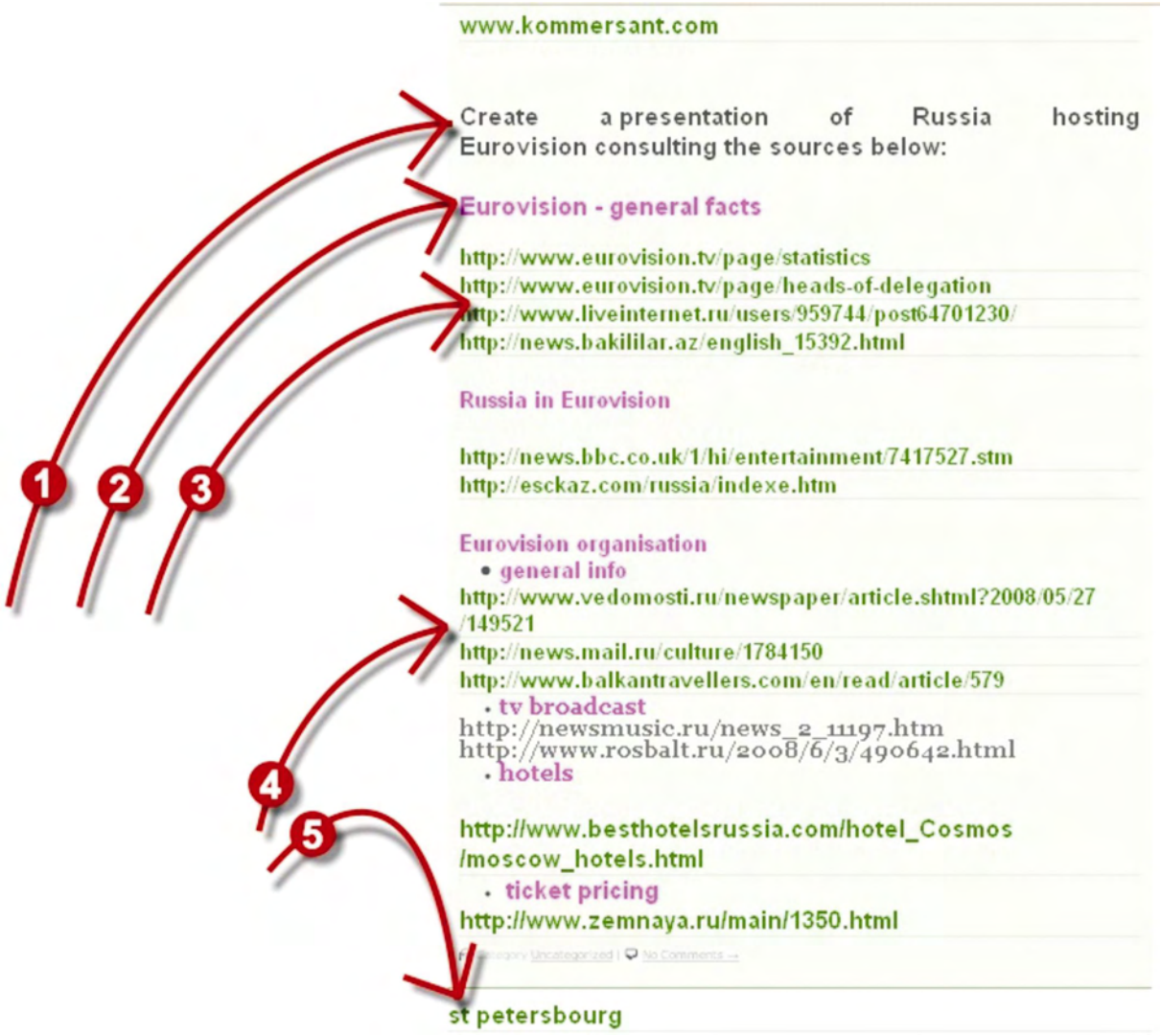


The text (4) was also copied from another website, and then edited to focus on the Russian winner. This is both dishonest – it betrays the original – and is theft of intellectual property, with no acknowledgement of the original author.

Now those who designed this blog are teachers – role models who are supposed to set examples of appropriate conduct at a time when moral bearings are disappearing in the limbo of the Internet.

Finally, from a pedagogical viewpoint, it is hard to see what sort of knowledge or competence could be acquired from reading through these pages.

But let us now progress to the front page of this blog.



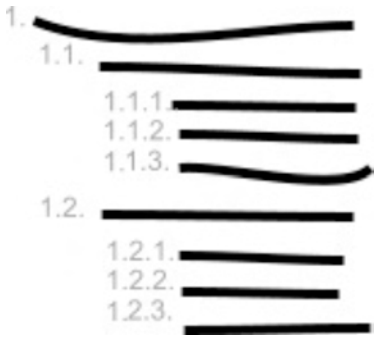
1. When creating exercise items, particular care should be attached to aligning text to the left, to avoid random gaps in the lines.

2. Colours are crucial. “Feminine” pink may be favoured by some, but considered “kitschy” by others and difficult to read. As a rule, one should prefer darker, primary colours for better readability.

3. & 4. Hyperlink entries of this kind are bad manners, showing unwanted backstage items – the “kitchen” as it were. Here, providing four links in straightforward text, for example,, “Eurovision statistics”, “Eurovision heads of delegations”, etc., making the targeted resources immediately clear to your users, would be far better. Incidentally,

these links lead to Russian-language websites, a rather strange idea, as the target audiences are supposedly learners of English.
Again, for ease of reading, outlines or information of a hierarchical nature should usually appear as below, with lower-level paragraphs indented to the right from their headings.

5. Finally, as teachers of English, we should be well aware that proper use of capitals and spelling is crucial, therefore in a didactic environment, Saint Petersburg should be capitalised and spelt correctly.



Let us now take a look at another example.

There are a number of problems here. One is the choice of the template, an attractive, green environment with a poetic visual that would have been perfect for an ecologically oriented blog, but is hardly appropriate in a teaching environment. Appearance does matter in a resource that the student is to cope with without teacher guidance. There should be coherence between the visual identity of the weblog and the content delivered. Here, the discrepancy

between the first subject dealt with – innovation, technical progress and productivity – and its showcase makes it almost counterproductive in terms of communication.

The second issue is the colour of the typeface; here, apparently a must-use item that is part of the template. But, clearly, if the headline is too long the text will wrap into the navigation bar below, thus becoming illegible.

The third point concerns the copy itself. If we write a book under their guidance, the publisher's editors will provide necessary corrections. But, using the web, we are very much alone, and as the only interface between the learning material and the learner, we have to be extremely careful and check everything we publish. This particular resource was created by a teacher of French, who failed to check agreement between the plural form *devoirs* (homework) and the verb *accompagnent* (that go with it), which should also be in the plural.

Let us continue further down the page.

We are told here (1) that a group of teachers of French visited Grenoble and that these pictures were taken in that fine city.

The problem is that these pictures were taken in Dijon, where the famous cathedral stands. Embarrassing!

In other words, for purely aesthetic reasons, a teacher is misleading the students she is teaching. She could have taken authentic pictures of Grenoble, or used public domain pictures, or provided links to the town tourism office website. As teachers, we are role models. If we pay no attention to ethics in our daily work we are setting a bad example for young people. Publishers have been sued for less. Now that we are also in a position to publish widely, we are vulnerable, if we are not rigorous in our choices and editing.

Samples of good practice

As webmaster responsible for the Centre de Langues Vivantes (CLV) website, I have published content online for my colleagues for a number of years. One example of the usefulness of a website in our teaching environment was delivered during a very lengthy strike in February and March of 2009. Colleagues felt the need to continue providing their students with material by uploading resources onto the CLV website.

Typically, they would deliver a Word-format file which I converted into HTML format, complete with accompanying visuals, to publish them online. However, after a first workshop on blogging I ran for my colleagues, some rose to the challenge and created their own blog using Edublogs and then simply gave me the URL to connect to. That was their first step towards autonomy.

My task now is to create the overall structure of a given section – here *Espaces enseignants* – to make my colleagues' resources directly available to students. For colleagues Gabriele and Maureen I do not – and could not – alter their work. They are in control; they use the blog environment totally independently, but play according to the given rules.

Recently, we held a second workshop on blogging, and I expect that other colleagues will soon follow suit, joining Gabriele and Maureen in building their own environment.

Gabriele has gone into overdrive, demonstrating a giant leap forward in her management of web resources. On the basis of the structure I had developed for our English resources, she created her menu for German as shown below. The only input I had to provide was the graphic format she wanted:

This is, in effect, a portal of sorts for German. Some of the entries (1) Gabriele has developed herself, each in one blog, while for others (2), she simply furnished the URLs which I linked to from the menu. The idea is that, for methodology and various aids she has been developing over the years, she keeps her students within her "territory", while for other resources she sends them to external websites. Ethically speaking, each external link opens into a new window, so we do not pretend the resource belongs to our site. But the transfer is seamless for our students, which is what matters. Pedagogically speaking, Gabriele fulfils her new teacher role by paving the way towards web resources available, validating them by her selection. Her only constraint is that she has to retain an Edublogs template that dovetails with the graphic chart of our website, essentially gray, red and black. So she adopted the one below:

We see (1) that the template she chose is in character with the subject. In some templates there is also the possibility to change the visual inherent to the page.

It is also coherent (2) with the colour codes in the mother website.

It is embedded (3) in a frame within the mother website, so that our navigation bar is always in view, allowing the user to move out to other resources when needed. Of course for an external resource the navigation bar is no longer visible, ethics oblige.

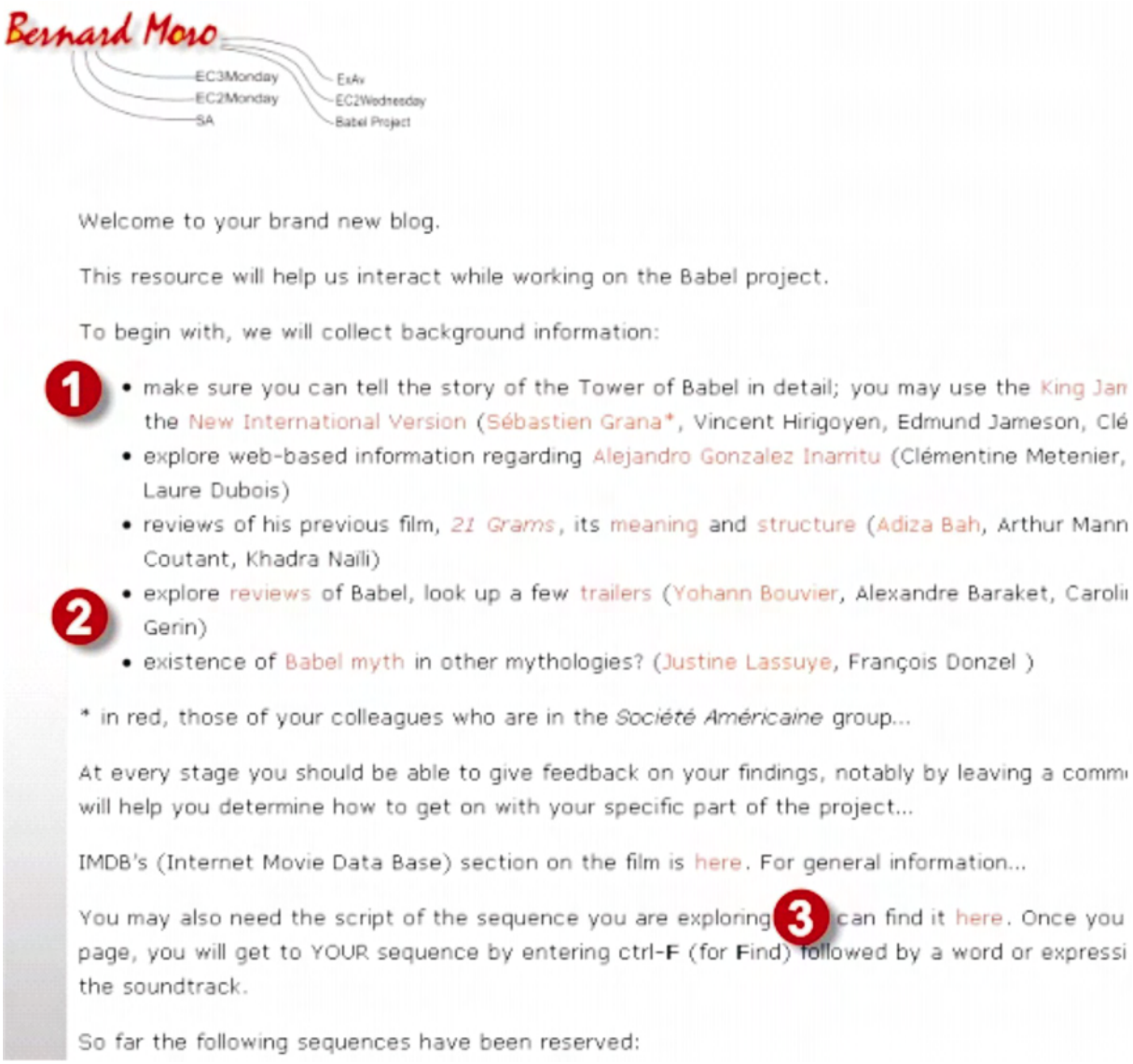
Our first conclusion is, therefore, that Web 2.0 technology has made Gabriele (who has no knowledge of HTML) capable of publishing what she has created, connecting to what she has found of value, and maintaining and developing her didactic environment. She no longer needs a webmaster.

But we can, of course, go further than that with Web 2.0.

What interested me was the interactive aspect of blogging. For years, I have been working with my students at levels B2 to C1 on films; the idea being to analyse film sequences the way we would have done in literature classes of yesteryear for chapters in novels. When we tackle a film, this is always big undertaking, it takes time for them to select the sequence they want to focus on, negotiate with others, etc. Class time is too short for all of these operations, so using the comment facility on the blog we use came naturally.

This is the first visual I used to get my students started on the project. It is a film entitled *Babel*, by Iñárritu, starring Brad Pitt and Kate Blanchett.

The page below provides a full account.



Here, I did exactly what Gabriel did – pave the way towards relevant resources – sending out scouts to discover and share knowledge, both peripheral and central to the subject. All entries in red are links toward external resources. Background culture (1), recent coverage of the film (2) and practical information (3) were made readily available.

Then, because I invited them to do so, insisting I would not pass judgment on their exchanges, they started using the comment facility. And that brought them to write as they had never done before, not without mistakes, granted, but with gusto and inspiration for the most part. An important piece of interest was that communication was asynchronous, so they had time to think a little bit before contributing.

n°1 to n°6 ... only).
In that condition, it is yet very difficult to have a global view of the story...
What I can though, say is that the story of the Tower of Babel is the story of a god who is afraid that his children became as powerful as him. By building a tower which top is ending in the sky, men offended God. He would punish them, imposing them several languages so that they could not understand them together and so that it will be very difficult for them to do what they have planned.

Seb — February 9, 2009 @ 7:01 pm

2. As I haven't seen the movie yet, I'll make this short and the complet it once I have seen it.
Let me first of all introduce the movie, the main actors are Cate Blanchett, Brad Pitt, Gael Garcia Bernal, Koji Yakusho and Rinko Kikuchi. The storie takes part in several locations, Morocco, America, Japan and Mexico. The film was directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu.
To be brief the storie from what I've seen and heard is based on interelated situations and the way they effect one an other. The official trailer is cut the same way an action movies is, the scenes are very short and skip to one an other in a very fast way, even thow this film is a drama.

Bouvier Yohann — February 10, 2009 @ 12:53 pm

3. Well, as for me I've worked on 21 grams, and found out it was pretty much the same way of writing and making a movie as in Babel. It's about entertwined, hard lives. I've seen the movie before so believe me when I say, it's a pretty hard film to watch. You better not be blue the day you want to see how it looks like. But my opinion is that it is very well done and well thought of, which is actually nice considering what's on theatres nowadays. Though, of course, this is very particular and special, so my guess is that you'll either love it or hate it.

Further down:

8. Hello fellas, 1

Well here we are, My man Mr Hirigoyen and me decided to study the scene in which Richard and Susan are alone in this little morroccan house.
This is the moment when he helps her doing a really private thing, I'm sure you know what I'm talking about. This is, to me, a major scene in the movie and it looks like we are going to spend some time studying it but it is worth it.

Bye.

Baraket Alexandre — February 22, 2009 @ 11:51 am

9. Ahaha yeah I see what the scene you guys are working on is. This is a very intimate sequence, indeed...But I think it will be interesting for you to study it, since you don't have these kind of scenarios in most of the movies, you know, like everyday life scenes. The only time I watched them was in indie movies or tv shows airing in the cable which are therefore not censored and closer to real life. 2

Anyway, I still don't know what scene I'm going to pick up...I was thinking maybe about the scene when the Japanese girl go clubbing.
What about you all? Do you have any idea?

Adiza Bah — February 23, 2009 @ 10:07 am

10. Hello, everyone I'm working on two things: the Babel's myth in other mythologies and the wonderful sequence of the dentist in Babel which makes some of us wonder about utility of the japanese story in the movie and moreover of the appropriate use of the word "nymphomania" in movie's analysis. 3
The main subject of Babel is communication and this scene is all about closeness and loneliness.

The students evidently enjoyed the freedom of writing informally (1) and showing off their competence in street English, and that was absolutely refreshing … The reply by Adiza (2) sounds very natural too. Finally, I enjoyed the latest entry, a young student disagreeing with common popular wisdom and deciding that the girl in question is not a nymphomaniac, but simply a lonely young adult in search of love and tenderness (3). He managed to prove, later on, that he was right.

What is interesting about this part of the task is that we are seeing here the "kitchen side" of things, the interaction, the negotiation, not just a final product.

For the next phase, after they had made their choice of a sequence, I felt they could continue using the blog's comment facility for writing, but this was not appropriate.

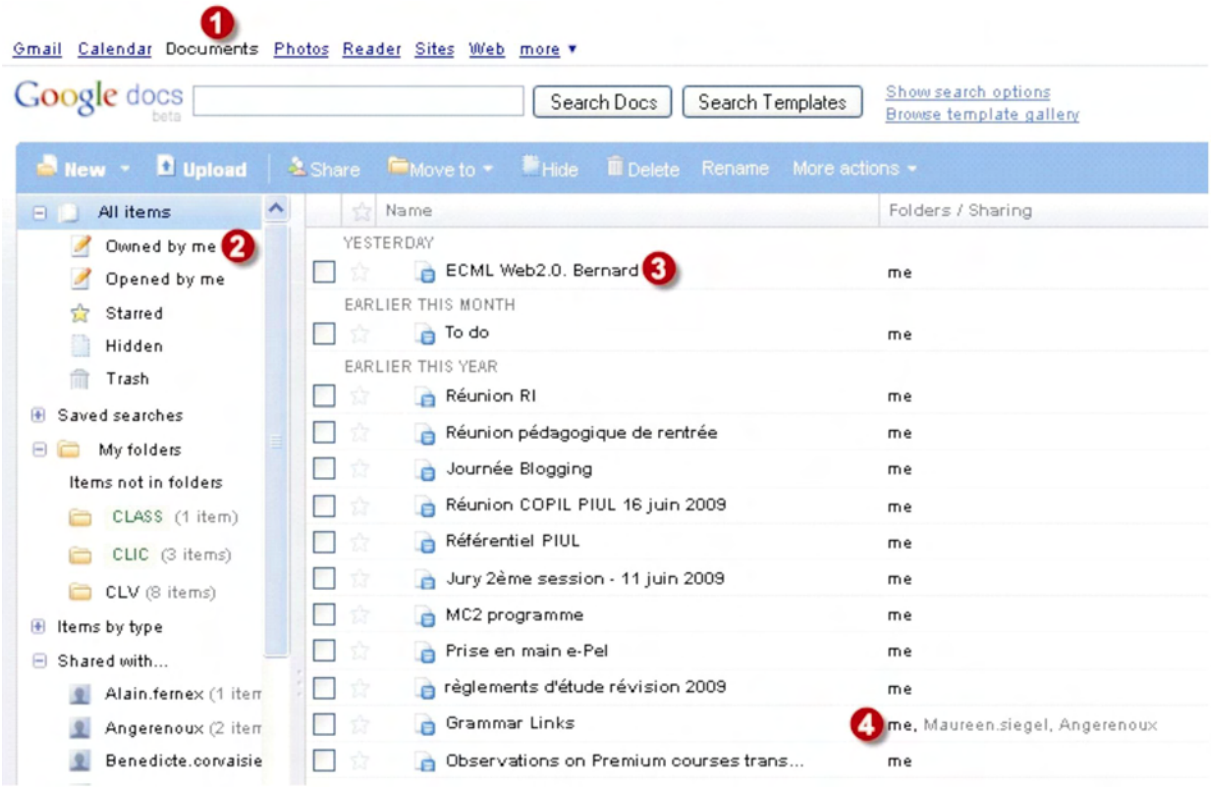
First of all, there is a kind of volatility in the comments as they move down the page every time a new item is posted. So with time you have several versions of the same work available, and keeping track of them becomes a delicate task for the teacher. Also, although it appears acceptable for comment-type writing – "Ah ah, I see what the scene you guys are working on is" – to be constantly open to the public eye, the process of writing a genuine review is of a more intimate sort, and should therefore be closed to everybody except the tutor and the writers. Finally, if students are working in pairs, a very productive, though not systematic approach, the comment feature in its disorganisation is clearly a deterrent and they will tend to return to the more private environment of personal e-mail, without always remembering to put the teacher in the loop. So a whole aspect of the writing, namely its evolution and improvement over the weeks, escapes the teacher, a terrible loss of information. Because the more we see of the writing in progress, at a level where students are at least B2+, the more we know about what generates hesitations and organisational errors, the more efficiently we can step in, either to remedy them, or to address incoming problems before they occur.

In spite of all these drawbacks, the student products ended up as very good quality, as may be seen on my website, http://languagelearningresourcecenter.org/anglais/read_films/babel/index.htm, which can be reached more easily perhaps by googling "bernard moro", opening the first entry available, clicking the "work on films" button and choosing *Babel.*

Google documents

For this writing process, I definitely should have used (or, rather, made the students use) Google documents, a far more appropriate instrument for this kind of exchange.

The Google documents environment looks as follows:



You open the resource as one item in the Google suite. There are four types of documents you can work with online: text, spreadsheet, presentation and form. We are interested first and foremost in the Word-type facility. You start from the “New” menu and give your document a name. In the light of what was done with the comment facility in the blog, I could have created and named the sequence that Messrs Baraket and Hirigoyen were working on together: "Just the two of us". Then I would have been the administrator of that document (3), and invited the two students to join in as editors. They could have modified it asynchronously or simultaneously from different workstations, and each time the page was refreshed, seen what the other had contributed. Every time one writer saves his work, his partner and I are automatically notified. This is the situation we can observe on this page with Maureen and Angerenoux (4).

Had I chosen this tool, which, unfortunately, I had insufficient knowledge of at the time, I would have been able to constantly interact and guide my students in their writing. We would have all been far more efficient, because instead of getting lost in my various e-mails or in the succession of blog comments, all documents under way would have been readily available to all parties concerned at one given place, with always the latest version showing.

In other words, and whatever the level of your students may be, Google documents is the ideal tool for collaborative writing. There is no platform, no software per se, only the web-based application processing your words, and therefore no compatibility problems. Working this way presents another advantage: it takes into account the fact that computers are getting smaller and smaller and use less bulky software, because the tools, not only the data, are

available online. Students deploying these devices, evolving with the technology, will have an edge on others.

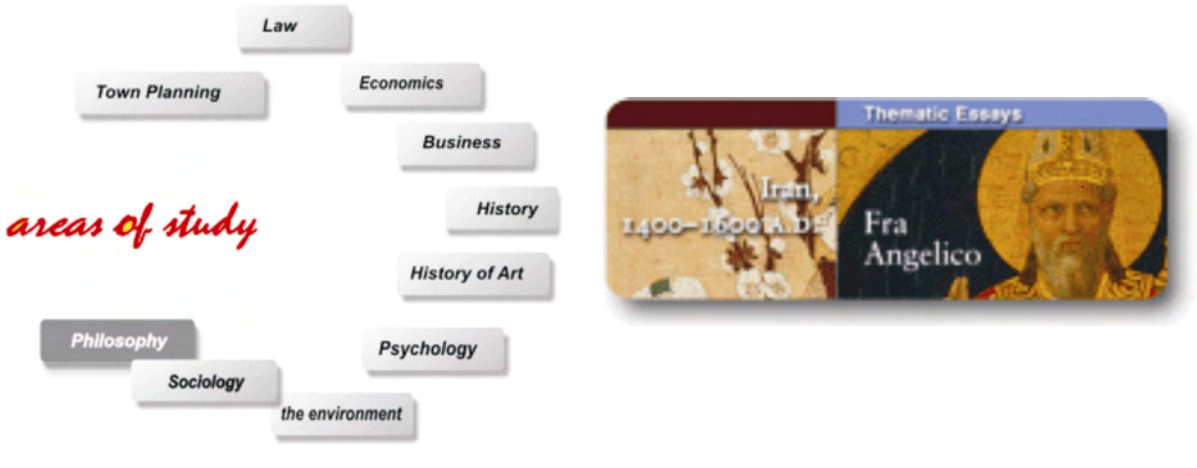
Wikis

Another tool that deserves our attention as VOLL teachers is wikis. The term inevitably evokes the mythical Wikipedia, an entity that seems completely beyond our reach, so huge it is. And yet anybody can enter Wikipedia and modify an article. I once read a page in French and found that in a very interesting piece of information there was an embarrassing spelling error, and a syntax error. I corrected both, not believing one second that would be integrated in the final product, but there it was: I had contributed, albeit modestly.

I am not suggesting that our students should be made to contribute as well, although the prospect might be explored as an exciting challenge. But there are more humble possibilities. I have always believed that vocabulary related to the various technical language students can be exposed to could not be learned in the form of decontextualised lists, because of the passivity of the learner in the learning process. This is a twofold passivity in that we teachers, who often have little knowledge of our students' real vocational/professional lexical needs, impose on them items we think may be of use; and, second, vocabulary is not acquired by meaningless repetition but by the meaningful study and use of language in context.

So, as I was once teaching town planning students, I decided to let them engage on a quest to find websites in English, related to their vocational area. They worked in pairs on a canvas based on appropriate search equations and were instructed to explore different websites, select one and prepare to show and comment on it to the rest of the class. After a whole session of presentations, I found that almost unconsciously they were all using – and understanding – words and expressions they had absorbed during their explorations, and which I had little comprehension of. In my website, I designed a menu from which they could then continue exploring and refreshing their memories when necessary.

So, I generalised the principle to my university students in sociology, history, economics, etc., as shown in the menu below. Should you click on, say, "History of Art", this is what would appear:



> Serious and safe, the Metropolitan Museum website is well-organized, with a timeline, first-time user help engine and effective search facility. It is full of beautiful images, all explained. While visiting, you can watch videos and listen to music. It is understandable for everybody, from every level. It also proposes selected readings.
>
> (Sidonie Bochaton, March 2007)

I chose the visual; the student wrote the text in class, a laborious process of précis writing ending up in this very short blurb.

At that stage, I would have greatly appreciated to be able to let each specialist create and maintain a professional French-English lexis database, but the logistics of keeping one file that all could contribute to over months and years were beyond my reach and theirs. That is where today a wiki would come in extremely handy.

Typically, for each section, a wiki resource could be implemented and opened to students. In essence (my bias here), there would be no limit to access, bearing in mind that nobody in their right senses would be thinking of contributing to a lexical database in "History of Art", for example, unless seriously inspired to do so. The resource, in typical Web 2.0 fashion, is web-based, the tutor in charge regularly downloading the file for safety and stocktaking purposes. Depending on how students appropriate the instrument, the tutor may decide whether to subject contributions to his/her approval, and keep the resource in easy access to both active and passive users year after year.

The content of the resource is a matter of debate. Is it advisable to keep entries very basic, the expression in French faced by its equivalent in English? Or up the ante with a more elaborate style of information? A student's article explaining what a class action is, for example. Such an entry should pass a plagiarism test, respect concision guidelines (say 30 words) and demonstrate grammatical accuracy. That would be both excellent writing practice and a good tool for them to use as future professionals. Needless to say, building such a resource locally would amount to reinventing wheels existing in a few other schools. But when students create something all by themselves, they tend to make it theirs far better, and for a longer time.

The downsides of Web 2.0

Hopefully, we have demonstrated how Web.2.0 technology has brought Internet expression into the hands of teachers who have no idea what a tag is. But there are caveats. Visual results are sometimes surprising. Text may behave erratically, pictures may move to where you did not intend them to be, when they come at all into your page. Bullet lists sometimes turn into strange, nonsensical hieroglyphic scripture. You may try your blog at home with IE7, see it looks good, and then find out that when running at school on Mozilla your laboriously obtained layout has been ruined.

It was very interesting to run that workshop on Edublogs, precisely because of all those problems. When working alone, fellow teachers, especially those not too well versed in those fields, may get very frustrated and believe they are useless in handling these tools. Not so. The best experts in the field cannot decipher why this will work one day and fail the next day. The principle is to remain humble and maintain low expectations, as your concern is only to project your pedagogy and make it available on the web.

If you want it beautiful, dynamic and WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) there are more complex tools for website creation, a quantum leap forward, but it is my belief our time should devoted to didactic problems rather than to webmastering solutions.

Chapter 4

Telecollaboration: online interaction and collaboration in VOLL contexts

Robert O'Dowd

Introduction

In today's globalised world, teaching in vocationally and professionally oriented contexts often involves preparing learners to use networked technologies to communicate and collaborate with others in geographically distant locations. Selling products to clients in international markets via e-mail, explaining the technical requirements of a new product to an engineering team in another country via Skype or describing your European office's particular situation to the company's head office in the United States via videoconference are all situations which are not uncommon today in the knowledge society. However, being able to work and collaborate in these contexts inevitably involves not only being linguistically proficient in more than one language, but also being sensitive towards cultural differences and having an ability to mediate between different cultural perspectives and find outcomes which are acceptable to all. Added to this is the challenge of being able to engage in these intercultural interactions using online tools which may be principally text based or which may come with their own particular cultural conventions and norms of use.

One possible way to prepare learners for the challenges of working in online intercultural contexts is to engage them in telecollaborative intercultural exchange with learning partners in other countries. These intercultural exchanges have been in use in foreign language education since the early 1990s and have been shown to improve learners' communicative ability in the target language, to increase their intercultural awareness and sensitivity and to develop the e-literacies which are so in demand in the modern workplace (see Guth and Helm 2010 and O'Dowd 2007 for historical reviews of this activity and for overviews of current models of practice).

In this chapter, I will present what telecollaboration activity involves in current foreign language learning contexts and then outline what I see as the possible advantages of such exchanges for VOLL learning contexts. Following that, I will discuss important issues which teachers need to take into account when planning such exchanges. Finally, I will propose some guidelines for VOLL educators who are in the process of elaborating an exchange with partner teachers in other countries.

1. Changing approaches to telecollaboration

Traditionally, telecollaborative projects in foreign language education have involved the use of (text-based) online communication tools to bring together language learners in two different countries to learn the others' language and culture. A class of Spanish learners in Ireland, for example, working together with English learners in Spain, would exchange bilingual e-mails and work together to compare each other's cultures and correct each other's grammar and vocabulary. However, in recent years more flexible and dynamic models and approaches to online exchange have begun to emerge and some of these may be of particular interest to VOLL educators who find it difficult to find a "traditional" partner class in the target culture.

First, there are a growing number of reports in the literature about educators who are bringing their learners into contact with informants or partner groups who are not necessarily other classes of foreign language learners. For example, groups of FL learners have carried out exchanges with students of anthropology, communication studies or culture studies as well as with native speakers of the target language who are not involved in education at all. Transferring this to a VOLL context, it is easy to imagine how groups of VOLL-based EFL students could carry out projects with groups of engineering or business studies students in the United States or the UK or carry out virtual interviews with "expert" informants from their own area of professional activity.

Another emerging practice in current telecollaborative models is a move away from a two-language "tandem" approach towards a lingua franca approach where a language such as English or German is used as the working language between groups of learners who do not speak the language of communication as their mother tongue. For example, VOLL students in Greece, Romania and Finland might communicate in English to co-operate in an online exchange in which they work on a topic related to their specialised area of study (see the case study by Vlachos, Netikšienė and Concheiro later in this volume).

A further, significant development in telecollaborative practice has been the move away from the strictly text-based communication tools such as e-mail and forums towards Web 2.0 tools such as blogs, wikis and social networking sites which enable learners to communicate through the combination of text with photos, video and other media (see Namuth, this volume). The increased quality of voice-based tools such as Skype has also meant that exchanges are increasingly combining text-based with voice-based communication.

2. Why engage VOLL learners in online intercultural exchange?

The potential advantages of these exchanges for learners in VOLL contexts are numerous. First, an important benefit of online exchanges is their potential for helping learners to improve their intercultural communication skills and their intercultural awareness – aspects which were mentioned at the outset of this chapter as being vital to language learning in

professional and vocational contexts. The opinions and insights which learners receive from their partners in the target culture enables them to supplement the information in their textbooks with real-life examples and this may encourage them to avoid stereotypes and be aware of the heterogeneous nature of a modern-day society. Intercultural awareness can also be developed through the questions which learners receive from their partners about their own cultural practices. These can serve to raise learners' awareness of how others see them and can also stimulate reflection on and criticism of aspects of their own culture which they had, until now, taken for granted.

Furthermore, intercultural exchanges can help to make learners more aware of the link between language and culture. Kern (2000), in his report on the American-French personal histories exchange, describes how he helped an American student to reinterpret a message which she had originally considered offensive, as it had been unsuitably phrased in English by her French partner. The French student had translated the French phrase "vous devez savoir" as "you should know", instead of the more appropriate "as you know" and the American student had found this condescending. He concludes:

> It is by identifying such "hot points" in the language and exploring the responses they evoke that students and teachers begin to develop an awareness of how cultural stereotypes are formed and perpetuated.
>
> (Kern 2000: 73)

Apart from the clear advantages for intercultural learning which online exchanges present, recent research conducted by Ware and O'Dowd (2008) shows that learners also often improve their communicative competence by integrating new vocabulary acquired in their online interaction and by taking the opportunity to "try out" newly learned words and expressions on their partner. In a VOLL-based exchange, learners would have an opportunity to use vocabulary specific to their area of vocational/professional language use with native speakers and also to see how these natives use this specialised vocabulary and structures.

Finally, successful intercultural exchanges can also be advantageous in VOLL contexts as they motivate learners to write more in the target language and to reflect more on the language they are producing. A telecollaborative project may be the first time a VOLL learner has an opportunity to use the foreign language in order to engage in authentic communication with a native speaker about his/her specialised area of vocational/professional language use. When learners participate in this type of activity, educators argue, they are no longer writing simply for their instructor, nor are they writing in order to have their grammatical and lexical mistakes identified and corrected. Instead, they are using the foreign language to communicate with a distant peer who will be reading the messages primarily for their content and not for their grammatical correctness. Being aware of this can increase motivation and encourage learners to express themselves more clearly and to take more care in the grammatical correctness of their writing. A Spanish student reflected this in her feedback form at the end of an intercultural exchange:

> I really like doing this because every week we write an essay in class and sometimes you like the topic, sometimes not. But this [online exchange] is different. As it is for a friend, because for me she is a friend, you make a much bigger effort.

3. Organising a telecollaborative VOLL project

Any VOLL educators considering engaging their learners in online exchange with a partner class in another culture will inevitably have to make various methodological decisions as to how the exchange should be organised and implemented. It is my belief that educators need to be aware of the technological and methodological options available to them in this context and should then be able to make principled choices based on their teaching contexts and pedagogical aims. Some of the most important issues which need to be dealt with before organising an exchange with a partner class include the following:

3.1 The role of the teacher

Teachers are often unsure to what extent they should get involved in an online exchange of written or spoken correspondence between two or more individuals. Should teachers check and correct messages before they are sent? Should they make sure that learners are writing before the established deadlines? To what extent should teachers decide what the content of the correspondence involves? The answers to these questions may depend, to a certain extent, on the particular model or structure of online exchange which is chosen. Some models of online exchange are quite strict about what learners write about, while others (such as eTandem) see the content of messages as a matter for the learners. However, the role of the teacher in an exchange may also reflect their own philosophical beliefs about education and pedagogy. Many teachers believe, for example, that integrating the exchanges into their classes allows the teacher to guide and motivate the learners in their online activities. In the words of one educator:

> Online exchanges should be integrated into the regular classes in the way which the teacher finds most effective. When students are left to themselves they lose interest in the process fairly soon. As any other teaching/learning process, this should be well-planned, organised and controlled – then it brings results.

However, other educators can see things very differently and argue for giving the learners a more independent role in the exchanges. One partner teacher of Spanish as a foreign language in the United States wrote to her partner the following when he complained they were not receiving any messages from their American counterparts:

> They [my students] know how telecollaboration functions and what impact it has on their grade. If they don't intend to take it seriously on their own, their grade will suffer. Although they might not learn a lot of Spanish from that, it'll be a valuable lesson in other senses: namely, I always tell my students that part of their academic experience is not only to learn about the subject matter, but also to learn responsibility, (self-)discipline, time management, collective awareness as well as many other concepts and principles on which the adult world operates. So, if my students don't grasp the subjunctive fully, but I manage to teach them some of the afore-mentioned principles – that satisfies me as a teacher as well. Ideally, I'd want to have them grasp both aspects, but that's not always possible.

While it is fair to say that the development of time management and self-discipline are important non-academic outcomes of VOLL, I believe that learners need guidance and support from their teacher in order to maintain motivation at the initial stages of an exchange. Checking that learners have written messages on time and encouraging slow starters to maintain a relationship with their distant partner are a vital part of the teacher's role in this activity.

3.2 The question of language use

A second inevitable question is how to organise language use in an exchange. In a project involving learners from various countries the use of a lingua franca such as English or French may be the obvious course of action. However, if both sets of learners are learning each other's language (Irish learners of Spanish and Spanish learners of English, for example) then the question arises as to how both languages should be used. Probably, the most common approach is that adapted by the eTandem network (see O'Rourke 2007), which involves each learner writing half of their message in the foreign language and half in their native tongue. The principle is justified as it "grants both learners the opportunity to practise speaking and writing in their target language and listening to and reading text written by their native speaking partner" (O'Rourke 2007: 42).

However, other practitioners have argued that requiring learners to interact in the foreign language may mean that they inevitably simplify the content of their messages or neglect content altogether due to the need to focus on linguistic accuracy in the target language. The original developers of the Cultura model, for example, propose asking learners to always write in their first language and justify this choice in the following way:

> We wanted to make sure that students were able to express their thoughts in all their complexity as fully and as naturally as possible … what students may "lose", by not writing in the target language, is largely offset by the gains they make by getting access to a rich, dynamic and totally authentic language.
>
> (Cultura website)

The decision of what language set-up to use in an exchange will inevitably depend on the foreign language level of both groups and the learning contexts in which they are located. As already mentioned, other options also exist: many successful exchanges use a lingua franca as the language for communicating. This provides a "level playing field" for the groups as there are no native speakers involved. It also reflects the reality of much modern intercultural communication in which many different nationalities use English to communicate together, even though none of them has this as their first language

3.3 The correction of partners' errors

It was seen earlier in this chapter that online exchange can be seen as an opportunity for learners to improve their communicative competence in the target language in various ways. They have the chance to interact with native or lingua franca speakers of the target culture, they are exposed to authentic input in the target language from their partners and they are free to express themselves away from the watchful gaze of their classroom teacher. There is also the possibility that their partners can correct their errors in the target language. However, the issue of peer correction can be more complicated than first imagined. Questions arise as to whether the fact that someone is a native speaker guarantees that they are qualified and capable of correcting and explaining errors in their own mother tongue. Also, as I and a co-author discovered in our research on a previous exchange, learners may feel uncomfortable about the effects which correcting their partners' work may have on their relationship. An American student explained:

> I wasn't so sure [about providing feedback], because I don't know what kind of people they are, and I don't want like the second time I talked to them, to be like, 'Oh wow, this is what was wrong with your paper.' … I was like I'm going to do my best to not make it seem like I'm a teacher. … I don't want to appear like I'm trying to teach them English.
>
> (interview data taken from Ware and O'Dowd (2008))

Another related question is whether learners expect to receive feedback from their partners. While many learners often prefer to focus on the content of their interaction, others may expect to receive feedback on grammatical and linguistic issues in order to feel that they are truly benefiting from the activity. More student feedback, this time from a Spanish student, helps to illustrate this point:

> No, she's too polite [to comment on grammar]. But I prefer it if she does because if they don't correct you, you can't improve. It [participating in an exchange] is useful because you see how language works but it's not enough because you can't improve your writing because they don't say to you what you are doing wrong.
>
> (interview data taken from Ware and O'Dowd (2008))

3.4 Choosing appropriate tasks for a VOLL intercultural exchange

Once a partner group has been found, the teachers in both locations have to agree on the type of tasks which their students have to carry out together. These tasks can range from the conversational (for example, "discuss with your partner your future professional plans") to more formal activities which require high levels of interaction, cultural analysis and collaboration and which reflect the specific area of VOLL in which both sets of learners are involved (for example, "Compare the advertising campaigns for Product X in America and Spain with your partner and attempt to identify the cultural differences between the two. You should then prepare together a PowerPoint presentation which presents your findings to your fellow learners"). Similarly, some

telecollaborative tasks may involve a clear focus on linguistic form, while others may lead to greater reflection on cultural aspects of the foreign language.

Table 1 below presents 12 task types which were identified in over 40 reports in the literature about telecollaborative exchanges and which could be suitable for an exchange involving VOLL learners. The tasks have been organised into three main categories which reflect the type of communicative activity which is involved in each case. The first category, "Information exchange tasks", involves learners in providing their telecollaborative partners with information about their personal biographies, their local towns or companies or aspects of their home cultures. These tasks can function as an introductory activity for two groups of learners who are not yet familiar with each other.

The second task type, "Comparison and analysis tasks", can be more demanding as they require learners not only to exchange information but also to go a step further and carry out comparisons or critical analyses of cultural products from both cultures (for example, books, surveys, films, newspaper articles). These analyses or comparisons may have a cultural focus and/or a linguistic focus. These tasks generally require learners to provide their partners with explanations of the linguistic meaning or cultural significance of certain cultural products or practices and then to engage in dialogue in order to establish similarities or differences between the two cultures.

The final task type, "Collaborative tasks", requires learners not only to exchange and compare information but also to work together to produce a joint product or conclusion. This may come in the form of an essay or presentation or, in VOLL contexts, it may involve working together to develop, for example, an advertising campaign or a design for a robot. These types of activities usually involve a great deal of co-ordination and planning, but they also bring about substantial amounts of negotiation of meaning both on linguistic and cultural levels as learners strive to reach agreement on their final product.

Telecollaborative tasks – (1): Information exchange

Task	Description	Intended outcomes	Potential pitfalls
Authoring "Cultural autobiographies"	Students present themselves and their home cultures to their (future) partners through "cultural autobiographies" in various visual and textual formats. In a VOLL context, this maybe involve presenting one's current professional activity or future professional aims.	Establishment of personal relationship with partners/increased awareness of cultural differences.	Students reify stereotypes in their presentations (students are not always that aware of their own L1 cultural situatedness). Can be restricted to single genre of narration. Primary reliance on personal narrative limits functionality across contexts of learner groups.

Carrying out virtual interviews	Students take turns to interview each other on a certain vocational context, and produce a presentation/written report based on interview process. For VOLL learners, this may involve questions related to the area of professional activity which the learners are involved in.	Development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC)	Relies on the information provided by only one partner – requires a great deal of reciprocity and responsibility
Engaging in informal discussion	Students are provided with general questions (e.g., "How do the new technologies influence your work or your studies?") or with a cultural product from the home or target cultures (e.g., a newspaper article or film) and are asked to discuss these with partners.	Learner independence/development of fluency in TL	Can easily turn into an information exchange without significant processing or without challenging input
Exchanging information about professional practices in the partners' culture	Each class takes turns to collect from their partner class accounts of their work experience. A class magazine or website can then be published with the resulting collection.	Increased factual/cultural knowledge about C2	Can easily turn into an information exchange without significant processing or without challenging input

Telecollaborative tasks – (2): Comparison and analysis

Task	Description	Intended outcomes	Potential pitfalls
Comparing parallel texts	Both groups of learners compare and analyse media extracts from both cultures which are based on a common theme related to the area of VOLL in question.	Increased awareness of target culture and one's own culture	Superficial contrasts made unless the instructor guides the conversation
Comparing class questionnaires	Both groups of learners complete questionnaires (e.g., related to word associations, reactions to situations related to the VOLL area) and then compare the answers of the two groups. Findings by both groups are then discussed online.	Development of awareness of different cultural meanings and connotations of words and concepts in C1 and C2	Superficial contrasts made unless the instructor guides the conversation Requires significant amount of participation using the L1, which not all teachers/students/institutions agree to do
Analysing cultural products	Cultural products from either C1 or C2 (e.g., TV ads for consumer products, items in shops) are analysed and discussed by both groups.	Greater awareness of target culture/one's own culture	Superficial contrasts made unless the instructor guides the conversation
Translating	Students translate a VOLL text from their L1 to L2. Without seeing original, C2 partners help to refine and correct the translation.	Improved language awareness/development of linguistic accuracy and fluency in TL	Tends to reduce the exchange to an information/linguistic exchange and is less rich in opportunities for cultural learning

Telecollaborative tasks – (3): Collaboration and product creation

Task	Description	Intended outcomes	Potential pitfalls
Collaborating on product creation	Learners in both groups work together to produce either a document (e.g., an advertisement) or a multimedia product (e.g., website or PowerPoint presentation).	Development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC)/electronic literacy	Requires technology-savvy teacher or context because of the tendency toward multimedia Requires teamwork among students and therefore reciprocity (lack of participation on one side jeopardises the whole project/grade)
Transforming text genres	Students in C1 help C2 partners to rewrite texts in a different genre in their TL.	Improved metalinguistic awareness/development of linguistic accuracy and fluency in TL	Tends to reduce the exchange to an information/linguistic exchange and is less rich in opportunities for cultural learning. Relies on comparable metalinguistic awareness on both sides of the exchange
Carrying out "closed outcome" discussions	Students in C1 and C2 share and compare information in order to complete an information gap activity (e.g., a "spot the difference" activity based on different versions of pictures).	Negotiation of meaning/development of linguistic accuracy and fluency in TL	Requires elaborate set-up by the instructor in the absence of easily available online gap activities Research tends to show that students mainly negotiate at the lexical level when online
Making cultural translations/adaptations	Students in C1 and C2 collaborate to make a culturally appropriate translation/adaptation of a product from C1 to C2 (e.g., business letter/TV advertisement).	Development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC)	Require off-task involvement (discussion, debriefing, etc.) by the teacher in order for most students to develop cultural awareness beyond stereotypes

Table 1: Telecollaborative task typology for VOLL (adapted from O'Dowd and Ware 2009)

Of course, a successful online exchange will require the combination or sequencing of different task types over the duration of the project. The integration of different task types has various functions. First, as the third column in the table clearly illustrates, different tasks can lead to different outcomes. Therefore, a combination of task types can expose learners gradually to different aspects of intercultural communication (for example, cultural self-

awareness, cultural comparison and intercultural negotiation) or the tasks can also engage learners in reflection of different aspects of the foreign language (for example, genre, pragmatics, grammar and lexis). A further reason for combining task types is related to the degree of interactivity and personal relationships which tasks can require. For example, instructors may choose to use opening tasks which do not require partners to know each other very well and which do not require relative strangers to engage in intense negotiation together in order to reach an agreement or to create a product together.

An example of an online exchange for VOLL learners in Spain and the United States in the area of tourism studies might involve the following sequence of tasks:

1. Introductions. In these first two weeks of the exchange, learners will do two things. Part 1: they will write an introductory text on themselves and present a profile of the tourist industry in their home town focusing on aspects of their city which may surprise people from the other culture. Part 2: learners have to visit the tourist shops in their home town and report back on what they find there. Are the objects for sale really representative of their culture? Or are they simply stereotypical images of the home culture which do not correspond to the reality? How could their home town be more successfully represented in local tourist shops in their opinion? They discuss these themes together online and ask each other questions about the two cities.

2. Text reconstruction. Learners will be given the keywords and phrases in English taken from a text related to the marketing of Spanish products in the United States. The Spanish group should try to recreate the text, constructing full sentences using as many of the original words and phrases as possible. The American group should then read the Spanish partners' texts and make suggestions as to how the text can be improved and made to sound more "natural"..

3. Advertisement adaptation. The learners from Spain will be shown a Spanish advertisement about their hometown and will be asked to write an adaptation for the American market. They can change the content as well as the language genre, so that the ad is appropriate for the other culture. The American partners should comment on the language, style, and cultural appropriateness of the new version and suggest changes. Draw up a final version of the adaptation which is acceptable to all group members.

4. Grammar trouble. Learners write a marketing report in their target language in which they use a grammatical aspect that they find difficult. They should explain to your partner what aspect they are working on and elicit feedback/correction from their partners.

4. Conclusion

In my view, two main conclusions can be drawn from the discussion above about organising an online exchange for VOLL contexts. First, these exchanges take a considerable amount of time to organise and implement and many different factors need to be considered during the planning process. Second, when they are carried out in an organised and structured manner they offer great potential for the development of linguistic proficiency and intercultural competence.

When discussing a possible online intercultural exchange with other educators in geographically distant institutions, I would propose that educators use the following questions to guide their "negotiations". By exchanging information about their professional contexts and by reaching agreement on organisational issues, educators will be more in control of how the exchange develops in their own classrooms and they will also gain a better understanding of the context within which the partner's learner groups are working.

Planning an online exchange with international VOLL partners

Exchange information on the following themes with your partner-teacher:

1. The age and target language level of your learning groups and the area of VOLL which they are involved in
2. The level of access to online computers in your respective institutions and the online communication tools which your learners use most
3. The objectives which you have for the exchange
4. The ideal length of duration of the exchange (The full length of the course? A month? Or merely a few weeks?)
5. The tasks you and your learners would like the learners to carry out together
6. The communication tools you and your learners would like learners to use
7. How you want to match learners from the different institutions (According to interests, personality? Or simply at random?)
8. The rules of interaction which you would like to use (Exclusive use of the lingua franca? Or should the lingua franca be combined with another language?)
9. Should learners correct their partners' mistakes?
10. How you think the exchange should be evaluated

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Links of interest related to online intercultural exchanges

Examples of exchanges and tasks:

Multicultural lingua franca exchanges: http://esleflstudents.edublogs.org.

Spanish-American Cultura: http://cultura2.wikispaces.com.

Examples from Isabel Perez: www.isabelperez.com/penpal.htm.

Information for teachers about finding partner classes and developing tasks for online exchange:

World Class: www.bbc.co.uk/worldclass.

Global Gateway: www.globalgateway.org.uk.

ePALS Classroom Exchange: http://content.epals.com.

Science across the world: www.scienceacross.org.

E-twinning: www.etwinning.net.

The Tandem Server: www.tcd.ie/CLCS/tandem.

IT4ALL: www.integrating-technology.com.

Links for learners to find their own online partners:

www.italki.com

www.friendsabroad.com

www.lingofriends.com

Chapter 5

VOLL, the social web and teacher training

Kerstin Namuth

Introduction

Over the past few years the World Wide Web has changed from a huge information bank to a vast social space where we meet and communicate in our leisure time and at work. We see a rapid development of services, widgets and platforms that open up new ways of sharing information, views and opinions, pictures, texts, music, films, new ways of socialising and collaborating with individuals, groups or with an infinite audience. Cutting-edge hardware, like smartphones, makes the web accessible to anybody and from everywhere.

The "real world" and the "virtual world" are increasingly merging into each other. While the old Internet was a bank of resources for its users, Web 2.0 is increasingly becoming a place to be in.

VOLL, vocationally oriented language learning, aims at equipping learners with such linguistic and language-related competences as their jobs and professions demand. For VOLL trainers, it is essential to understand their learners' work situation and the linguistic needs that arise from it. Therefore it is imperative that VOLL trainers be familiar with Web 2.0, that is, their learners' virtual working environment, and appreciate its impact.

Many language trainers, however, find it difficult to relate to new technologies and the social web. They belong to the "e-mail generation" and still draw a line between real life and online activity, rather than embracing the web as the extension of the physical world that it has come to be in many areas.

Only a few years ago front-line language pedagogy would occupy itself with CALL (computer assisted language learning), and concentrated on issues like "How can technology enhance language learning?" and "How do we enable trainers to implement the new tools?" Today, in addition to making best use of ICT tools for learning purposes, we have to pay attention to the "social web" itself and all the changes it has brought about in working life and VOLL.

In view of the choice and possibilities that Web 2.0 is offering, the new key questions for VOLL trainers and teacher trainers seem to be: How does Web 2.0 affect language, communication and working life and what are the consequences for VOLL learning and

teaching? What new literacies do VOLL trainers require and how can professional development be designed for that target group?

This article addresses the above issues and offers a platform for further discussion, rather than attempting to provide all the answers and solutions. The author hopes to encourage language trainers, teacher trainers and decision makers to engage in the development of VOLL in the light of the social web.

Section 1 illustrates what the social web stands for. A grid lists types of Web 2.0 applications and indicates how they are currently being used.

Section 2 highlights areas, relevant to VOLL, in which new media have already exercised great influence and describes changes they have induced to date.

Section 3 provides concrete examples of new learning objectives for VOLL learners and suggests new ingredients for a 2009 VOLL syllabus.

Section 4 describes the new literacies required of VOLL trainers and draws up a scaffold for a train the trainer syllabus with regard to digital competence.

Section 5 considers the special work situation of VOLL trainers and suggests an approach to professional development for VOLL, illustrated by two samples where this approach has been put into practice.

This chapter does not set out to cover any of the issues in depth. It aims to give examples and start "threads" for thought and discussion that readers may find worth pursuing with colleagues or on their own.

1. Typical features of the social web

The table shows a rudimentary typology of Web 2.0 tools and features and gives examples of applications that are – currently – well known and widely used. The x indicates the types of actions and interactions they are used for, the bold X highlighting the main uses. This list is not and cannot be comprehensive.

Type of (inter-) action / **Applications**	*Socialising*	*Sharing information*	*Publishing content*	*Communication*	*Collaboration*	*Entertainment*	*Storing/ sharing content*	*Used in business*
Blog (e.g., Blogger)	x	x	**X**	x	x	x	x	**X**
Micro blogging (e.g., Twitter)	x	**X**	x	x		x		**X**

Web/videoconferencing (e.g., Skype, Flash)	**X**	**X**		**X**	**X**	X	x	**X**
Shared calendars (e.g., Google)		**X**			**X**		x	**X**
Social bookmarking (e.g., del.icio.us, spurl.net)		**X**			x		x	**X**
Shared documents (e.g., Google docs)	x	**X**	x	x	**X**	x	**X**	**X**
Role-playing games (e.g., World of Warcraft)	x			x	x	**X**		x
Virtual worlds (e.g., Second life, Active Worlds)	**X**	x	x	x	x	**X**		x
Wikis (e.g., Wikipedia)		**X**	x		**X**	x		**X**
Web publishing/ sharing of videos/photos/ podcasts, etc. (Flickr, YouTube, Slideshare, Spotify, Pirate Bay)		**X**	**X**			**X**	**X**	**X**
Social networks (e.g., Facebook, MySpace, all kinds of communities)	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	x	**X**
Professional social networks (e.g., Linkedin.com)	**X**	**X**		**X**	x	x		**X**

E-commerce sites with functions for customer reviews, rating, etc. (e.g., Amazon)		**x**	x					**X**
Social network hosting services (e.g., Ning)	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**

As the chart illustrates, all these applications offer a multitude of uses and most likely will be developed to cover even more shortly – or be abandoned by their users.

2. The impact of Web 2.0

Web 2.0 is bringing about changes in a number of areas. It affects the way we communicate and collaborate and how we deal with content and information. The social web influences working life in general and the individual employee's everyday working processes.

The overall mind map below illustrates some of the areas where the presence of new media has evoked considerable change that VOLL trainers need to understand.

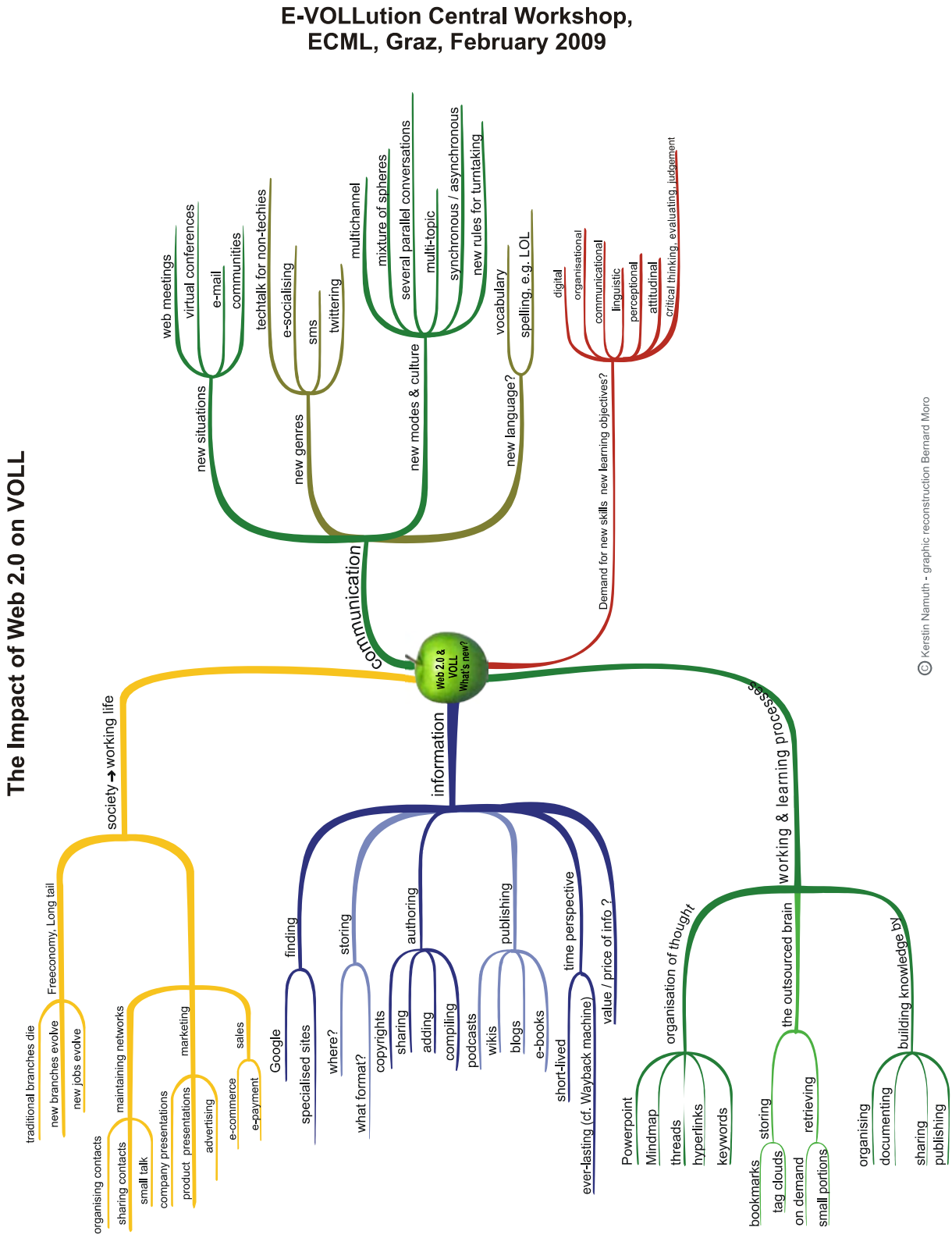
2.1 The impact of Web 2.0 on society and working life

Social media like Facebook, MySpace, and blogs offer spaces to meet, communicate and socialise. Started as leisure time sites, they are increasingly being used in working life, sometimes blurring the distinction between business and private life. These sites play an increasingly important role in job searching, marketing and maintaining business contacts.

Blogs, for example, are used extensively for the promotion of products and for the shaping and communicating of companies' images. YouTube – originally a site for sharing amateur films – has become a place to look for work-related material like product presentations and instructional films. Web 2.0 is definitely moving into the world of business.

Business itself is affected by the Internet. The basic idea of trade, that is, paying for products one wishes to acquire, has been shattered by the concept of "freeconomy". Whole business branches are disappearing. Typical examples of this are the music industry with producers and retail shops closing down, while music is either purchased via the Internet or even shared for free. Currently, we can observe a similar upheaval in the field of book publishing and its related retailing branch as selling, buying and distributing (e)books is much easier and cheaper online.

Jobs linked to old branches disappear, while new business concepts call for completely new career orientations. Even traditional job tasks are being accomplished in innovative ways and employees need a whole range of new skills. New language skills, such as understanding instructions given via a YouTube film, participating in a discussion via a videoconference, or writing a blog are amongst them.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Web 2.0 & VOLL What's new?
Communication
new situations
web meetings
virtual conferences
e-mail
communities
techtalk for non-techies
new genres
e-socialising
sms
twittering
new modes & culture
multichannel
mixture of spheres
several parallel conversations
multi-topic
synchronous / asynchronous
new rules for turntaking
new language?
vocabulary
spelling, e.g. LOL
Demand for new skills new learning objectives?
digital
organisational
communicational
linguistic
perceptional
attitudinal
critical thinking, evaluating, judgement
information
finding
Google
specialised sites
storing
where?
what format?
copyrights
authoring
sharing
adding
compiling
publishing
podcasts
wikis
blogs
e-books
time perspective
short-lived
ever-lasting (cf. Wayback machine)
value / price of info ?
society → working life
traditional branches die
Freeconomy, Long tail
new branches evolve
new jobs evolve
organising contacts
maintaining networks
sharing contacts
small talk
company presentations
marketing
product presentations
advertising
sales
e-commerce
e-payment
working & learning process
organisation of thought
Powerpoint
Mindmap
threads
hyperlinks
keywords
the outsourced brain
bookmarks
storing
tag clouds
on demand
retrieving
small portions
building knowledge by
organising
documenting
sharing
publishing
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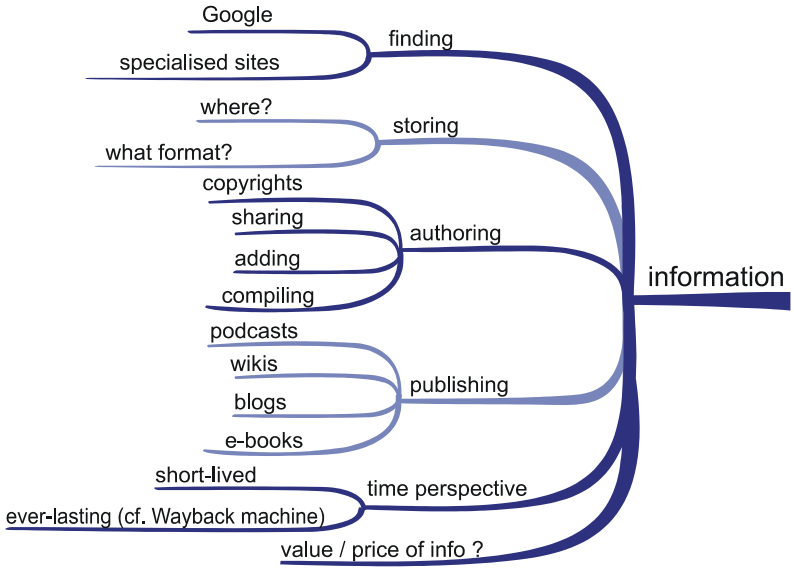
2.2 The impact of Web 2.0 on how we deal with information and content

New media provide new ways of presenting, publishing, finding, storing, retrieving and sharing information. In Web 2.0 every user is a potential producer of content with a variety of tools and formats at their command. Anybody can easily produce and publish text, pictures, music, films, etc. and share them with any other Internet user. Publishing is no longer the sole domain of professional experts.



For VOLL learners and trainers this offers great advantages, as there is almost unlimited access to a vast choice of – free – resources to cater for any imaginable language need. On the negative side, from a trainer's perspective, however, we can state that standards for learning materials and resources have been raised very high. Should a language trainer be required to produce tailor-made materials for learners and customers, they will expect interactive and flashy digital learning resources – preferably at no cost at all.

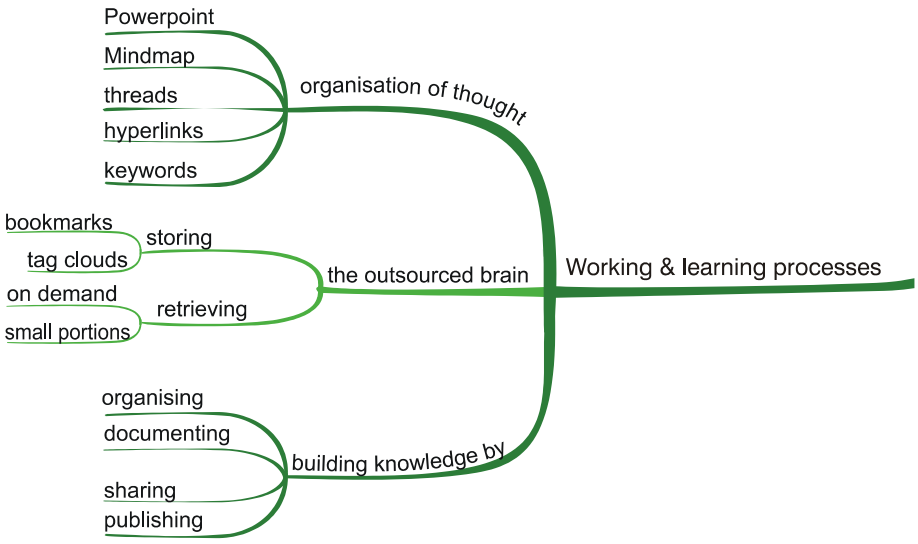
In the same way, the value of traditional teaching lessons is sinking rapidly. Why should a learner or a company pay for teaching services when complete language course packages can be downloaded for free, advice can be asked in fora and the whole web is full of opportunities to use and practise the language?

Language trainers need to redefine their roles and address the essential question: "What can I offer my learners that they cannot get from the Internet and how do I motivate them to pay for it, where there is no viable alternative?"
Possible answers and marketing arguments might be provided by the following points: with professional support the learning process will be both faster and smoother. The trainer can help learners to identify their exact needs and can create individual course plans for them. He/she will find relevant and reliable resources on the Internet and elsewhere and advise learners on how to make optimal use of them. A trainer will assist the learners by monitoring

the learning process and provide immediate feedback and encouragement. He/she will also help them to evaluate their progress.

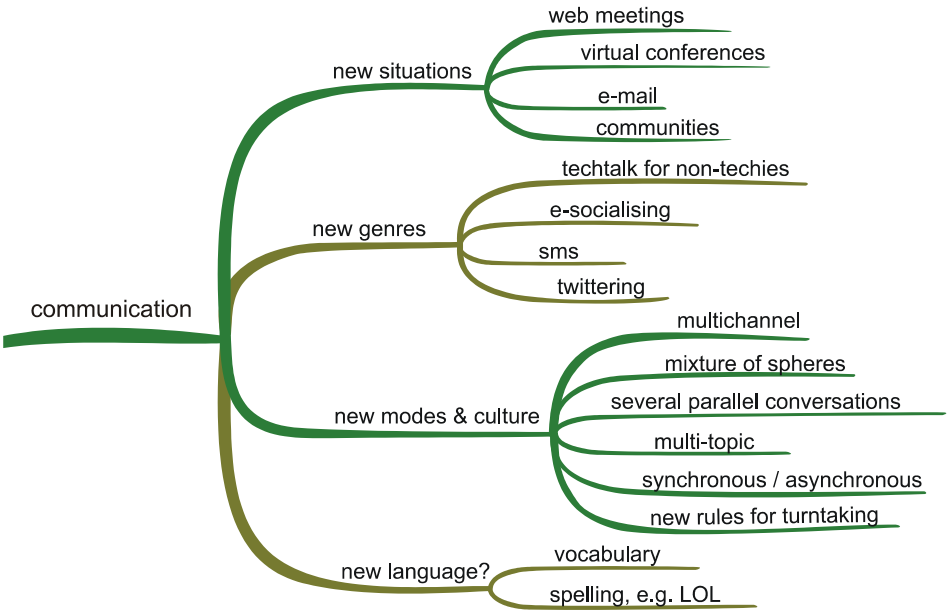
This obviously assumes that the language trainer is familiar with modern work processes, ongoing language developments and Web 2.0 resources and tools.

2.3 The impact of Web 2.0 on learning processes



Language trainers also ought to take a closer look at how new technologies have affected learning processes. This branch of the mind map deals with how we organise knowledge, display ideas, how we store and retrieve information, how we process facts, impressions and experience, how we work and collaborate in the building of individual and shared knowledge and how we become aware of and monitor our own learning. One example is the "PowerPointisation" of how we present facts and ideas, often mentioned and criticised. Another new phenomenon is the "outsourced brain", where we trust technical applications with the storage of our memories, our work, important documents, etc., and where we believe that it is not necessary to "know" things as long as you can google them.

2.4 The impact of Web 2.0 on language and communication



Language is, and always has been, subject to constant change. In the world of social media, language is changing more rapidly than ever and the changes are easier to observe, since much of online communication is still in written format. Even oral computer-mediated communication is easy to record. The obvious and much discussed developments are in vocabulary and writing style, for example, the use of abbreviations like BTW, OMG, Lol, which, interestingly, spill over to the "real world" where especially young people can be overheard using chat language in oral conversations. For language trainers, the creative use of language online ought to be an exciting field of study.

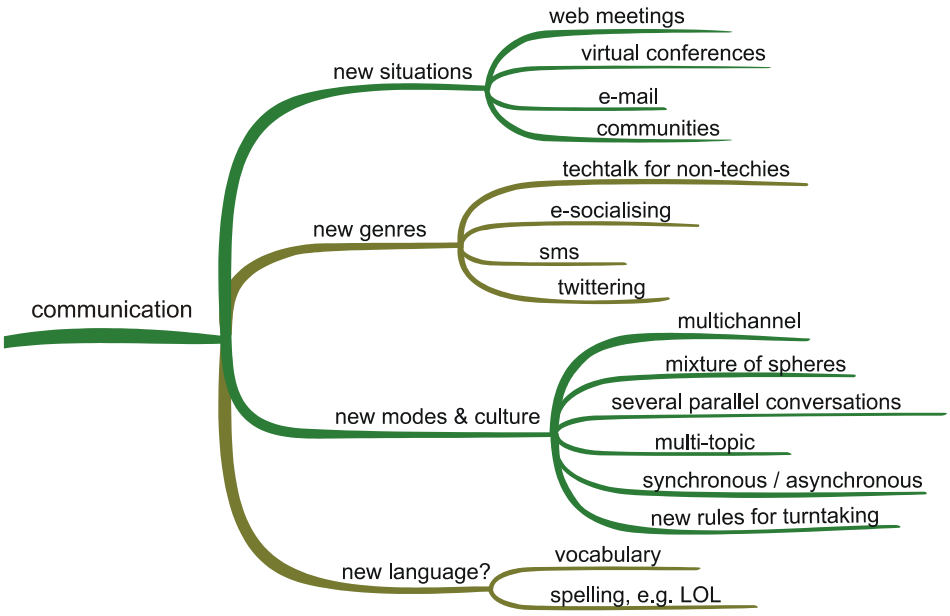
The web also provides us with a wide range of completely new genres, like "tech-talk for non-techies", SMS, Tweeting, chairing a web meeting, sound checks at the beginning of a videoconference, blogging, etc. – each of them with their typical situations, vocabulary, register and style as well as communication habits and procedures.

Even the settings for communication and conversational behaviour are different from face-to-face-situations. Engaging in several online exchanges at the same time, for example, talking in Skype, while chatting in MSN and reading posts in Facebook is natural for the – supposedly – multitasking generation of digital natives. New rules and conventions for the use of body language, non-verbal signals, attention and politeness, etc., which originally belonged to online settings, have started to take their place in "real life".

3. The need for a new VOLL syllabus

The changes described above imply that aims and contents for vocationally oriented language learning and teaching have changed, too. Typical VOLL syllabi or course plans have to be revised in the light of Web 2.0 to answer the following questions:

- Which (new) work situations are learners likely to find themselves in?
- What (new) language will they need to perform their tasks?



Participating in a meeting, for example, used to mean that one had to follow and engage in oral exchange between a number of people and, maybe, take notes. Nowadays, meetings may take place as web meetings. Platforms for videoconferencing provide functionalities for speaking and chatting at the same time. While participating in the oral conversation, one may well be expected to maintain one or more separate chats within the meeting, and at the same time contribute to a shared document on the virtual whiteboard – and maybe, take notes. The traditional aims and objectives of a VOLL course have to be adapted and the classical "meetings" chapter in textbooks for business language needs to be rewritten.

Also, the traditional "four skills", their sub-skills and typical features have to be revisited and revised. For instance, we used to make a distinction between written and oral communication where "writing" meant: time to think, accuracy above fluency and a product that was expected to be as close to perfect as possible. "Chat", however, presents us with a written communication mode that displays typical features of oral exchange, like fluency above accuracy and immediate feedback.

These examples show that traditional core ingredients like writing business letters or e-mails, talking to the switchboard operator, small talk on arrival at a partner's company, now compete

with a number of completely new ones. Every area of traditional VOLL syllabi needs to be reviewed, revised and expanded in view of Web 2.0.

A new VOLL syllabus is likely to contain a selection of the following issues:

A sample list of new contents for a new VOLL syllabus

Communication – New genres

Tech-talk for non-techies

- giving support, for example, explaining how to configure sound and video for a web videoconference;
- choosing tools and applications for collaboration with business partners, this comprises describing features and how they work, and comparing advantages and disadvantages;
- seeking advice, for instance, in a specialised forum.

New small talk topics

- comparing mobile phones, discussing special features and functionalities (this touches upon the genre "product presentations");
- telling anecdotes about technical accidents, funny incidents during web meetings, etc.
- referring to articles on new gadgets.

Socialising online

- commenting on blog posts;
- staying in touch with "friends", that is, contacts, on social media like Facebook;
- Tweeting;
- chatting.

Meetings

- chairing web meetings and videoconferences;
- participating in web meetings and videoconferences.

Publishing/production

Writing

- Tweeting;

- contributions to wikis;
- blogging;
- slides for presentations.

Speaking

- see also "Meetings" above and "Multi-channels/multi-skills practice" below;
- giving product presentations online;
- producing video clips or longer films, for example, product presentations and manuals.

Content management in the cloud

- sharing online content;
- social bookmarking, for example, efficient choice of keywords;
- searching for content.

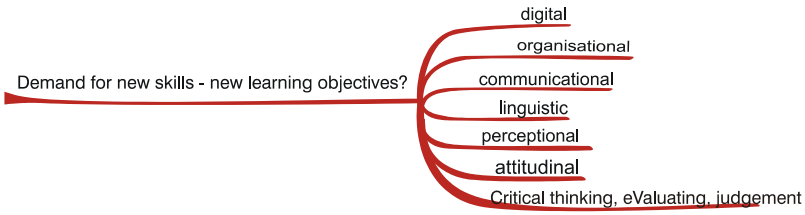
Multi-channels / multi-skills practice

For situations which require new combinations of linguistic and other skills and a high multitasking ability:

- web/videoconferencing: talking, chatting – often several separate chats at a time, reading/writing information on a shared whiteboard, addressing colleagues in the same physical room as well as across the web, although within the same conference;
- face-to-face conferences and seminars: listening to presentations, taking notes, participating in discussions in the same physical room, in parallel posting on a conference blog or in the seminar chatroom;
- semi-synchronous communication: chats, web/video meetings tend to switch quickly from a synchronous to an asynchronous communication mode. Due to unstable Internet connections or interferences in the physical environment of a partner, frequent interruptions and communication breakdowns are to be expected. This requires strategies to state whether all partners are still online and following the conversation, as well as the ability to summarise spontaneously and efficiently and/or efficient note-taking on a shared whiteboard in order to fill partners in on what they may have missed.

The new learning aims and objectives call for new skills and knowledge, for "new literacies" to be developed in language learners and trainers. These touch upon a variety of aspects: digital, social, linguistic, communicational, organisational, perceptional and attitudinal. All of them imply new aims for learning and development – and influence the trainer's job.

4. Digital competence for the VOLL 2.0 trainer



Web 2.0 is probably not going to make VOLL trainers redundant, but their roles and tasks are being transformed considerably and will require new literacies – digital competencies for a VOLL 2.0 trainer. These comprise:

- general digital competence as defined in the European reference framework for the key competences for lifelong learning.[5] "Digital competence involves the confident and critical use of Information Society Technology (IST) for work, leisure and communication. It is underpinned by basic skills in ICT: the use of computers to retrieve, assess, store, produce, present and exchange information, and to communicate and participate in collaborative networks via the Internet."
- an understanding of the impact of new media on society and working life, on languages and communication and on learning and teaching;
- familiarity with tools and resources for VOLL learning and teaching;
- methodological and didactic competence to make best use of new tools and resources, as well as to design learning opportunities for new language needs;
- attitudes of openness to and interest in professional development that further continuous development.

In a world where change seems to be the only constant, it is impossible to pin down the exact aims for teacher training for VOLL and the social web or to establish a canon of compulsory ingredients in a VOLL train the trainer syllabus. Any such list would have to be revised at the same pace as Web 2.0 (and 3.0) is developing. Instead, this article offers a draft syllabus, a scaffold, for the design of teacher training courses. It is up to trainers and decision makers to select relevant points from the list below, supplement it if necessary, fill in the concrete technologies and applications, and define the level and the scope.

5 "Key competences for lifelong learning – European reference framework", European Commission, 2007.

Examples of knowledge, skills and attitudes for VOLL trainers:

Internet knowledge and skills

- general familiarity with the Internet and the web landscape in the target country(ies);
- searching for information using search engines ("googling"), managing links;
- familiarity with materials, resources, sites for language learners;
- familiarity with materials, resources, sites for language trainers' professional development;
- copyrights, licences and liabilities;
- Internet ethics and risks.

Creating, editing and managing content

- word processing, spreadsheets and presentation software;
- HTML editors;
- recording and editing sound, images and video;
- managing the most widely used content formats;
- file management and storing and sharing content online (CMS, sharing sites, etc.).

Initiating and maintaining communication and collaboration

- e-mail;
- blogs, communities and social sites;
- web/videoconferencing;
- setting up and/or customising virtual meetings places, for example, in an LMS.

Social skills for teachers

- communicating efficiently online;
- familiarity with conventions for online communication;
- ability to create positive learning situations in virtual learning environments.

Course and task design and methodology for VOLL

- understanding the technical and pedagogical implications of the tools available, and making optimal use of them;

- selecting working modes and creating learning tasks which are adequate for a specific setting (distance, f2f, blended, web video, chat);
- identifying language needs that arise from the use of new media;
- designing distance or blended learning courses;
- creating new types of tasks that prepare learners for work in a Web 2.0 world.

Assessment

- ability to monitor and evaluate learners' progress with a view to "new" aims and objectives;
- familiarity with existing digital tools for assessment.[6]

IT skills

- installing and customising software programs and plug-ins;
- managing settings (monitor, keyboard, sound, external devices);
- efficient use of hardware (laptop, projector, mobile phone, etc.);
- antivirus and anti-spyware technologies, firewalls;
- updates and cleaning tools;
- working in a local network with a personal account;
- identifying and describing technical problems;
- solving problems with the help of support functions and forums.

Attitudes, individual prerequisites

- familiarity with working in a modern environment;
- reflective ability. The success of learning tasks that are carried out by learners in distance mode (as opposed to a face-to-face classroom situation) depends on the teacher's ability to anticipate the learners' work, use of resources and materials, (inter)actions, possible problems and to plan and present the tasks accordingly. This is in contrast to the face-to-face classroom where the trainer can rely on intuition and spontaneity much more, adjust task instructions, supplement materials and assist learners while they go along;
- curiosity, readiness to try out new things and being prepared to continuously update their own knowledge and skills.

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6 See also www.ecml.at/projects/voll/evollution, Graz, 2009, "Testing and assessment".

5. Web 2.0 and professional development for VOLL trainers

5.1 Approaches to teacher training for VOLL

In many European countries, syllabi for current (2009) concepts of initial teacher education state digital competence and the ability to make use of ICTs in teaching as important aims. On-the-job training programmes are being run for teachers within the school sector.

Many VOLL trainers, however, work freelance or are employed by non-governmental companies or organisations. They are normally paid per teaching hour and their fee does not include time for professional development. They often work for several employers and their schedules can vary greatly from week to week. They find it difficult to invest time in their own training on a regular basis.

Very often, VOLL trainers belong to the "e-mail generation", that is, they lack the direct and natural access to new technology and Web 2.0. They feel intimidated by the vast choice of new technical devices and applications. They know that they ought to improve their digital and pedagogical competence, but do not see how to achieve this or even where to start.

This target group requires learning opportunities adapted to their situation, that is, which:

- are not too time consuming and/or follow a flexible schedule;
- deal with easily accessible and usable applications;
- meet the teachers/trainees at their actual level of competence. Objectives may range from simply finding and using resources on the Internet to creating and sharing digital learning objectives and building lessons around them.
- combine hands-on experience of technical applications with reflections on their role and usability in language learning and teaching;
- allow for exchange on concerns and ideas with colleagues;
- render immediate return on investment: an afternoon invested in training pays off through practical ideas that save preparation time for the trainees' own lessons;
- create an incentive for trainers to continue exploring applications and their role in VOLL, that is, raise curiosity or involve participants personally. For instance, letting them start a blog or post a discussion thread in a community forum is likely to encourage them to return several times after the training session, just to follow up what happens;
- are fun – the best guarantee for anyone to continue on their own after the training course.

5.2 Web 2.0 training for VOLL trainers – An approach in three phases

When it comes to Web 2.0, we can no longer set out to develop comprehensive training courses that will take the trainee from being a novice to mastery. Web 2.0 has so many functionalities, purposes, applications and uses and develops so quickly that we will never be able to cover it all. A feasible approach, especially for the above target group, could instead be a three-step model that can be summarised as "explore, reflect, implement":

Step 1 – Explore: start at any point. Choose an application that captures your interest and just learn while you go along. In exactly the same way as any "ordinary Web 2.0 user" would. Explore the functions and possibilities hands-on. Participate, play around, be as active as possible. Try to sort any questions out on your own, making use of support and help provided by the application itself. Be confident that you will manage.

Step 2 – Reflect: stand back and reflect from your professional perspective as a language trainer. Evaluate the application with the leading questions in mind:

- How does this affect life and work, and language and communication?
- What are the consequences for learning and teaching languages?
- How can I best support my learners?

Step 3 – Implement: identify, based on your findings, relevant language or other learning points for your students. Prepare a study unit for them and carry it out with them, preferably making use of the Web 2.0 application you have focused on.

Ideally, you will be able to discuss your experience, views and ideas with colleagues.

This model is suitable for a language trainer's individual development. It will also work as a structure for learning tandems or small study groups working without a tutor, and it offers a valid model for tutor-led training workshops or courses.

5.3 Samples of teacher training units

5.3.1 Sample 1: Web 2.0 travel guide for language trainers

At Folkuniversitetet Göteborg, a Swedish adult education organisation, a number of train the trainer events have been held with the aim of familiarising language trainers with "life" in Web 2.0. Facebook, as one of the most well-known and widely used manifestations of the social web (in 2008/09), was chosen as an example and as the workshop platform. A very short manual, a "Travel guide" describes several brief tours through Facebook. Ideally, these tours will be taken by a group of colleagues, led by a tutor. Where this is not possible, the manuals serve as guides for trainers who wish to take their further development into their own hands.

Facebook – The business trip[7]

Facebook has become a market place, a business lounge, a call centre … Find out more about it.

Equipment: your Facebook account. If you do not have an account yet, create one.

Starting point: your Facebook home page and as many "Friends" as possible.

Time: from ½ hour to a whole lifetime – or as long as Facebook lasts.

The tour:

- Surf around for a while, click on things that intrigue you and learn to find your way to the interesting places and home again.
- Find your colleagues, business contacts, students, celebrities in your branch and add them to your friends list.
- Search for groups with a business purpose. Try companies in your students' business branch. How many can you find?
- Look up your own organisation's/school's group. If there is none, why not create one?

7 Adapted from the E-VOLLution project website at www.ecml.at/projects/voll/evollution, Graz, 2009, "Social web and VOLL".

Put your language trainer's glasses on:

- Find a group for your own professional development. Read, post, watch, participate.
- Reflect on the type of exchanges and compare it to real life. Is there small talk? Where does business come in? Is the conversational tone and culture in the work-related groups any different from the non-business ones?
- What will your students need to learn in order to use the social web effectively in their work? And how are you going to help them?
- How could your learners benefit from Facebook? Can you use it in your course?

To make the most of your trip:

- Become a member of all groups you think might be of interest to you or your learners. Participate over a couple of weeks and see how they develop. Make them develop!
- Ask your students' opinions on Facebook and whether and how they use it for business.
- Find out about safety and conditions of use, customise you privacy settings.

5.3.2 Sample 2: mini-workshops for language trainers

A series of mini-workshops has been developed within a Nordplus project (2008-10).[8] Every workshop focuses on one topic. During each workshop language trainers get to know a number of resources for learners, discuss their pedagogical benefit and design a learning unit for their own learners. They are also introduced to resources for language trainers. They will hopefully gain confidence in their use of web resources and be ready to continue exploring the advantages of the web for VOLL.

The workshops are based on "Resursplatsen för språk", a Scandinavian resource bank where 5 000 useful links for 11 languages have been collected and categorised. This is, however, not a prerequisite. The workshops could also be run without access to a compilation of useful resources. In that case, more time would have to be allowed for free search on the Internet.

8 Nordplus project 5L at www.folkuniversitetet.se.

"5 L" – A series of workshops for language trainers:
instructions for the workshop leader

Workshop 5: Theme media

Aims: language trainers will:

- develop further their pedagogical ideas of the Internet as a learning resource;
- find new websites to keep themselves up to date with business culture and language in their target countries;
- have prepared a learning/teaching unit, ready to be used with their learners.

Prerequisites: good computer skills. Experienced Internet surfers. Some experience gathered in distance or blended learning.

Time: approximately, four hours
Practical prerequisites: each trainee has a computer with Internet access.
Running the workshop – Step by step

1. Give a short overview of Resursplatsen (contents, structure, languages).
2. Plenary discussion: "web radio, the blogosphere, social media, etc. – what impact do (new) media have on business life, language and communication? What new competences will our VOLL learners need?"
3. Trainees log on. Present the following task for your trainees and hand out the instructions: "Work in pairs. Develop a comprehensive lesson for one of your language courses. The lesson will require that your course participants use media via the Internet (preferably social media); it will involve them in a group work session (face-to-face online); it will give them the opportunity to practise several different skills and will end with an evaluation."
    - Plan your language lesson step by step: describe for each step the working modes and how your learners will benefit from it.
    - Skim through the resources in the category "Media" in Resursplatsen and choose adequate resources/links for your learners.
    - If necessary, supplement with other websites.
    - Write a worksheet/instructions for your learners. It should include all necessary technical, pedagogical and language instructions. Your learners should be able to solve their tasks without the trainer being physically present – as would be the situation in a distance course.

4. Cross grouping: trainees read and comment on each others' lessons.

5. Mini-evaluation: brief plenary discussion on the resources used, any lack of material they experienced, tips from colleagues.

6. Joint rounding-up. Trainees surf the Resursplatsen section "For trainers" for interesting resources on the workshop theme for their own professional development. They share them with the rest of the group. If they have an account in a social bookmarking site, they might want to tag the resources and show their colleagues how that works.

6. Conclusions

These workshops and training efforts have in common that they seek to strengthen trainees' self-confidence in their relationship to technology and awaken their curiosity. They foster an independent and active attitude towards one's own professional development: VOLL trainers are encouraged to try things out, to contribute and participate, to engage and interact, to search for answers and solutions, to find and make use of resources available, to seek advice from other users and share their own expertise for the benefit of others. They will become aware of the fact that the whole web is in constant change and they will be invited to observe and reflect on the processes, using their common sense and critical thinking, and bringing their own professional experience of learning and teaching to bear on the whole.

With this attitude and approach language trainers stand a good chance of coping with the technical and pedagogical challenges of Web 2.0 for their own and their learners' benefit – and even enjoying it.

Chapter 6

Data-driven learning (online research)

Irina Smoliannikova

> **… find explanations that fit the evidence, rather than adjust the evidence to fit a preset explanation.**
>
> **(J. Sinclair)**

Introduction

Rapid development in today's world has made lifelong learning a necessity in all vocational and professional fields. Traditional methods and skills of retrieving and storing information will not ensure adequate professional performance. The speed at which new knowledge appears and previous knowledge deteriorates is such that any attempts to acquire and retain professional information by means of traditional educational methods and techniques have become senseless. The "half-decay" period of one's professional competence keeps shortening in leaps and bounds. If, in the 1940s, it constituted 10 to 12 years, nowadays it has reached the rate of 20 per cent yearly in knowledge-intensive fields (Nechaev 1999) "with knowledge doubling every five years – every 73 days by the year 2020" (Costa and Liebmann 1995). Thus, skills of continuous learning have become an indispensable asset in contemporary society, and it is the task of formal education to develop them. However, to be able to collaborate and co-operate in multicultural environments it is vital to be sensitive to cultural differences. One should be able to retrieve not only linguistic but also cultural information from the body of text one is working on, and this information should be processed into knowledge which will lead to target culture awareness and, finally, to acculturation.

One of the possible ways of meeting these challenges is to engage learners in a specific, discovery-based activity online or off-line and to provide tools that will facilitate language awareness and culture acquisition. In turn, this will promote the development of skills in a specific competence that will foster knowledge construction (see Rüschoff and Markus 2001). To achieve this, the educational community needs a methodology for language learning that focuses on authenticity in contents, context and task. And this is what data-driven learning may help to accomplish.

1. What is DDL and why engage VOLL learners in it?

Data-driven learning (DDL): an approach to language learning pioneered by Tim Johns, University of Birmingham, whereby learners of a foreign language investigate the language that they are learning and derive information about the language and cultural phenomena by using concordance programs. The authentic examples of language in use located serve as the bases for the further construction of a learner's knowledge and thus for the development of specific skills that may be effectively used for lifelong learning. In DDL the learning process is no longer based solely on the teacher's initiative and his/her choice of topics and materials, but on the learner's own discovery of rules, principles and patterns of usage in the foreign language. In other words, learning is driven by authentic language data.

Possible advantages of this kind of learning activity for VOLL-context students are evident. First, learners discover the grammar, the vocabulary and specific speech patterns of their VOLL field by means of their personal efforts, which increases their involvement and motivation and makes it an excellent way of improving their knowledge of the foreign language used in their vocational/ professional domain.

The basic idea behind data-driven learning in VOLL environments can be summed up as follows:

There is a focus on:

- the exploitation of authentic materials, even when dealing with tasks such as the acquisition of grammatical structures, terminology or speech patterns specific to a particular professional or vocational field;
- real, exploratory tasks and activities which have a direct link to professional needs;
- learner-centred activities;
- the use and exploitation of tools rather than ready-made learnware.

The underlying principles of DDL are:

- learning by using digital material related to the respective target area of language use;
- learning from real tasks which encourage exploration and discovery by doing;
- practice in a classroom or distance learning environment, individually or within a group, with or without support of traditional face-to-face interaction.

The idea that governs the development of a set of competences as well as skills in knowledge construction can be best understood through tasks which encourage the learners to focus not explicitly on the structure and the rules of the new language, but rather to stimulate them to *"*... find explanations that fit the evidence, rather than adjust the evidence to fit a preset explanation" (Sinclair 1986: 185-203). Learners will acquire the form of the target language

as well as elements of culture because they are engaged in exploring aspects of the language and the culture on the basis of authentic content and genuine materials.

According to Widdowson, genuine materials are language samples not constructed for the purpose of language learning (cf. Widdowson 1979: 80). The tasks learners are expected to fulfil within the framework of DDL should also be of an authentic nature, that is, they should take the form of learning projects and/or activities of knowledge construction which enable learners both to explore the target language and culture when working with such genuine "texts" and to realise how they work in their professional context. Here, it is worth mentioning that the notion of "text" should be best treated in accordance with the approach taken by semio-socio-psychology where a "text" is believed to be a complex social and psychological symbol, a unit of communication, rather than of the language alone, and to have its hierarchy of contents and meanings which are cemented by a common conception, structure and plot and this can be equally applied to a piece of literature, art (for example, a painting or a sculpture), music, architecture, engineering project, etc. (Dridze 1999). The approach to authenticity in language learning referred to above is described by David Little as creating opportunities for the learner to "psychologically interact" with the target language, that is, while the target language input is processed in the mind, it builds upon and modifies the learner's existing knowledge. And this works best if the learner considers the learning material to have direct personal significance.

To help language learners to experiment and to research while acquiring elements of communicative competence (linguistic, sociolinguistic, sociocultural and other competences that promote intercultural exchange), authoring software that helps to create different types of exploratory exercises as well as cognitive tools, such as concordancers, play no small part and, in fact, constitute the core aspects of DDL.

To discover the opinions of newcomers to DDL as well as those of colleagues who are already familiar with it, go to www.ecml.at/projects/voll/evollution/graz_2009/ddl/index.htm.

2. What is a concordancer?

As far as tools for data and information processing and data-driven learning are concerned, concordancing tools are probably the most widely used tools of this kind for language acquisition. These tools represent a special kind of application. They give the teacher an easy means of creating innovative worksheets based on up-to-date materials to be discussed in class. And learners can use the software hands-on at the same time. It is up to the teacher to decide which approach is more feasible for a particular group of learners or an individual learner. Both uses have been described in great detail in a book on the subject of concordancers in language learning called "Concordances in the classroom: a resource book for teachers" by Chris Tribble (1990).

Adapting a famous quotation from J. R. Firth, we may say that a concordancer is basically a tool that allows us to research "the company that words keep" (Firth 1957: 11) and provides an opportunity to discover the language from that angle. A concordancer is a tool which selects contexts for a given word or structure from a text or a text corpus. Its basic function is to extract lists with sample contexts of any word or structure entered into the search option. Oxford University Press MicroConcord, Longman's MiniConcordancer or MonoConc, etc. provide access to any electronic text (which is available on the computer, from a CD-Rom-based corpus or database – or you can also specify a URL and the software can directly be linked to the content of the site) and search for the occurrence of particular words or structures or combination of words (for example, verbs, prepositions, terms, word collocations). These are then listed in one-line contexts. The results of the search can then be used as a basis for what Tim Johns (1994) refers to as data-driven learning. A learner's task might be to deduct for him/herself the exact difference in meaning, connotation, or grammatical features of words. Thus, not only language material can be acquired in a discovery-based or exploratory mode, it also enables learners to develop culture awareness in addition to structural knowledge of sets of meanings.

The following is the result of a concordancer search for "who", "which", "that":

...ls laid-back approach: Roland Franklin,	**who**	is leading a 697m pound break-up bid fo...
... <p> SLOW developer; confusing thinker	**who**	is liable to cause controversy and conf...
... which would have allowed BIIBA members,	**who**	held existing professional indemnity co...
...ra, as the regulatory body of middlemen	**who**	sell investment and insurance products, ...
...ce borrowings to a consortium of banks,	**who**	acquired 61 per cent of GPG after the c...
... head of Pembridge Investments, through	**which**	the bid is being mounted says, 'rule nu...
...ike the value of the DRG properties, or	**which**	part of the DRG business he would keep ...
...h securities market, announced in 1983,	**which**	were to lead to Big Bang. There were th...
... years he had met very few institutions	**which**	had not cut back their system budgets f...
... from an agreement made on 18 September	**which**	would have allowed BIIBA members, who h...
...e merchant bank where he was a director	**that**	was rescued by the Bank of England. He ...
... responsible for the "casino atmosphere"	**that**	gripped US corporate life in the early ...
... for his backers. In a takeover campaign	**that**	has already seen vitriolic language, he...
...lic language, he responds to the charge	**that**	he is mounting the bid to enrich himsel...
...s friends by saying: 'Nobody could take	**that**	as a criticism _ this is an investor gr…

A concordancer is an invaluable tool for the language learner and teacher alike. Different software programs offer various options with regard to what one can do with the results of the search. You can choose to show full sentences or a certain number of symbols to the right and to the left of the target word; you can conceal the hits to create a gap filling exercise right away, etc. A concordancer allows you to search for occurrences of terms in any digital corpus of text. Sorting on words to the right and left of the search term is possible and collocation frequencies can be calculated. A word frequency count can also be calculated. The data can be

copied and pasted into a word processor and used as the basis for a variety of language exercises.

Monoconc is a good example of concordancing software, which may be of great value to those, who work within VOLL contexts because it is an open program, that is, it is an open but empty shell which needs to be filled with a set of texts of different kinds which will make up the corpus within which the search for the target language data will be carried out and the samples of use will be offered as query results (the bigger the corpus, the better choice of the examples you have). You can use any digital text with it and work within any field of knowledge. The resource you use depends on the type of language you need (newspaper articles, technical documents, literary texts, scientific texts, spoken language, professionally oriented texts, etc.). Teachers can find applications for many of their ideas in all areas of learning (grammar, vocabulary, structure, etc.).

Participants in a series of workshops at the ECML in Graz concentrated on evaluating the potential of concordancing tools for VOLL and the creation of sample exercises and tasks. To see their comments, go to www.ecml.at/projects/voll and select "Data-driven learning pages" under any or all spheres marking different events in the series.

To illustrate but a few applications of concordancing software:

One can build a concordance to, for example, contrast the meanings of the terms "information" and "data" (data protection VOLL field). This will help the learners to differentiate the usage of these terms, to find the most frequent, related collocations, etc.

It might be helpful to have the learners create concordances of collocations by themselves to find out the frequencies in which particular phrases occur in professional discourse.

Example

Study the following examples and derive the meanings of the terms "information" and "data".

(NB the number of lines in the following concordance is reduced compared with the original task.)

1. ... the world's first standard (BS 7799) for [information] security management. The first part of …
2. ... the challenges identified above. The [information] economy faced with the emergence and s…
3. ... are? Unlike the industrial economy, [information] and knowledge are not depleting resour…
4. ... the information, information assets and [information] technology on which its business model … etc.

5. ...tes. The extent and value of electronic [data] are continuing to grow exponentially. T…

6. …posure of businesses and individuals to [data] misappropriation (particularly in elect…)

7. … how secure they believe their personal [data] are. Data security, for this reason, ma…

8. …e they believe their personal data are. [Data] security, for this reason, matters to a … etc.

You may obtain the hits in clipped lines as shown above or in full sentences which, in some cases, might be more comprehensible:

1. Britain piloted the world's first standard (BS 7799) for [information] security management.

2. The [information] economy faced with the emergence and speed of growth in the information economy, organisations have an urgent need to adopt IT governance best practice.

…

5. The extent and value of electronic [data] are continuing to grow exponentially.

6. The exposure of businesses and individuals to [data] misappropriation (particularly in electronic format) or destruction is also growing very quickly.
…

By clicking a single key, you can create worksheets (for example, gap filling) like:

Worksheet

Fill in the gaps with the terms "information" or "data". Explain your choice:

1. Within its overall approach to corporate governance, every organisation has to determine how it will govern the information, information assets and [_____] technology on which its business model and business strategy rely.

2. With the increasing pervasiveness of computers and as hardware/software computing packages become ever more powerful and complex, so the opportunity for data and [____] systems to be compromised or corrupted (knowingly or otherwise) will increase.

3. Where it is useful (particularly in generic areas like e-mail controls, [____] protection, etc.), there are pointers as to how procedures should be drafted.

4. All organisations possess information, or [____], that is either critical or sensitive.
…

You may also use strings of characters to create wild cards when you can search for, for instance, forms of irregular verbs or word combinations in a single search option. A string of "dr?w*" resulted in:

- …ted code of practice, ISO/IEC 17799, it [draws] on the knowledge of a group of experien…
- …he information security policy is being [drawn] up, as set out in Chapter 5. An effecti…
- …uge and diverse that it is necessary to [draw] a boundary between what is within the o…
- …ll that stops all mobile code dead. The [drawback] of this is that this also makes it diff…
- … secure VPN. A detailed risk assessment, [drawing] on specialist advice that reflects the …
- ... all observed. The organisation [drew] up clear policies on the use of e-mail. …

Concordancer-based activities can be used to study usage statistics, correctness, variety, to raise students' awareness of stylistic and/or cultural differences, political correctness, to develop their grammar and lexical skills when they are asked to derive a grammar rule or lexical meaning(s) or to compare linguistic phenomena from different languages, etc.

Examples of types of tasks are:

- In which types of discourse is a construction like this is acceptable?
- Which word is omitted in the sentences?
- What is the place of the adverb (auxiliary verb, etc.) in the sentence?
- Do the meanings of the words "actual", "angina" and "magazine" coincide with similar Russian words?

Upload your essay into the concordancer and check if you have used the same word(s) many times. Think what can be done to avoid this (use your glossary, a dictionary, a thesaurus to change some of the occurrences).

For more examples go to
www.ecml.at/projects/voll/our_resources/graz_2001/data_driven_learning/bernd/index_samples.htm or
www.ecml.at/projects/voll/our_resources/graz_2002/ddrivenlrning/concordancing/index.htm.

You can also find more material and practical advice at www.ict4lt.org/en/index.htm under "Contents" where Module 2.4, "Information and communications technology for language

teachers" (www.ict4lt.org/en/en_mod2-4.htm) specifically deals with using concordance programs in the modern foreign languages classroom.

It should, perhaps, be said that most concordance software cannot be obtained free of charge. But, to get an idea of the program, there may be a free demonstration period of 30 days, as, for example, with Concordance (www.concordancesoftware.co.uk/index.htm) or demonstration versions which do not offer a full range of possibilities but will help to assess the applicability of the tool for one's particular needs. Others may be obtained at quite reasonable prices.

Online concordancing can be carried out free at:

- The Compleat Lexical Tutor offers lots of options to work at lexis (www.lextutor.ca/concordancers/concord_e.html).
- WebCorp LSE is a fully tailored linguistic search engine to cache and process large sections of the web accessing the web as corpus. The current version of WebCorp relies on standard web search engines such as Google and AltaVista, adding layers of refinement specifically for linguistic analysis (www.webcorp.org.uk/wcadvanced.html).
- Business Letter Corpus is an online KWIC concordancer (www.someya-net.com/concordancer/index.html)
- VLC Web Concordancer provides basic concordance search and retrieval functions using corpus files which are located on the VLC server. More corpus files are likely to be added in the future, including parallel texts in English and Chinese. Associated words concordances are also available (http://vlc.polyu.edu.hk/concordance/WWWConcappE.htm).
- Querying Internet Corpora work with Leeds University's collection of Internet corpora of newspaper texts in English, Chinese, Arabic, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish (http://corpus.leeds.ac.uk/internet.html).
- Web Concordances and Workbooks are devoted to the study of literature using literary computer concordances including concordances on poetry (www.concordancesoftware.co.uk/ webconcordances).
- IFAConc is a tool for personal and collaborative study of specialist/academic and non-specialist language use. IFAConc provides a platform for annotated concordancing activities for learners and teachers who want to take advantage of guided advanced-level data-driven learning. As of 30 March 2010, IFAConc is no longer available for anonymous use but registration is free (http://ifa.amu.edu.pl/~ifaconc).

- Word Lover's Wordspy is not a true concordancer but is a valuable resource for language teachers as it offers a guide to new words appearing in the English language (www.wordspy.com).

It would be unfair not to mention the facilities offered by the Google search engine as a concordancer. To check out the way a word, a phrase or a grammar phenomenon functions in English, it is enough to enclose it in quotes and enter into the search engine. You will get the most representative sample of results in context and the whole web will serve as a corpus. Here, you need to make sure that the references you have found are authentic English-speaking sites, if your learners are concerned with English, or with corresponding sites for other languages.

For more on using Google try http://languagelearningresourcecenter.org/anglais/write_essays/use_google/index.htm.

3. Authoring tools

Authoring tools, also known as authorware, basically mean a program that helps the author to write hypertext or multimedia applications and to create custom-made exercises merely by linking together objects, such as a text, a visual or a sound file. With a minimum of technical knowledge and basic computing skills, the authors can produce attractive and useful graphics applications that present a mixture of authentic textual, graphic and audio data.

Authoring tools provide teachers with ready-made templates for most of the exercise types and interactions commonly used in self-study packages. These templates can then be filled with content and the authoring tool automatically turns this input into an interactive exercise specifically geared towards a particular target group. Classic examples of authoring tools for language learning are:

- The WIDA Software Authoring Suite is an easy-to-use authoring program specially written for language teachers that enables them to create language activities on the computer, including multimedia features. This can be purchased either as a whole or in parts. The price starts at £75 per title (www.wida.co.uk/noframes/auth.htm).
- The TELOS package allows you to create your own learning and testing materials (CD-Rom and web) and make your e-learning content meet your learners' needs. It offers appropriate and flexible options to put together complete and structured multimedia-enhanced learning packages. The licence for non-commercial use (TLP Pro 4.0 plus TLP WebConverter 2.0) is free of charge (www.sprachlernmedien.de/mod/resource/view.php?id=161).
- The Half-baked Potatoes suite includes six applications, enabling you to create an interactive learning environment with multiple-choice, short-answer, jumbled-sentence, crossword, matching/ordering and gap-fill exercises for self-study and place

it on the web. Hot Potatoes is freeware, and you may use it for any purpose or project you carry out (http://hotpot.uvic.ca).

- Fun with Texts is a flexible text-manipulation package which now provides a facility for enhancing the Fun with Texts exercises with still images, sound and video. For more detailed information on the available activities and prices go to www.camsoftpartners.co.uk/fwt.htm#description.

These tools can be used by the teacher who creates exercises with a view to providing their learners with effective technology-enhanced tasks or the learners can be engaged in the creation of exercises for their peers. A number of colleagues report on their positive experience with learner groups, where learners do not simply work through exercises, but are invited to work further on the items they master using the authoring mode of the tools. By asking learners to create an exercise dealing with what they have learnt, one provides them with a framework within which they have to consider the language phenomenon in more detail, think about it and search for suitable samples and tasks and contemplate the necessary feedback to be integrated into an exercise. In such cases, the learner works not only on linguistic skills but at the same time develops language awareness and learning competence.

Throughout a series of workshops, participants created sample exercises and put together a list of resources for those who want to find out more about the potential of these tools. To have a look at this material visit the ECML site at www.ecml.at/projects/voll and consult the DDL resources pages.

4. Corpus

Both concordancing and authoring software need a corpus to provide the language data within which research will take place. What is a corpus for our purposes? In principle, any collection of more than one text can be called a corpus. But at the same time, the modern corpus should correspond to a few requirements and possess certain characteristics.
First, we are interested in creating a corpus which is maximally representative of the variety under examination, that is, which provides us with an accurate picture of the tendencies and peculiarities of the specific language of the vocational/professional field under study, as well as their proportions. Ideally, we need a broad range of authors and genres which will represent the kind of language "typical" for a particular vocation/profession, that is the special language of the field, and provide a reasonably accurate picture of this specific variety of the language. For example, the language of lawyers is different from that of economists or data protection managers, not only in its lexical content (system of terms used) but in their discourse peculiarities.

As for the size of the corpus, it should basically be big enough to provide sufficient occurrences of the elements of language and culture we want our learners to study. But, if we let our students loose on vast masses of text such as COBUILD, for example, which uses a

corpus of about 200 million words or Birmingham University's Bank of English Corpus, which comprises about 500 million words, we are likely to create more confusion that clarity. Here, less is more. Moreover, in VOLL contexts we really need vocationally specific corpora. Chris Tribble (1990) states that a specialist micro corpus of about 25 000 to 30 000 words will be quite adequate for most educational purposes.

Today, few corpora are available in book form. Corpora may be available in other forms of media, for example on microfiche, or sometimes, in the case of spoken corpora, copies of the actual recordings are available – as is the case with the Lancaster/IBM Spoken English Corpus. For our purposes, the corpus should definitely be machine readable as it can be searched and manipulated at speed and can easily be enriched with additional data.

The most interesting property of the corpus is that it enables the user to deduce not only linguistic but also cultural information, and it is a challenge for the teacher to think of and introduce various types of tasks that will disclose this to learners. Kjellmer (1986), for example, used the Brown and LOB corpora to examine the masculine bias in American and British English focusing on the occurrence of masculine and feminine pronouns, and the occurrence of the items man/men and woman/women and found that the female items were more common in British English than in American English, and this might be important for professionally oriented discourse.

Free access online English language corpora:

- COBUILD Direct Corpus Sampler: the Cobuild Direct Corpus is composed of 50 million words of contemporary written and spoken text. To get a flavour of the type of linguistic data that a corpus like this can provide, you can type in some simple queries here and get a display of concordance lines from the corpus. The query syntax allows you to specify word combinations, wild cards, part-of-speech tags, and so on (www.collins.co.uk/Corpus/CorpusSearch.aspx).
- The Collins Wordbanks Online English Corpus sampler is composed of 56 million words of contemporary written and spoken text (http://www.collinslanguage.com/wordbanks/default.aspx).
- The British National Corpus (BNC) is a 100 million-word collection of samples of written and spoken language from a wide range of sources, designed to represent a wide cross-section of current British English, both spoken and written (www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk).
- The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) is the largest freely available corpus of English, and the only large and balanced corpus of American English. COCA is also related to other corpora, including the British National Corpus and the 100 million-word TIME Corpus (1920s-2000s). The corpus contains more than 400 million words of text and is equally divided among spoken, fiction, popular

magazines, newspapers and academic texts. It is updated every six to nine months (www.americancorpus.org).

- Linguistic Data Consortium (University of Pennsylvania): access to North American corpora. LDC Online is a free service for LDC current year members. An interactive tutorial is available to everyone, as is a guest account permitting access to the Brown text corpus, the TIMIT speech corpus and the Switchboard corpus (www.ldc.upenn.edu).
- The Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English at the University of Michigan contains 152 transcripts and 1 848 364 words (http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/micase).
- TIME Magazine Corpus website allows you to quickly and easily search more than 100 million words of text of American English from 1923 to the present, as found in *TIME* magazine. You can see how words, phrases and grammatical constructions have increased or decreased in frequency and see how words have changed meaning over time (http://corpus.byu.edu/time).

Online multilingual corpora:

- Visual Interactive Syntax Learning corpora (VISL) develops taggers, parsers and computational lexica based on corpus data. On the other hand, these tools can be used for the grammatical annotation of large running text corpora. The main methodological approach for automatic corpus annotation is constraint grammar (CG), a word-based annotation method. Hybrid systems are used to create syntactic treebanks from CG output in VISL's various research languages, with overall corpus size given in million words: Danish (95 million), English (189 million), Esperanto (19 million), Estonian (<1 million), French (71 million), German (99 million), Italian (19 million), Portuguese (257 million) and Spanish (53 million) (http://beta.visl.sdu.dk/corpus_linguistics.html#German_corpora).
- Wortschatz portal is a multilingual resource hosted by the University of Leipzig, Germany, which uses German as the basic language[9]. Die Daten werden aus sorgfältig ausgewählten öffentlich zugänglichen Quellen automatisch erhoben. Ohne besondere Kennzeichnung unterliegen im Wortschatz wiedergegebene Marken wie Gebrauchsnamen, Handelsnamen, Warenbezeichnungen usw. den gesetzlichen Bestimmungen. Die synonyme Verwendung eines Trademarks beschreibt nicht notwendigerweise produktspezifische Eigenschaften sondern kennzeichnet stattdessen die Verwendung des Begriffs im allgemeinsprachlichen Kontext. Auf unserem internationalen Wortschatzportal in englischer Sprache können Sie derzeit in

9 As the E-VOLLution project opted to choose English and German as its two "project" languages, it seems appropriate to provide some references in and to German resources, allowing the German language to stand as representative of materials for other languages, which would be too numerous to list here. In addition, it makes the website known and accessible to all modern language teachers who use German as their second language.

17 verschiedenen Sprachen Wörter nachschlagen. Um das Suchen für Sie einfacher zu gestalten, werden Ihnen zu jeder Sprache zufällige Wörter vorgeschlagen. Über 100.000 Wörter und Wendungen auf Deutsch und Englisch. Die Besonderheit: Häufigkeitsangaben verraten Ihnen, wie oft die einzelnen Wörter verwendet werden (http://wortschatz.uni-leipzig.de).

- Corpuseye, developed at the Institute of Language and Communication (ISK), University of Southern Denmark (SDU), is a multilingual user-friendly search interface which allows the construction of treebanks, that is, annotated sentences that have been enriched with structural information. This corpus interface integrates three different types of corpora (text, CG annotated and treebanks) and three different search techniques for Danish, Portuguese, English, German, Spanish, French and Esperanto (http://corp.hum.sdu.dk/cqp.de.html).
- The PolyU Language Bank, developed in the Department of English at Hong Kong PolyU, is a large archive of language corpora made up of a wide range of written and spoken texts totalling over 12 million words from academic, business, journalistic and legal texts, and literature. Corpus searches can be performed using the Bank's built-in Web-based concordance. Written English texts form the bulk of the bank's corpora, while a small number of texts in other languages (Chinese, Japanese and French) are presented as components of larger collections of parallel or comparable corpora (http://langbank.engl.polyu.edu.hk/indexl.html).

5. Conclusion

To sum up the discussion above, data-driven learning in VOLL is a strategy and a model for learning and teaching on the basis of authentic data, that is, genuine language that has not been compiled for the purpose of learning, but represents real professional discourse. DDL offers a variety of possibilities to develop a set of competences (for example, linguistic, sociocultural, sociolinguistic, learning, digital) and provides on-demand support for the learner who acts as a researcher, an active constructor of knowledge rather than a consumer of the ready-made product. The integration of modern multimedia, on the one hand, provides a learning environment in which the computer acts as a sort of expert reading and learning partner and a linguistic consultant, and, on the other hand, it makes VOLL more attractive and motivating.

DDL is a concept of integrating your own as well as online resources into scenarios for language learning, and the exploitation of the ICT potential provides a platform, a way and a tool for ensuring more flexibility of content, bringing it as close as possible to the target field of vocational/professional language.

There now seems to be a consensus that the ultimate aim of learning in a modern knowledge society is to develop strategies of knowledge processing. Therefore, learning models which

emphasise information processing and knowledge construction are most welcome as they can promote the acquisition of the kind of skills needed for the knowledge society. Learning is now perceived as a self-structured and self-motivated process of knowledge construction and the learner is regarded as a self-governed creator of knowledge. The development of cognitive and strategic abilities is believed to be one of the principle aims of discovery learning, as a learning process based on knowledge construction is known. Here, the role technology-enhanced materials have to play can hardly be overestimated.

This is where data-driven learning, online intercultural exchange or computer-mediated communication, the use of networked technologies, including social networking, distance and blended learning, web authoring and publishing along with online and offline assessment and testing come together.

Bibliography

The following links to free online theory and learning/teaching resources may be useful for all those interested in data-driven learning:

Resources

The English Corpora site (by S. Braun (at www.surrey.ac.uk) offers short descriptions of and access to the most widely known English language corpora: American English, Australian English, British English, East African English, Indian English, New Zealand English, Philippine English, Singapore English, English as a lingua franca, historical English, other descriptions and websites (www.corpora4learning.net/resources/corpora.html).

The Centre for English Corpus Linguistics of the Université catholique de Louvain (Belgium) is a specialist research centre with three core areas of research activity: computer learner corpus research, cross-linguistic research, integration of (learner) corpus research into technology-enhanced language learning (www.fltr.ucl.ac.be/FLTR/GERM/ETAN/CECL/cecl.html).

At the resource developed by James Thomas, a research assistant from Masaryk University in the Czech Republic, learners who have achieved Threshold Level competence in English can discover a great deal about how the language works for themselves. The resources of this site provide a lot more information than dictionaries can (www.fi.muni.cz/~thomas/EAP/concordancers.htm).

DDL online

ICT4LT module: using concordance programs in the modern foreign languages classroom (www.ict4lt.org/en/en_mod2-4.htm).

How to avoid giving bum information? Jamie Keddie, an English teacher and writer based in Barcelona, offers his own resources to help answer this question (www.hltmag.co.uk/jul06/idea.htm).

Tom's ESL Lounge (Tom Axtell's test-bed for no-cost network-assisted language learning (NALL)) describes how ESL teachers in Québec's CEGEP system use concordance software to provide learners with a rich language learning experience, gives reasons why concordancing is useful, and provides a step-by-step example of how this tool can be used (http://pages.infinit.net/jaguar3/lounge/concord/default.htm).

ICAMET – Innsbruck Computer Archive of Machine-readable English Texts – is divided into three subsections, namely the Prose Corpus 1100-1500 (a full-text database), the Letter

Corpus 1386-1688 (containing 254 complete letters from different sources, arranged diachronically), and the Prose Varia Corpus (a mixture of tagged, normalised, translated and otherwise manipulated or synopsised texts). Since the texts are offered in their complete versions, they allow literary, historical and topical analyses of various kinds, particularly studies of cultural history (www.anglistikguide.de/cgi-bin/ssgfi/anzeige.pl?db=lit&nr=000753&ew=SSGFI).

Online texts

Bibliomania is a great starting point with a huge reference section, classic novels online, as well as important classic non-fiction works including biography, science, economics and ancient texts, plus poetry, Shakespeare's (in)complete works, etc. (www.bibliomania.com).

The Online Books Page – this index includes more than 9 000 English works in various formats. All should be free for personal, non-commercial use (http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu).

Project Gutenberg – the Project Gutenberg philosophy is to make information, books and other materials available to the general public in forms a vast majority of the computers, programs and people can easily read, use, quote and search. There are three portions to the Project Gutenberg Library: (1) light literature; such as *Alice in wonderland*, *Through the looking-glass, Peter Pan, Aesop's fables*, etc; (2) heavy literature; such as the *Bible* or other religious documents, Shakespeare, Moby Dick, *Paradise lost*, etc; and (3) references; such as *Roget's thesaurus*, almanacs, and a set of encyclopedia, dictionaries, etc. (www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Main_Page).

Oxford Text Archive develops, collects, catalogues and preserves electronic literary and linguistic resources for use in higher education, in research, teaching and learning. They also give advice on the creation and use of these resources, and are involved in the development of standards and infrastructure for electronic language resources. There are lots of texts free of charge, but not very easy to use (http://ota.ahds.ac.uk).

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Case studies

Case Study 1 – Intercultural collaborative learning: creating and marketing an EFL online application

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Introduction

This chapter presents a plan for a joint project which was designed in the Blended Learning Working Group of an ECML workshop in Graz in 2009. The proposed endeavour is founded on the idea of involving three different groups of international partner students with different cultural backgrounds and interests in a project in which they will co-operate online and contribute their expertise to design and trade online a didactic, virtual web tool, which will include a sample lesson for students of English as a foreign language (EFL). At the time of writing this chapter, the project is being carried out by the three partner groups and it is, therefore, not possible to provide a full account of the actual outcomes. More details of the project and its results can be found at: www.englishproject.viko.lt.

As far as the structure of this chapter is concerned, first, we describe the profile of the three partner groups. Then, we go on to provide the rationale for the selection of activities. Following that, we present the educational aims and the expected learning outcomes. Next, we describe the teaching methodology and the students' collaboration patterns. Finally, we make some proposals in terms of the students' assessment.

1. The profiles of the three international partners

1.1 The Greek partner group

The Greek students, who are EFL teachers, attend a Masters programme in Applied Linguistics at the Hellenic Open University (HOU) and are using distant learning to enrich and expand their teaching skills outside of the course. The programme is built on a number of modules, which aim at helping students, on the one hand, acquire a solid theoretical background and, on the other, to get acquainted with novel practices, digital applications and modern means of instruction that render foreign language learning effective and stimulating.

The experience of creating online learning activities is expected to be challenging and rewarding for the specific students due to the fact that it can open new job opportunities for them in the Internet market.

1.2 The Lithuanian partner group

The Vilnius College of Higher Education (VIKO) is the largest accredited higher professional education institution in Lithuania. A group of students who have been doing their Professional Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science in the Faculty of Electronics and Informatics has joined the project. In particular, the students study computer programming and information systems and at the same time they attend a course in English for specific purposes (ESP), which aims at increasing their ability to understand and deal with various situations, communicate a set of professional skills and perform particular job-related functions. It is hoped that the project will widen their experience of both designing online digital applications, and consolidating and expanding the English language.

1.3 The Icelandic partner group

The Icelandic students are completing their Masters in International Business at Reykjavik University (RU). Their role in the joint project is to design the marketing campaign for selling the digital product. These students have been working in different posts in business and have decided to attend this programme in order to acquire new skills and knowledge in marketing. Participating in the joint project is expected to motivate them since they will have to collaborate with students from other European institutions. This process is expected to broaden their intercultural experiences and offer them opportunities to sell a product in an international market. At the same time, it is believed that the project will help them expand their skills in the English language, which is the lingua franca of the Internet.

2. Literature review and rationale for the design of the joint project

The endeavour is in line with principles of good practice in the areas of blended learning, the intercultural communicative approach and new literacies. The joint project has been structured in such a way that the participating students' intercultural communicative competence can be enhanced through their online communication. Furthermore, the process of the co-operative production of the didactic, digital web tool is expected to expand their new literacies and broaden their experiences in the subject areas they are specialising in.

Blended learning, which can be defined as a teaching format that is articulated by combining online and traditional learning approaches in various degrees, is a mode of learning that

facilitates online intercultural exchanges, such as the one presented in this chapter. Growing numbers of scholars and researchers view this educational process as an active attempt to enhance teaching and learning within a learner-centred environment (Singh and Reed 2001, Cameron 2003, Frazee 2003, Garrison and Anderson 2003, Ausburn 2004, Dziuban, Hartman and Moskal 2004, Bonk and Graham 2005, Vaughan and Garrison 2005). Research has shown that asynchronous and synchronous online communication by means of e-mail, blogs, wikis or videoconferencing, which is combined with traditional teaching methods, enables students to develop their productive, that is, speaking and writing, and social skills (Vlachos 2009). Face-to-face instruction in the three regional institutions will prepare the international partners for the online collaboration as well as for the particular non-linguistic tasks each group will have to complete. The tasks are described in section 5 of this case study.

The intercultural communicative approach aims at the development of intercultural communicative competence, which is a construct that includes a number of sub-competencies, skills, experiences and awareness of one's own and other cultures (Vlachos 2006). Specifically, except for the linguistic, pragmatic, strategic and sociolinguistic sub-competencies, according to Byram (1997), the construct includes a number of interrelated components, that is, willingness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own; knowledge of social groups and their products; skills of interpreting and relating documents or events from another culture to documents or events from one's own culture and, last but not least, critical cultural awareness of one's own and other cultures. The online intercultural exchange planned in this chapter targets the development of intercultural communicative competence, which nowadays is interrelated with the acquisition of new literacies (Kalogerakou 2009).

Online technologies have changed the definitions of literacy to include electronic environments. According to Leu et al. (2004) and Lankshear and Knobel (2006), new literacies include the skills, strategies and disposition that empower students to use ICTs effectively to identify important questions, locate information, critically evaluate the usefulness of the information and to synthesise information to answer those questions. More specifically, as it is analytically discussed in Vlachos (2009), students nowadays need to be trained in new literacies that let them access multimodal online sources of information, decode and evaluate the meanings contained in these sources and use Web 2.0 applications to communicate their knowledge and ideas to other Web 2.0 users. In the vocationally oriented language learning (VOLL) context, acquiring sophisticated new literacies is essential due to the fact that students are being prepared to enter the working world as active members and, therefore, they need to exhibit readiness to make effective use of the ICTs and to demonstrate their social abilities that allow them to co-operate with representatives of different cultures, social environments and mother tongues.

Summarising the rationale for the design of the joint project, we may assert that the main aim is to enable the international partners build intercultural communicative competence and new literacies in a VOLL context with the aid of blended learning. The section that follows presents the particular aims the project opts for.

4. The teaching/learning aims of the joint project

The learning aims and the educational benefits are grouped on the basis of four categories: language, intercultural knowledge and experiences, new literacies and VOLL.

A. Linguistic aims in the English language

- improving communicative skills (negotiating, collaborating, reflecting and expanding other people's arguments, expressing oneself with clarity and precision, etc.) in the target language (English);
- becoming aware of netspeak;[10]
- accumulating ICT, business and applied linguistic related vocabulary.

B. Intercultural aims

- enhancing intercultural awareness and knowledge of more than one culture and social identities;
- cultivating the capacity to discover and relate to new people from other contexts;
- developing global awareness by collaborating with representatives of other cultures;
- mediating across different cultural groups;
- creating a pedagogical, digital product which reflects the interests and needs of all participants.

C. Developing new literacies

- improving online skills (using e-mail, videoconferencing and Skype to communicate effectively);
- creating sophisticated, user-friendly digital materials and media;
- communicating information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences using a variety of media;
- contributing to project teams to produce original works;
- getting used to locating, analysing, evaluating and synthesising information from a variety of sources and media;
- evaluating and selecting digital tools based on the appropriateness of specific tasks.

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10 "Netspeak" is an alternative term to Internet language, which involves all four language skills, that is writing, talking, listening and reading. Crystal (2001) has studied the characteristics of netspeak.

D. VOLL aims

- expanding and consolidating the Greek students' knowledge in lesson planning, activity design and assessing students' linguistic and communicative skills;
- broadening the Lithuanian students' technical vocabulary, gaining intercultural skills working with the international team;
- improving the Icelandic business students' specific vocabulary regarding the marketing area; they will also improve their intercultural skills/competence.

5. Teaching methodology and collaboration patterns

Each international partner group has been in charge of a part of the project.

a. The Greek students have been in charge of designing the application in terms of pedagogy and applied linguistics. First, they will consult their partners in terms of their expectations from the joint project. Next, they will define the types of learning activities they will create for the sample lesson of the didactic web tool, as well as the patterns of collaboration the activities will entail (group work, pair work, individual work). Furthermore, they will write the instructions for the learning activities. Finally, they will explain to the Lithuanian partners what the layout of the learning activities will be like.

b. The Lithuanian students are in charge of creating the application following the layout guidelines dictated by the Greek students. Specifically, first, they will consult the Greek students about the characteristics of the application, that is how it will work, who will use it, the facilities it will offer (for example, online dictionaries and thesauri), the type of learning activities it will include (for example, cloze tests, multiple choice questions, interactive games, writing tasks, etc.). Having constructed the didactic web tool, the Lithuanian partners will explain in detail how the application works to the Icelandic students and ask for their suggestions to improve the application, so that it may attract online customers, who use it to improve their EFL skills.

c. The Icelandic students will need to collaborate with both groups overseas in order to get a proper description of the product they are expected to trade online since their task in the joint project is to design a marketing campaign for the digital application. They will get information from the Greek students regarding target customers, their educational level and age, how the application will be used (for example, for individual access at home or at school or for group work at school). In other words, the Icelandic students will require and be provided with all the necessary information in order to create a business plan. At the same time, the Lithuanian students will give them all the information about how the didactic tool will work in order to allow them

to describe it properly to potential customers. The selling campaign will be published in the web tool. Table 1 presents the separate steps required for the completion of the joint project.

Steps to be taken	Partners involved	Length of time	Task
Step 1a	Greece	2 weeks	Develop specifications for the engineers
Step 1b	Lithuania	1 week	Clarify the needs of the Greek students
Step 2a	Lithuania	2 weeks	Create mock-ups of the platform and send it to Iceland
Step 2b	Iceland	1 week	Consult the Lithuanian partners about technical characteristics
Step 3	Iceland	2 weeks	Create the marketing campaign and share it with all the partners of the same group
Step 4	International teams	2 weeks	Creation and submission of the portfolio
Step 5	International teams	Same week	Reflection on, and evaluation of, the teaching/ learning procedures and patterns of collaboration

Table 1: The steps to be taken for the completion of the joint project

6. Assessment and evaluation

6.1 Formative evaluation of the project and self-reflection

The project work in each partner group is organised by a co-ordinator. The co-ordinators in each of the three countries will prepare a questionnaire that will attempt to raise students' awareness regarding collaboration patterns, the effectiveness of co-operation, the quality of the product in terms of pedagogy, the usability of the produced online application and proposals as to how the product can be improved. The questionnaire will be answered twice

by the students. The first time students fill in the questionnaire will be two months after the joint project has started, so that the co-ordinators will gather information that will be used for adjusting and improving the work plan and the learning activities that will follow. The second time students complete the questionnaire will be at the end of the joint project. This time the co-ordinators will collect data regarding both the effectiveness of the endeavour and also the students' progress in terms of the teaching/learning aims presented in section 4 of this chapter.

6.2 Individual assessment forms for each participating country based on the specific criteria each co-ordinator has established

The Greek students' work will be assessed by the HOU co-ordinator on the basis of how effective the EFL activities will have been in terms of the principles of good practice in foreign language teaching. They will also be assessed with reference to the new literacies they will have built and the intercultural awareness that they will have developed.

The Lithuanian student's work will be assessed by the VIKO co-ordinator on the basis of the following criteria:

- if the steps taken to create the application will have been appropriate;
- whether the set problems will have been solved;
- if the students will have improved in terms of language expression.

The Icelandic students will be assessed by the RU co-ordinator according to their final product (portfolio), which should reflect the effectiveness of their marketing campaigns. In addition, they will be assessed in terms of the following criteria:

- language and communication (oral and written through chats and Skype recordings);
- intercultural aspects (use of appropriate register of language and commitment for meeting the deadlines);
- new literacies (proper use of the multimedia resources used in the project to communicate).

Concluding remarks

The case study presented in this chapter was designed in the E-VOLLution Graz workshop as an example of how telecollaborative exchange and blended learning can be used in a VOLL context to enhance language learning, intercultural awareness and the development of new literacies. At the time of writing the chapter, the case study is still being developed. The participating students have already reported that the specific collaborative project provides

them with opportunities for personal development in the professional fields they are interested in. The project is a model that can be altered or expanded. It can also be adjusted to the learning, social and cultural conditions that constitute reality in the educational environments individual groups of international partners come from. In closing this chapter, we would like to assert that joint, online, collaborative VOLL projects need to be accompanied by systematic observation and research so that their dynamics, potentials and weaknesses are recorded and documented in the relevant literature. The results will be published in the near future in our online platform.

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Case Study 2 – Learning though blogging: a case study with business Spanish students at Reykjavik University

Pilar Concheiro

1. Introduction

In a knowledge society where competence domains are widened and in rapid evolution, organisations are forced to move towards the so-called Web 2.0 model, characterised by an intensive use of blogs, wikis, social bookmarking and RSS. Web 2.0 and its development of social platforms have brought about a change in online communication. In this new social web, all of us create the content and interact with each other. "Communication" and "interaction" are the terms that best describe this new reality.

Communication is a fundamental part of learning. As instructors, we communicate with each other, as well as with our students, who also interact with us and with each other. It would be a waste therefore not to use these online communication tools and apply them to our learning contexts, especially in the process of teaching and learning a foreign language.

This case study reports on the experience of using a blog in the classroom as a learning and evaluation tool on a university level course with students of Spanish as a foreign language at Reykjavik University, Iceland.

According to Will Richardson (2006):

> blogs are made of reflections and conversations updated every day (if not a couple of times a day). They engage readers with ideas and questions and links. They ask readers to think and to respond. They demand interaction. Blogs are a collaborative space, as readers become part of the writing and learning process.

The blog tasks and the contents were adapted to the course level from A2 to B2 (see the European Framework of Reference for Languages). My students were mainly business students but they also come from other faculties as law, computer science, engineering and health education and the syllabus is designed as a Spanish course for professional purposes. Consequently, the "Reader" and "Debate" sections of the blog are focused on economic issues and news as a way to give a context and practise vocabulary and expressions related to their professional sector.

2. Why use blogs in my classes?

2.1 A source of input

In Iceland, there are very few chances for my students to practise their Spanish and they get most of the input from their classes. Taking into account the fact that all my students (as most of the Icelandic people) can access the Internet,[11] blogs were a good tool to use on my courses. The most positive aspect is that they gave me the chance to create a "Spanish environment" where my students could express themselves in Spanish. They could communicate in a virtual space with a real audience and with a real purpose. The contents used in the blog (articles, news, resources, images, etc.) could also be easily updated on a regular basis.

2.2 Distance and blended learning

Some of my students belong to the business community and it is often the case that due to their work schedule or because of a business trip they cannot always attend class. Sometimes, despite the fact that they want to keep on practising and studying a language, they give it up as they find it hard to follow the course. However, the use of blogs has improved the situation. Now, students can keep on working and collaborating in the course even if they are abroad or unable to attend class that day. All they need is an Internet connection.

My courses at the University of Reykjavik follow this schedule: Once a week I meet my students so we can focus on practising oral skills and maintain personal contact. The rest of the time we keep connected through the course blog where a dialogue about different issues is established. Students also feel that they are more autonomous and that they are more in control of their own learning process.

2.3 Blogs as a collaborative space

One of the greatest potentials of blogs is the ability to create spaces where students can collaborate with each other online. The read/write web opens up all sorts of new possibilities for students to learn from each other. The group blogs I run on the business Spanish courses are described as "a collaborative space created for and by the students of Reykjavik

11 According to the seventh survey published by Statistics Iceland on the use of ICT and the Internet by Icelandic households and individuals, results show that the vast majority of Icelandic households have a computer and access to the Internet. In 2008, 92% of households had a computer and 88% of households had access to the Internet. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development found that Iceland is the most web-savvy country, with a study showing it has the highest concentration of broadband users.

University". They know that their collaboration and participation is absolutely necessary and that sense of responsibility helps them to be more autonomous in their learning process.

Students interact with each other through their comments asking for an explanation of a word they do not know, for more information about their lives, introducing new content and links to other interesting pages trough hyperlinks or simply expressing their agreement or disagreement. They create a virtual Spanish learning community and when they arrive at class I usually hear things like: "Oh, yes, you mentioned that in the blog …". That sense of community helps the students to feel part of a group. They all work better together in class and social interaction is increased. The learning process here is less focused on the teacher and more on the students who do not expect the teacher to give them all the information. They create and construct their own knowledge. Students learn from each other, and if we focus on the linguistic aspect, we can see that after reading their classmates' entries and comments, students end up adding structures and new words used by others. Collaborating with each other in order to build a project like this one also contributes to developing students' social skills (for example, interaction and group work) that will have an important value in their future and professional careers.

2.4 A motivating tool

Having an audience is one of the most motivating factors of the read/write web. Students know that their comments and entries will be read by their classmates and that aspect makes them be careful about their writing and also motivates them to keep on publishing in the blog where they can express their own ideas and their own vision of the world. By reading and commenting on others' entries, they start to learn from each other without the instructor being too directly involved. Their comments are as important as mine; they "build" the blog with them. This helps them to be more critical and analytical without waiting for the teacher's opinion. They are not just readers and writers they are editors and collaborators as well.

The blog is a democratic tool that supports different learning styles, so for those students who might be more reticent to express their ideas in front of the class, a blog gives them the opportunity to share in writing the ideas they may be too shy to talk about. However, to make students participate is really important that we as teachers select topics and issues that are interesting for the students or related to their professional career.

3. My teaching experience with blogs: target students, content and evaluation

Over the last few years, some online tools such as blogs or forums have often been ignored by teachers, perhaps due to the perceived informality or maybe because some teachers think that those tools will involve extra work. I must admit that this can be a time-consuming exercise

depending on the size of the class. The best is to check the blogs every few days in order to prevent an overflow of unread, uncommented new blog entries.

The language courses I teach at the University of Reykjavik follow a continuous evaluation process and that means a substantial coursework requirement (in addition to examinations). On some courses, the schedule concentrates three hours in one class a week. So, I wanted to use our "face-to-face" class to focus on their oral skills (listening and speaking). But what about writing and the essays they were supposed to submit to me? At that point, blogs seemed to be the perfect solution. There were no more excuses like: "sorry, I forgot that I had to do this for the class …" or no more getting worried about where I had left that student essay. The answer is simple: "It is on the blog". We need to think about the blog as a great course management tool, a class portal where all the tasks are perfectly and safely kept.

The steps I followed to introduce the blog into our classes were the following. First, I set up a class blog at Blogger.com, which is owed by Google and it will host your blog for free. It is also one of the easiest to use and it has some levels of privacy that are important for a class blog. It was also a more authentic and real option than the intranet used in our university, which is more similar to a "closed garden". Another benefit of applying to the classroom an open platform is that it will help to develop the students ICT skills as they will learn how to manage a blog (that includes publishing, downloading pictures, adding links to other interesting web pages using hyperlinks, etc.) and they will be ready to repeat the experience outside the academic environment.

The class blog was divided into sections: "*Nosotros*" (where they introduce themselves), "*Lecturas*" – a reading section (with updated news and economic articles); "Debate" (where they express their opinion about some sociocultural issue as "10 tips for a business meeting in Madrid", "Spanish cultural stereotypes you have to avoid" or "how to start an export/import business between Spain and Iceland: useful tips and reliable sources to find information on the net"); "*Escucha la noticia*" (short films, songs, publicity adverts, etc. are included in this audiovisual section where they are also required to leave a comment); and "*Sugerencias*" (students decide the content of this section themselves by including links to resources, news … anything they consider can be useful for the course). Apart from these sections, links to online resources (dictionaries, grammar exercises, and a glossary for business terms) are selected and included to help students and to promote a more autonomous learning process. Also, an anonymous survey (one of the many applications offered by Blogger.com) about different aspects of their learning process is included periodically. I am the administrator of the blog and I subscribe the students, who have previously registered with a gmail account (most of them usually have one). During the first classes, I explain them very carefully how the blog works and what they are expected to do. Most of my students had previous experience and that was very helpful for their classmates.

Roughly, a third of the coursework marks come from the blog. The students have to do different tasks in the blog weekly (by creating an entry) and also participate by reading and making comments in their classmates' entries. I always correct the writing of the entries (in a different colour) but never the comments they make because they are made spontaneously and

I do not want to break the communication by making them feel too concerned about their correctness when expressing themselves in Spanish.

Once they got used to the blog dynamic, their participation and interaction was extremely high (although there are always some students that are more reluctant than others) and they started considering the blog an extension of the real classroom to a virtual one. Different blogs were used for each language course during the same period of time and these blogs were interconnected. So, students from different courses and levels could interact and learn from each other, thereby creating our Spanish virtual world. This learning environment can be easily extended to other countries: blogs designed by students in one country can be opened and linked to students from another country.

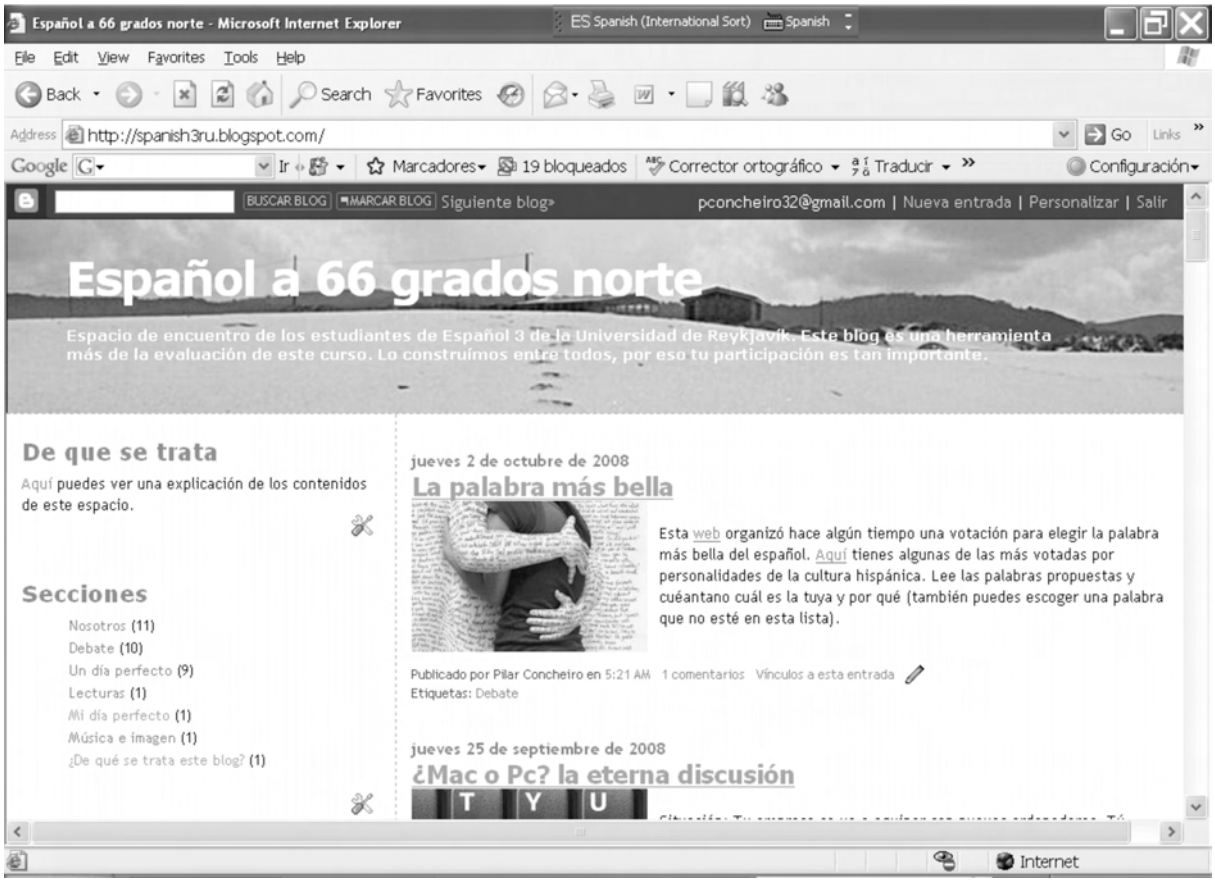

Figure 1: Spanish III blog

4. Conclusion

As a result of our work with blogs, students became more independent (by adding and selecting contents, practising at their own rhythm, choosing the learning resources they prefer, etc.) and at the same time they interact with each other. Students created contents and

collaborated with each other, they controlled their own learning process and they were able to work together and exchange their opinions with different learning communities. Is not this every teacher's dream? To teach our students to become independent thinkers and be open-minded about other cultures? Let us meet then in the blogosphere.[12]

> If we give students a voice, they will certainly use it.
>
> (Burguess 2006)

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12 Blogosphere is a collective term encompassing all blogs and their interconnections. It is the perception that blogs exist together as a connected community (or as a collection of connected communities) or as a social network.

Case Study 3 – Riga-Durham webinar on using Smartboard technology in VOLL

Steve Mulgrew (Durham, UK)
Natalja Cigankova (University of Latvia)

About the project

A webinar/workshop on the use of Smartboard technology in professional language education was organised by two E-VOLLution 2009 project participants, Steve Mulgrew, Durham, UK, and Natalja Cigankova, Latvia. The event, which took place on 3 December 2009, linked the presenter in the UK to Latvian students completing a Master's programme in English Language Teaching Methodology at the University of Latvia. The event was arranged as a Skype videoconference with live video presentations on Smartboard applications in foreign language education, followed by a live question-and-answer session with accompanying discussion.

Background to the technology

The Smartboard – or SMART Board interactive whiteboard to give it its full title – was first introduced into the UK in 1991 and has since become very popular in primary and secondary schools, universities and other training establishments. It consists of a touch-sensitive surface using resistive technology – in other words, the board detects the point of contact of a pen, eraser, or finger on its surface. This makes it easy to use for teachers who are accustomed to using a traditional dry-erase whiteboard, and for learners who enjoy being able to touch the display with their fingers. From a teaching perspective, it allows direct interaction with the material being presented, bridging the gap between the mouse and the monitor of a traditional computer system.

The popularity of interactive whiteboards in the foreign language classroom can be attributed to a number of factors. At its most basic level, the equipment provides an opportunity for authentic video, text and photographs to be shown in large format, enhancing the learner's experience and familiarity with the culture of the target language country. Slightly more advanced users will use the interactive whiteboard as a record of lesson activities, saving a digital flipchart which can be instantly shared via e-mail or uploaded in PDF format to a virtual learning environment, serving as a reminder of the lesson or a reference for absent students.

However, it is when combined with specialist software that the whiteboard becomes truly interactive. The ability to move objects around the screen – on SMART models with just the human hand – encourages participation and can motivate less confident learners to match, for example, words to pictures when learning new vocabulary. A favourite of language teachers is the information-gap exercise (or cloze text), where the student is asked to fill gaps left in a sentence or paragraph. Traditionally, a paper exercise, the interactive whiteboard software transforms this task to a hands-on collaborative activity where students can physically choose words from the word bank and drag them into the chosen position in the text, before moving or erasing some "digital ink" which reveals the correct answers. On some whiteboards, the software can recognise the word or phrase which has been selected and either accept or reject it, providing immediate feedback to the student. Because this whole task is carried out at the front of the classroom, everybody can be involved and group participation is encouraged.

The Smartboard software is ideal for teachers of languages other than their own, as recordings of native speakers can be attached to words or pictures in the SMART Notebook pages. Simply clicking on an object (or pressing with the finger) plays the sound clip. Objects can also be linked to external websites, PDF documents and video files.

The presentation in our online webinar made use of the lesson activity tool kit, a part of the SMART Notebook software which allows quick and easy creation of interactive resources, including anagrams, sentence ordering, spelling tests, true/false activities and matching games (the SMART website hosts a quick reference guide to these activities – see the link at the end of this chapter).

There are countless examples of video clips which give a more detailed impression of the capabilities of the Smartboard. Two can be found by following the links below. The first is a walk-through of a unit of work for primary school French, and the second a clever animation which shows how interactive whiteboards can really capture the imagination of the learner: www.youtube.com/watch?v=db8y7zj8Zc4 and www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLdHbtuCIyY.

Communication

Our webinar used the free Skype service as a means of communication, with a simple webcam pointing at the Smartboard in Steve's office in Durham. Through this arrangement, the students in Latvia were able to watch the presentation, listen to the description of the technology, and ask questions about what they had seen.

The students in Riga participated in the organisation and the event at each stage:

1. Organisational stage

Natalja and her MA students in Riga established the connection between the facilities in the two countries via Skype. All the necessary equipment had been prepared and piloted a week before the event. Students read the available information on the methodology of using interactive whiteboards in language teaching and prepared their questions for the presenter.

2. Webinar presentation stage **(web seminar/workshop)**

During the 40-minute event, Steve demonstrated numerous fascinating features of an interactive whiteboard from his office in Durham. Answering the students' questions, he showed how easy it is to improvise and creatively use the facilities of the Smartboard with students of different ages and levels of language competence.

Figure 1: Establishing contact – collaboration between the tutors during the webinar

Figure 2: Presentation in progress

3. Post-presentation stage

Steve forwarded the links to the online methodological materials on the use of Smartboards in language teaching for further reading. During the week following the event, the students in Riga read the materials and tried out the techniques demonstrated by Steve in the Smartboard-equipped classroom. Natalja guided them in preparing lesson plans and language learning activities with an interactive whiteboard.

4. Reconnection stage

A week after the webinar, a video connection via Skype was established again for a short time during the next lesson, so that the students could share their experience on using interactive whiteboards and express their views on further applications of Smartboard technology in language teaching. Steve answered their questions and gave his recommendations.

Figure 3: The students enjoying Steve's presentation

5. Evaluation stage

The students in Riga discussed the techniques developed and created their own teaching materials in an online discussion forum in their Moodle course and reflected on their experience of working with the Smartboard in their electronic teaching portfolios.

After the webinar, the Riga students posted messages in the Moodle course forum. They discussed the potential of the technology presented at the webinar for teaching languages and other school subjects.

This is what one of the students wrote about the advantages of using a Smartboard:

> I think we are going to use Smartboards soon. Some decades ago we did not use computers, but now we do. First, it is a great useful resource for teachers because everything we do can be saved and used in the future. Teachers do not have to write the material again but simply correct and add something. And, of course, our lessons become more interesting and diverse.
>
> (Marina)

The students, however, also mentioned that, for many Latvian schools, the Smartboard is still not an affordable piece of technology at the moment. Moreover, those schools that have bought it often cannot afford to finance teacher training for its implementation. Students

wrote in their forum messages that they had either only very little or no experience of working with an interactive board. Therefore, they found the webinar very useful and interesting for them.

As the Riga students report, walking over the "Internet bridge" between the two universities was exciting and extremely useful:

> I enjoyed the webinar a lot. It was a fantastic and unforgettable experience. I think the Smartboard is a great tool to make lessons more interactive among students, especially children.
>
> (Kitija)
>
> I agree that children would enjoy it a lot, and it will be something they are not used to. And, of course, the teacher will need some time to get used to it as well.
>
> (Nadja)

The webinar demonstrated that, at a time of severe shortages in funding for higher education in Latvia, it is possible to organise effective webinars and consulting via the Internet and thus promote cutting edge technology among language teachers who otherwise would not have the opportunity to attend such an informative, first-hand presentation as the one given by Steve. This mode of training can be very effective and makes for great savings in cost, and is, therefore, ideal for establishments that already possess a Smartboard but are in need of some support in order to unlock its full potential.

Images from the Smart Notebook file used in the presentation

The image below shows some sample screens from the webinar.

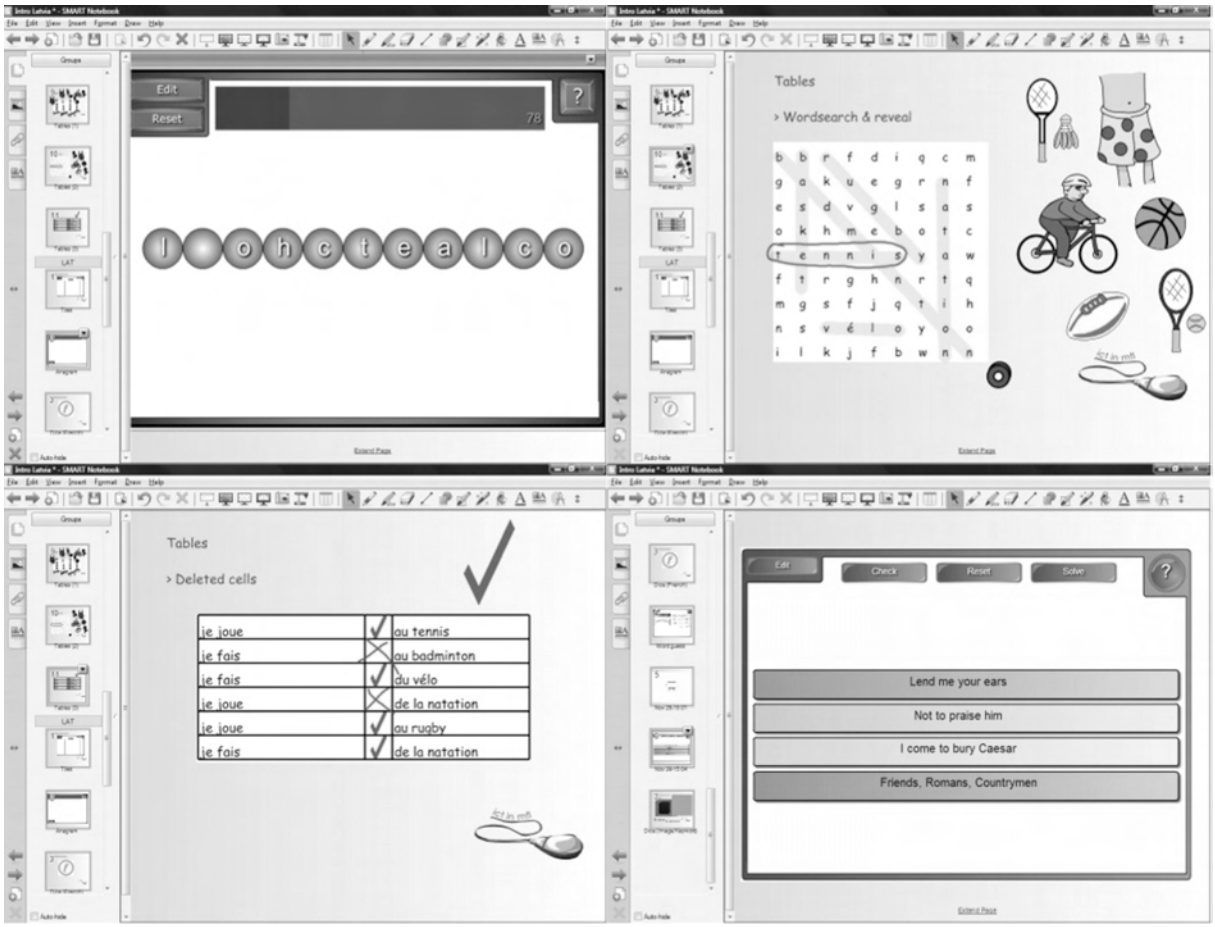

Figure 4: Smart Notebook in action

Clockwise from left, this shows an anagram activity and wordsearch for working at word level, an ordering activity for working at sentence or text level, and a table which will only allow certain answers to a grammar exercise. Other examples used showed that activities can be created by manipulating basic shapes and colours, for example making part of a sentence the same colour as the background so that it becomes visible only when moved into a box of a different colour, and the technique of having keywords on the board and "cloning" them so that a variety of phrases can be created, each time extending and rearranging the sentence to add more complexity.

Internet resources on Smartboard technology

The main website for Smartboard products is at http://www2.smarttech.com/st/en-us/products.

The Smart Notebook software can be downloaded from:
http://www2.smarttech.com/st/en-US/Products/SMART+Board+software/default.htm.

Information on the main features of the software can be found here:
http://downloads01.smarttech.com/media/services/quickreferences/pdf/english/qrnb10toolbars.pdf.

Some of the interactive activities demonstrated are described here:
http://downloads01.smarttech.com/media/services/quickreferences/pdf/english/lat_qrg.pdf.

Case Study 4 – Evaluation, testing and assessment

"May I help you, madam?" – English for office communication in an adult education centre

The use of current evaluation, assessment and testing instruments in a VOLL course

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1. Introduction

Within the context of the February 2009 workshop, a sub-group dealt with evaluation, assessment and testing, basing its work on some of the tools referred to and made available by the animator. The group took as its point of departure the situation of one of the workshop participants, who was in the process of setting up a (VOLL) English language course for employees in her organisation. The group members explored the different assessment systems available to decide on their potential for language testing and assessment procedures for the envisaged target group. They then set up a step-by-step system for evaluating the proficiency of course participants from entry level to achievement of course objectives.

By documenting the steps taken, they hope to give colleagues working in VOLL a practical introduction to available tools which they found useful for testing, assessment and evaluation, and guidelines as to how and when to deploy those tools.

2. The setting

The language department of the Viennese Adult Education Association (Wiener Volkshochschulen) had decided to set up and offer a new English course for employees in the administration of its 16+ member institutes throughout the city. The course was to address the needs of those operatives, all native speakers of German, who had contact with potential learners/customers in face-to-face or telephone settings. A blended learning approach was to be adopted, as staff members are spread over a fairly wide geographic area. This would mean a combination of contact classes in a group (face to face) and various online activities (Skype, e-mail, etc.).

The motivation for (potential) course participants was quite clear. A survey had shown that an increasing number of potential learners/customers for adult education courses were not speakers of German, but that English was used by the majority of this target group as a lingua franca.

In order to enable reception personnel to interact adequately with enquiries, an in-house language training course, "Can I help you, madam? – English for office communication in an adult education centre", was to be designed and offered in the winter term of 2009/10. The target level of proficiency – concentrating on oral/aural skills – was set at level B1 on the scales of attainment defined in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The teachers assigned to these courses were to receive specific training in assessment procedures to ensure that common standards were defined and adhered to.

3. Course description

The wording of the planned announcement of the course in the programme of the Wiener Volkshochschulen (in German) was to be as follows:

> "Can I help you, madam?" is a blended-learning course covering 40.5 units. It comprises a weekly self-study unit and online collaboration with fellow learners and the teacher/tutor of two hours per week (= 22.5 hours online) and nine face-to-face (f2f) sessions of two hours.
>
> In each online unit, learners will have to work individually (approximately two hours per week, depending on previous knowledge and online experience) and/or collaborate with their colleagues. There will be joint tasks where they will communicate with one another in a forum, a chatroom or via Skype.
>
> The nine f2f sessions will offer learners the opportunity to meet one another in person, to exchange experience and practise speaking English.
>
> Each of these nine meetings will last for two hours.
>
> Sub-groups of participants will work together on a final mini-project which will give them the opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned. The mini-projects will be presented in the final f2f session of the course.
>
> Learners will also be required to set up individual portfolios where they are to upload the tasks they have completed.

4. Setting the aims of the course

The communicative and linguistic aims of the course were defined in terms of "can do" statements adapted from those listed in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe 2001; cf. www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre_en.asp) and related to common communicative situations encountered by the operatives in everyday customer contacts. The CEFR provides a practical tool for setting clear standards to be attained at successive stages of learning and for evaluating outcomes in an internationally

comparable manner. “Relating language examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR) – A manual” and “Illustrations of levels of language proficiency” were particularly helpful in helping the group to define the objectives of the course.

4.1 VOLL-specific descriptors

However, for the purposes of defining the skills specific to the needs of the target group, the general descriptors needed further refinement, so the group examined a number of documents developed to aid authors, course designers and test experts to adapt the CEFR descriptors to VOLL situations. They are described here by way of exemplification, but by no means represent an exhaustive list of possible sources of material of this nature.[13]

The resources examined which were best known to the members of the group were EVoQs – the “European Vocational Qualifications”, a set of specifications based upon the CEFR and elaborated within the context of ROSLOTRAIN (www.icc-languages.eu/roslotrain.php), a European project conducted under the aegis of the LEONARDO programme of the European Union – and the descriptors of the “KMK-Fremdsprachenzertifikat” a system of vocationally oriented language certification developed for vocational schools in Germany.

4.1.1 EVoQs (www.icc-languages.eu/evoqs.php)

The EVoQs were developed by the ICC International Language Network (www.icc-languages.eu) and provide a system for assessment and certification (www.icc-languages.eu/certification.php). They can also be used to design courses and set clear learning/training aims. They can be used for benchmarking, for job descriptions and are thus of great value independent of training programmes. No examinations are involved in the achievement of an EVoQ. EVoQs candidates carry out work-related assessment activities – usually during normal course time – until they have covered all requirements.

There are six levels, corresponding to those of the CEFR, and four units – speaking (including interaction), listening, reading and writing. The five CEFR skills are thus all included. Levels and skills can be awarded across the board; for example, Reading Level B2 with Speaking Level B1. Thus, the current level of the candidate’s competence as well as his/her work-related needs can be accounted for and clearly expressed in a candidate profile. Overall descriptors are available for English, French, German, Italian, Romanian, and Slovak, and descriptors for levels A1-A2 are available in Estonian, Finnish and Spanish.

13 See, for example, the work of CILT, the National Centre for Languages (UK), at www.cilt.org.uk/workplace.aspx, or ALTE, the Association of Language Testers in Europe, at www.alte.org/projects/eelp.php.

Structure of an EVoQs unit

I Page 1: **Title** … informs about ▪ Level (A1 to C2) ▪ Area of competence (speaking, listening, reading, writing) ▪ Types of communicative activity	**II** Page 2: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages Orientation aid showing how the selected types of activity are defined at the respective level of general use of language	**III** Page 3: Range of situations and content … shows which factors influence or hinder the types of activity; helps to devise assessment activities (simulations) or to judge the suitability of natural (authentic) evidence offered for assessment
IV Pages 4 and 5: Examples of typical work-related performance … provides specific examples of types of communicative activities, at the respective level, which can occur in the work situation; can be used as reference for selecting natural evidence or for devising assessment activities Comprises: ▪ type of activity (job-related) ▪ key descriptor ▪ (3) job-related examples for typical performance	**V** Last pages: Assessment and certification (Checklist for actual assessment procedure) ▪ Type and range of performance evidence to be provided ▪ Activity type with key indicators for assessment purposes ▪ Assessment criteria to be ticked off ☑ as appropriate	

4.1.2 The KMK-Fremdsprachenzertifikat

The KMK-Fremdsprachenzertifikat (Foreign Language Certificate of the Standing Conference of the Ministers for Education and Culture of the *Länder*) system provides a standardised framework for the evaluation of VOLL competence in vocational education throughout Germany. It is the only system of testing within the German school system which has been approved and ratified by 15 of the 16 German states (*Länder*), whose ministries of education/culture are responsible for the school system within their own particular state. The system is relevant for all languages, but, to date, there are only descriptive grids for English, French, German, Russian and Spanish. An overview of the grids can be found at: (http://archive.ecml.at/projects/voll/evollution/graz_2009/testing/index_kmk_grids.htm). The KMK-Fremdsprachenzertifikat descriptors are also based upon the specifications of the CEFR and provide the basic structure for the vocation-specific test materials developed at a national and regional level.

AREAS OF COMPETENCE

Note: The following descriptions are based on the Council of Europe's
"A Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment" (CEFR)

	Level I (CEFR A2)	Level II (CEFR B1)	Level III (CEFR B2)
Reception	The candidate can grasp common items of information from simply structured and job-related texts, using aids such as dictionaries and illustrations. He/she can understand the content of short messages related to everyday working life if these are spoken clearly and slowly and there is an opportunity to listen to them more than once.	The candidate can quickly grasp the details contained in texts that are in frequent use in his/her field of work, using aids such as dictionaries and illustrations. He/she can understand virtually all the content of messages spoken clearly and at an appropriate, natural speed if the items of information are noticeably separated and there is an opportunity to listen to the message more than once.	The candidate can comprehend fairly complex texts in his/her field of work and recognise their implicit meaning, using works of reference if necessary. He/she can follow messages spoken at a natural speed and detect and record the main ideas even if these are spoken with a slight regional accent.
Production	The candidate can fill in forms used in everyday working life and form short sentences. He/she can successfully produce longer, guided messages, using aids such as dictionaries and/or text modules. The candidate has sufficient command of the language in order to convey the most commonly used, job-related factual information (even if the language employed is not always completely correct).	The candidate can produce standard texts that are typical of his/her field of work in the foreign language to a relatively high degree of accuracy, acting on instructions and using works of reference. He/she can express factual information concerning his/her field of work comprehensibly in the foreign language despite a limited range of vocabulary.	The candidate can phrase texts that are typical of his/her field of work to a high degree of language and stylistic accuracy and appropriacy of form, without necessarily resorting to text modules.
Mediation	The candidate can render simple, job-related facts provided in the foreign language in German. He/she can also convey simple job-related facts given in German, in his/her own words in the foreign language, using works of reference.	The candidate can render job-related facts provided in the foreign language in German or convey the message in the foreign language facts provided in German, using works of reference. Of primary concern is appropriacy of content, not accuracy of language and suitability of style.	The candidate can either render fairly complex job-related information provided in the foreign language in German or convey fairly complex job-related information given in German in his/her own words in the foreign language, using works of reference. He/she considers stylistic appropriacy.
Interaction	The candidate can cope with simple conversational situations in the foreign language dealing with the exchange of information in his/her field of work, making use of the help provided by the person to whom he/she is talking. He/she is aware of cultural differences existing between the speakers of the two languages. He/she is able to react to very frequently used messages using basic language. Pronunciation, choice of vocabulary and use of structures may still be strongly influenced by his/her mother tongue.	The candidate can cope with conversational situations in the foreign language that arise frequently in his/her field of work, on occasion making use of the help provided by the person to whom he/she is talking. He/she can react to messages, and express or explain his/her own opinions or plans, considering major cultural differences. Pronunciation, choice of vocabulary and use of structures may still be influenced by his/her mother tongue.	The candidate can cope confidently with conversational situations in the foreign language that relate to his/her field of work. In the process, he/she can also take the initiative and adapt to the needs and wishes of the other person. He/she can react to fairly complex contributions within the situation. He/she can explain facts in detail and defend his/her position. In this context, he/she is able to pay appropriate attention to the intercultural differences existing in the occupational environment of the speakers of the two languages. Although the influence of his/her mother tongue may still be recognisable with regard to pronunciation, choice of vocabulary and use of structures, he/she has an appropriate command of idiomatic expressions.

The four levels of the Foreign Language Certificate issued by "The Standing Conference of Ministers for Education and Culture of the Länder" (KMK) can be categorised according to the Euro-Levels as follows:

A		B		C	
Basic User		**Independent User**		**Proficient User**	
↙	↘	↙	↘	↙	↘
A1	**A2**	**B1**	**B2**	**C1**	C2
	KMK-Level I	**KMK-Level II**	**KMK-Level III**	**KMK Level IV**	

Pages 3 and 4 of the KMK-Fremdsprachenzertifikat feature the global descriptions of the four areas of competences tested, adapted to vocational requirements. They are "reception" (listening/reading), "production", "mediation" and "interaction". The descriptions are CEFR-oriented (cf. the descriptions in English, German, French, Spanish and Russian: www.ecml.at/projects/voll/evollution/graz_2009/testing/index.htm).

Documentation by Manfred Thönicke in German, "Zertifizierung von Fremdsprachenkenntnissen in der beruflichen Bildung DAS KMK-FREMDSPRACHENZERTIFIKAT – Hinweise zur Aufgabenstellung und Bewertung/ Aufgabenbeispiele für Englisch" (available at www.hamburg.de/contentblob/69118/data/fremsprachezertifikat-kmk.pdf), gives an overview of the background, the objectives, guidelines and formats of the examination system, which is administered throughout the country.

4.2 Specific aims for "May I help you, madam?"

Using the materials referred to above, the specific aims of the "May I help you, madam?" course were set as follows:

4.2.1 Listening and understanding

Of the types of communicative activities commonly occurring at this level of competence, understanding during interaction was considered to have the highest priority, leading to the following overall aim:

- can understand the main points of clear, standard speech, if clearly articulated and spoken with a familiar accent, on familiar matters regularly encountered in work situations related to customer enquiries.

Range of work-related interaction:

The following factors influence the specific form of the respective type of interaction at this level; these factors must be taken into account in the production of assessment and training activities:

- location and situation: workplace and places directly related to workplace (training/educational courses, congresses, talks, airports, railway stations, etc.);
- topics and content: facts and data from own area of work; simple topical and political themes, weather, etc;
- media: direct (face-to-face) communication; telephone.

Conditions and restrictions

1. Understanding occurs in simple one-way situations or in short listening and audiovisual texts related to work-related routine situations.
2. For the most important listening comprehension descriptors for this level, see "interaction" below. It is important in this connection that the other persons adapt (without being asked to) to the speaker's level of competence when this proves necessary.
3. As a rule, only standard accents or dialects are understood well.
4. Background noise cannot be too loud so that it drowns out the information; good listening conditions must prevail.
5. Visual aids are useful (brochures, handouts, etc.).
6. In the case of audiovisual recordings, there should be a clear connection between sound and the supporting pictures.
7. Listening strategies are mainly top-down, although bottom-up strategies are used for more demanding texts, where meaning is reconstructed on the basis of isolated words.
8. Understanding gist is possible in most cases as well as understanding selected details; subordinate units of meaning can be understood in their entirety

Typical performance in selected work-related activities:

(NB please remember that this level also includes all descriptors listed at lower levels.

- Obtaining information (announcements live and via PA)
    - *Can extract selected data (or details) and facts from all listening texts related to own routine area of work and can also understand extended units of meaning or complete texts in their entirety.*
    - Can understand simple routine messages on own or others' answering machines ("Hello, it's John Smith speaking. Please phone me back. I need to know when the German course at Level A2 begins next month. I'm travelling all day today, so could you please leave a message on …? Thank you").

Understanding during communicative interaction:

See descriptors for speaking/interaction below

Range of situation and content

- The samples of evidence provided for the purposes of assessment must cover at least one example from each of the following aspects of situation and content:

Location and situation

- Workplace and places directly related to workplace

Themes and content

- Facts and data from own area of work
- All kinds of announcements
- Simple current everyday topics (weather, etc.)

Media

- Telephone, answering machine
- Direct communication (face to face) with one other person

4.2.2 Speaking/interaction and oral production

Types of communicative activities commonly occurring at this level:

- information exchange and goal-oriented co-operation;
- transactions: exchanges involving obtaining and providing services;
- conversation (social contacts).

General level of language competence for the activities chosen

Exchange of information and goal-oriented co-operation:

- can – without difficulty – exchange more comprehensive routine information in his/her own job area;
- can follow most exchanges, but must occasionally ask for repetition or explanation if the interlocutor is speaking too quickly or if utterances are too complex;

- can recount in English the contents of short work-related German texts (course descriptions, conditions of participation, pricing, etc.) and express his/her opinion on the subject matter;
- can describe problems; can explain what is to be done; can compare alternatives;
- can give exact instructions and follow detailed instructions.

Transactions: exchanges involving obtaining and providing goods and services:

- can make a reservation for a course;
- can cope with non-routine situations during customer contact; can respond to complaints;
- can tell someone the way with detailed directions.

Conversation – social contact:

- can participate in conversations on known topics without preparation;
- can conduct everyday conversations when interlocutors speak clearly, but must ask for repetition from time to time;
- can maintain a conversation or discussion; sometimes expresses him/herself unclearly;
- can express emotions like surprise, pleasure, sadness, interest and indifference and can react appropriately to similar expressions of feeling.

Formal and informal meetings and discussions:

- can participate in exchanges on topics from his/her own area of work if the interlocutors speak clearly and adapt to his/her level of language;
- can participate in routine, formal discussions, exchanging factual information on familiar topics;
- can discuss solutions to practical problems if interlocutors speak clearly using standard language;
- can express his/her own opinion, agreement or disagreement, but has difficulties in more complex discussions.

Arguing a case:

- can express arguments sufficiently clearly for the interlocutors to follow them effortlessly;
- can explain and justify views, plans or actions.

Speaking to a group:

- can give a short, prepared presentation on a topic related to his/her own area of work and can explain opinions, plans and actions;
- can answer straightforward questions;
- can read out a short, prepared statement.

4.2.2 Reading

Reading of English texts for work-related purposes is not considered necessary for this course. However, there is a clear need for participants to be able to mediate between German texts and clients in oral mode.

4.2.3 Writing

Writing in English for work-related purposes is not considered necessary for this course.

5. Entry level

After examining and agreeing on the descriptors which were most appropriate to describe the target level of competence to be achieved – which corresponded roughly to Level B1 of the CEFR, but with a specific profile of skills (see above) – an entry level was defined. In order to ensure that learners in the planned course have an appropriate level of mastery of English to benefit from the course in its envisaged form, it was decided that they should have an overall level of competence which corresponds to Level A2 on the CEFR levels of attainment scale.

5.1 Online and computer-aided testing materials

The group then proceeded to examine the instruments available in electronic form for online assessment to help establish a person's general level of competence. The following websites

provided online tests which were considered suitable for a preliminary guide to overall language competence and which learners could use themselves without recourse to teaching staff.

5.1.2 Dialang

(www.lancs.ac.uk/researchenterprise/dialang/about)

DIALANG is a free, online language diagnosis system developed by a number of European higher education institutions. It reports a person's level of skill against the CEFR for language learning. The skills tested are reading, writing, listening, grammar and vocabulary for Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Icelandic, Irish-Gaelic, Italian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Spanish and Swedish. Instructions and tests are available in all the aforementioned languages.

5.1.3 Itembanker

(http://archive.ecml.at/projects/voll/evollution/graz_2009/testing/index_itembanker.htm)

The CAT (the Computer Adaptive Test of ITEMBANKER), a commercially available computer-based testing system available for English, German, French and Spanish that exploits a bank of 1 000 items per language, is also a suitable tool for initial placement. The items in the bank each have known difficulty values which have been established by trialling conducted with approximately 5 000 learners for each language concerned. All the items are calibrated on the same scale, so that the results of tests using all three ITEMBANKER programs report onto the Eurocentres Scale of Language Proficiency or the CEFR.

The CAT is a test on a computer which takes about 15-20 minutes to report the candidate's level. It adapts the difficulty of the questions it presents to the apparent ability of the user. If you get a question right, you are given a more difficult question; if you get a question wrong, you are asked an easier one. Normally, the program requires about 20 questions in order to give an evaluation. Answers are matched to a "network" which generates the acceptable answers.

The development of ITEMBANKER was supervised by Brian North, who was closely involved in the definition of the descriptors of the CEFR.

ITEMBANKER can be used to quickly and effectively verify a learner's language level, if supplemented by some form of self-assessment or interview conducted by a language professional.

Use of this tool would imply that the teaching organisation purchase it in advance.

5.1.4 Corporate English

(www.ce-world.com/html/e_home.htm)

Corporate English is a commercial, web-based system providing personalised training solutions for learners of business English. It has a comprehensive testing system and is mentioned here as an example of how a CAT can be used to place learners in suitable groups according to their level of competence, and assign designated tasks to compensate for established weaknesses. The relevance of this particular material is that it addresses the needs of those wishing to learn business English, so many of the scenarios, speech intentions and topics dealt with are of direct relevance to the needs of the identified target group.

Use of this tool would imply that the teaching organisation purchase it in advance, and the investment in such a comprehensive system would only be meaningful if the other elements of the program were used in the institution.

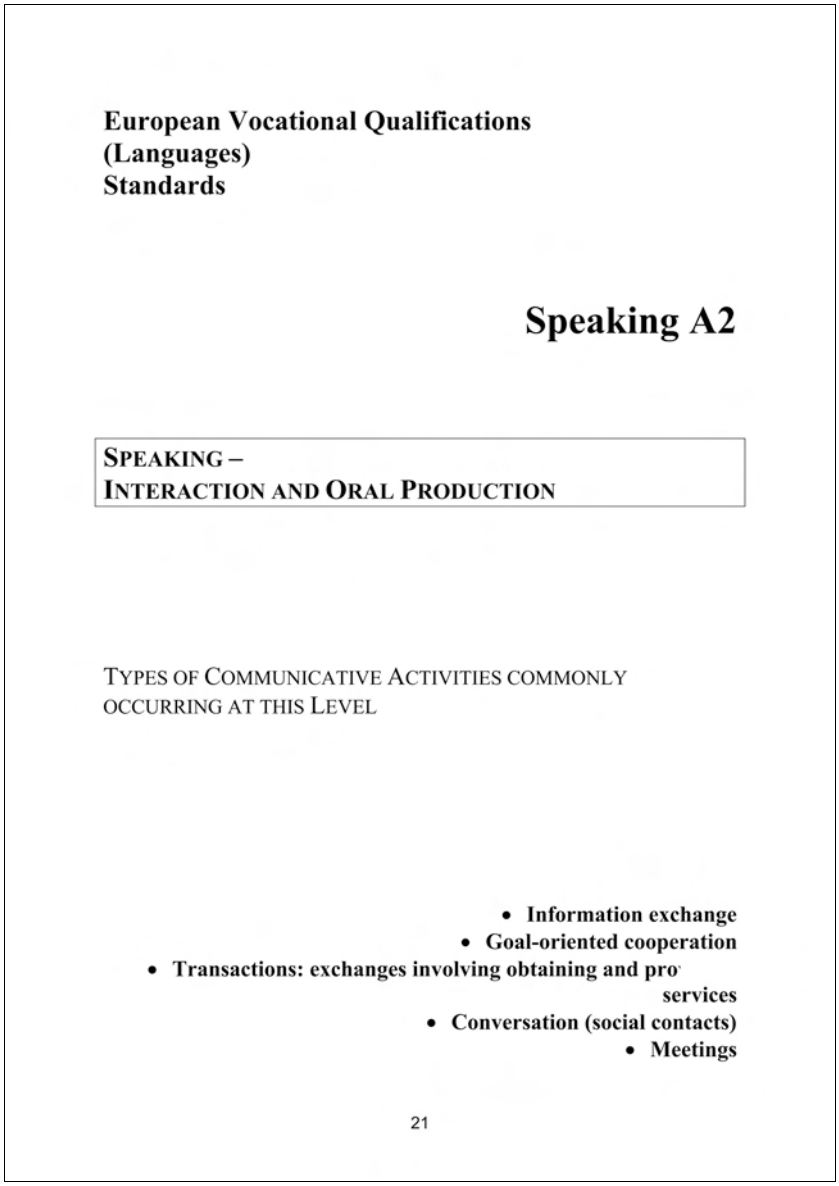
All the above, and especially ITEMBANKER and Corporate English, can, of course, also be used during the course to track progress in the acquisition of structures, vocabulary, collocations, etc. – the "knowledge" element in language learning.

5.2 Self-assessment to establish present level of competence

In addition to the above-mentioned testing devices, it is wise to ask potential course participants to gauge their own level of competence in the skills considered relevant to the objectives of the course. Again, there are a number of instruments freely available to help learners and teachers to establish whether the applicants have an adequate command of the language to be admitted to the course.

5.2.1 EVoQs as an aid to establishing present level of competence

This cover page of a unit in the EVoQs specifications indicates the language skill under scrutiny together with the level of competence described.



← Skill and level

←Sub-skill

←Communicative activities covered

Allgemeinsprachliches Niveau für die ausgewählten Aktivitäten (Orientierungshilfe)

Sprechen A2

- **Informationsaustausch:**
  - Kann sich ohne größere Mühe in Routinesituationen verständigen, in denen einfache und sachlich geläufige Informationen ausgetauscht werden.
  - Kann fragen, was jemand bei der Arbeit und in der Freizeit macht oder früher getan hat; kann entsprechende Fragen beantworten.
  - Kann persönliche Informationen geben und erfragen.

- **Zielorientierte Kooperation:**
  - Kann genug verstehen, um ohne größere Mühe mit einfachen Routineaufgaben zurechtzukommen.
  - Kann um Wiederholung einer Äußerung bitten, wenn er/sie etwas nicht versteht.
  - Kann aushandeln, was man als Nächstes tun sollte, kann Vorschläge machen und auf Vorschläge reagieren, kann um Anweisungen bitten und Anweisungen geben.
  - Kann die wichtigen Details von Äußerungen verstehen, wenn sich die Gesprächspartner Mühe geben, sich ihm / ihr verständlich zu machen; kann zeigen, ob er / sie etwas verstanden hat oder nicht.

- **Transaktionen: Dienstleistungsgespräche**
  - Kommt mit gängigen Alltagssituationen wie Unterkunft, Reisen, Einkaufen und Essen zurecht, z.B.:
  - Kann in einem Hotel die wichtigsten An- und Abreiseformalitäten erledigen.
  - Kann sich einfache Reiseinformationen beschaffen und öffentliche Verkehrsmittel wie Bus, Zug, Taxi benutzen, Fahrkarten kaufen.
  - Kann visuell gestützte Wegerklärungen geben und verstehen.
  - Kann in Geschäften, Postämtern, Banken nach etwas fragen und einfache Erledigungen machen.
  - Kann Informationen über Mengen, Anzahl, Preise usw. geben und verstehen.
  - Kann bei Einkäufen sagen, was er / sie sucht und nach dem Preis fragen.
  - Kann eine Mahlzeit bestellen.

- **Konversation:**
  - Kann sehr kurze Kontaktgespräche führen, vor allem, wenn die Gesprächspartner sich auf sein / ihr Sprachniveau einstellen; versteht aber oft nicht genug, um das Gespräch selbst in Gang zu halten.
  - Kann im Allgemeinen verstehen, wenn in deutlich artikulierter Standardsprache über bekannte Dinge gesprochen wird, vorausgesetzt, er / sie kann ab und zu darum bitten, etwas zu wiederholen oder anders auszudrücken.
  - Kann in Routinesituationen an kurzen Gesprächen über geläufige Themen te
  - Kann in einfachen Worten sagen, wie es ihm / ihr geht.
  - Kann mit einfachen, alltäglichen Höflichkeitsformeln jemanden grüßen / ansprechen.
  - Kann jemanden einladen und auf Einladungen reagieren.
  - Kann um Entschuldigung bitten und auf Entschuldigungen reagieren.
  - Kann sagen, was er / sie gerne hat und was nicht.

- **Besprechungen**
  - Kann im Allgemeinen in Besprechungen im Rahmen des eigenen Fachgebiets wechselnden Themen folgen, wenn langsam und deutlich gesprochen wird.
  - Kann relevante Informationen austauschen und, wenn direkt danach gefragt wird, die eigene Meinung zu einem konkreten Sachverhalt äußern, wenn er / sie Hilfe beim Formulieren erhält und wenn nötig darum bitten kann, dass wichtige Punkte wiederholt werden.

(adaptiert aus: *Gemeinsamer europäischer Referenzrahmen*)

Those wishing to join the course should tick off the "Can do" statements in the list opposite with or without the aid of a language professional.

The list presented here is the German version of the descriptors for speaking at Level A2, adapted from the CEFR[14].
For the English version, see below.

General level of language competence for the activities chosen (For orientation)

S / IntA2

■ **EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION**
- Can make him / herself understood with little effort in routine situations in which simple information related to familiar matters is exchanged.
- Can ask someone what he / she does or did at work and in his / her free time; can reply to corresponding questions.
- Can ask and respond to questions about personal information.

■ **GOAL-ORIENTED COOPERATION**
- Can understand enough to be able to master simple, routine tasks without great effort.
- Can ask for something to be repeated if he / she did not understand something.
- Can negotiate what is to be done next, can make and respond to suggestions, can ask for and give instructions.
- Can understand the important details in utterances if the interlocutor takes care to make them clear; can show if he / she has understood something or not.

■ **TRANSACTIONS: EXCHANGES INVOLVING OBTAINING AND PROVIDING GOODS AND SERVICES**
- Can cope with common everyday situations related to accommodation, travel, shopping and food, e.g.:
  - complete the most important registration and departure formalities while staying at a hotel.
  - gather simple travel information and purchase tickets for public transport like bus, train, taxi.
  - give and understand instructions on how to get somewhere (with visual support).
  - pose questions and conduct simple transactions in shops, post offices, and banks.
  - give and understand information about quantities, number, prices etc.
  - explain when shopping what he / she is looking for and ask about prices.
  - order a meal.

■ **CONVERSATION – SOCIAL CONTACT**
- Can handle very short social exchanges, above all when the interlocutors adapt their language to his / her level; but often does not understand enough to keep the conversation going him-/herself.
- Can generally understand when addressed in clearly articulated, standard language about familiar matters, provided that he / she is able from time to time to ask for repetition or for something to be expressed differently.
- Can participate in short exchanges in routine situations concerned with familiar topics.
- Can say in simple words how he / she feels using simple expressions.
- Can address or greet someone with simple, everyday, polite expressions.
- Can extend and react to invitations.
- Can extend and react to apologies.
- Can say what he / she would (not) like.

■ **MEETINGS / DISCUSSIONS**
- Can, in general, follow the contents of a meeting within one's own area of job activity if participants speak slowly and clearly.
- Can exchange relevant information and, if asked directly, express his / her own opinion concerning a concrete matter if he / she receives help with formulation and, if necessary, can ask for important points to be repeated.

(adapted from: *Common European Framework*)

14 A snapshot of the German version is presented here to encourage teachers of German as well as German-speaking teachers of languages other than English to visit and use this resource.

This page shows the English version of the “can do” statements for “spoken interaction” at Level A2.

Obviously, at this level of language competence it would be necessary to make the statements available in the native language (here: German – see above).

Together with a test of the nature described in 5.1 ff., above, it should be relatively easy to establish whether an individual candidate has a sufficient command of the language to participate fruitfully in the envisaged course.

As mentioned above, those wishing to join the planned course should master all of the language functions listed opposite to be admitted to the course.

The above materials could, of course, be made available online, so that interested parties need not travel to a central place to complete the form, but an interview with potential course participants is considered highly advisable.

5.2.2 DiLaPort: an online electronic portfolio for VOLL learners (www.dilaport.utu.fi)

An alternative to the above can be seen in DiLaPort. DiLaPort (Digital Language Portfolio), hosted at the University of Turku, Finland, was developed for VOLL teachers and learners.

From the teacher’s point of view, DiLaPort should help them to:

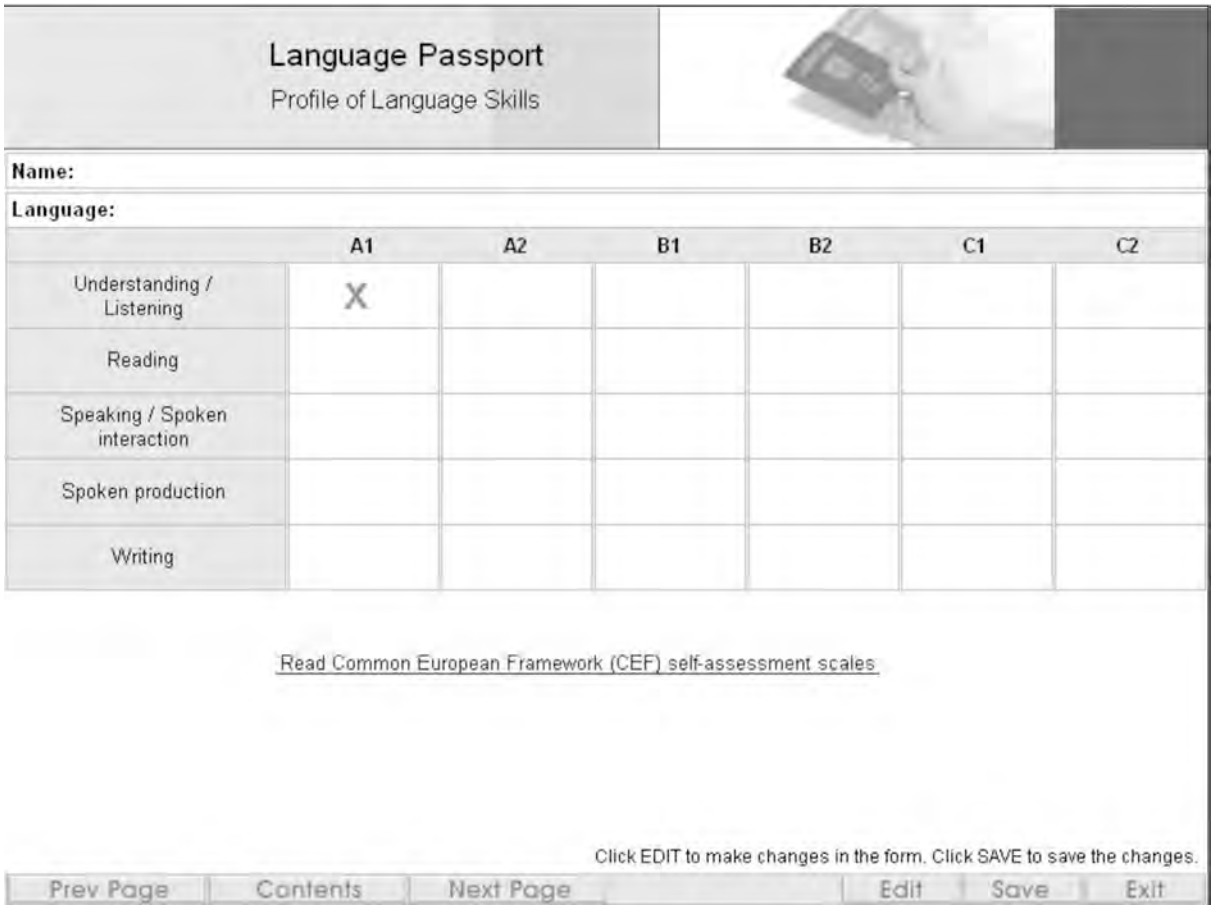
- introduce modern media (computers, Internet, video, voice recordings, etc.) into their teaching, step by step;
- make efficient use of the new media for planning the teaching and learning process and for recording progress in language competence;
- empower their learners to work more independently and to take charge of their learning;
- provide learners with instruments to explore and make use of authentic, "real world" materials and settings to support the learning process;
- change their role from that of "sage on the stage" to "the guide at the side", releasing them for more productive use of their time;
- become familiar with new concepts in foreign language learning and teaching.

For learners it is a practical, free and easy-to-use tool to help them focus their attention on important aspects of their foreign language competence and its further development.

In the digital language portfolio, learners can collect and record their best work and present it as evidence of their language skills.

DiLaPort has three components:

- A “Language Passport” revealing the person’s "linguistic identity", where they record their achievements and assess their competence in relation to the CEFR.



Language Passport

Profile of Language Skills

Name:

Language:

	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
Understanding / Listening	X					
Reading						
Speaking / Spoken interaction						
Spoken production						
Writing						

Read Common European Framework (CEF) self-assessment scales

Click EDIT to make changes in the form. Click SAVE to save the changes.

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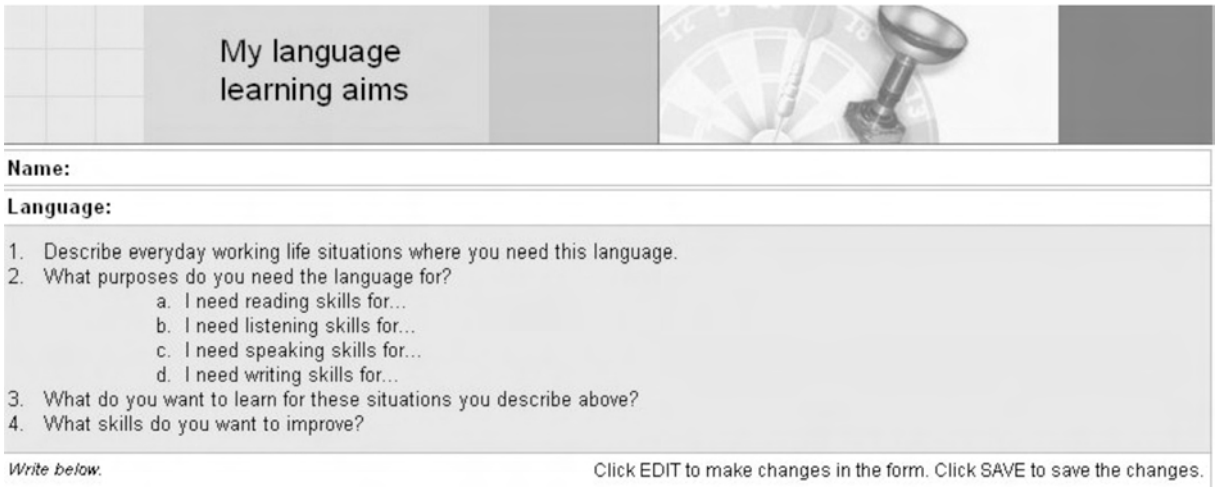
- A "Biography" where they set their language learning aims.



My language learning aims

Name:

Language:

1. Describe everyday working life situations where you need this language.
2. What purposes do you need the language for?
   a. I need reading skills for...
   b. I need listening skills for...
   c. I need speaking skills for...
   d. I need writing skills for...
3. What do you want to learn for these situations you describe above?
4. What skills do you want to improve?

Write below.

Click EDIT to make changes in the form. Click SAVE to save the changes.

- … and where they record how, when and where they have learned the language.

My language learning history 1

Name:

Language:

Describe your exposure to language as a child:

Fill in the courses you have taken:

Institution:	Year:	Length:

Fill in the exams you have taken:

Name of exam:	Institution:	Year:

Click EDIT to make changes in the form. Click SAVE to save the changes.

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Here, they update the biography as they collect more learning experiences, thus helping them to review their progress.

- Self-assessment forms also form an integral part of the portfolio.

A2 Speaking

Language:

Date:

! = yes, not completely !! = yes, fairly well !!! = yes, very well

I can:		Yes !	Yes !!	Yes !!!	Target
1.	I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities.	X			!!
2.	I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.				
3.	I can cope with common everyday situations related to accommodation, travel, shopping and food.				
4.					
5.					

Click EDIT to make changes in the form. Click SAVE to save the changes.

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- A "Dossier", which acts as a "digital showcase" where learners keep samples of their best work and which provides realistic evidence of their language skills.

6. Formative assessment

The group felt strongly that the envisaged course should integrate forms of ongoing assessment to help students take control of their own learning and to encourage a dialogue between teacher and learners to ensure that learner needs were being met. With this in mind, they explored the potential of the EVoQs and systems referred to above and the possibilities which electronic language portfolios offer, using DiLaPort as an example.

6.1 DiLaPort as a tool for formative/ongoing assessment

An e-portfolio like DiLaPort seems an ideal tool for learners to map their progress and become increasingly conscious of their language needs and progress. In the digital language portfolio, they can collect and record their best work and present it as evidence of their language skills. If they afford their teacher access to the portfolio, he/she can provide ongoing

feedback. The teacher may also gain insights into where further instruction/intervention is necessary for the course as a whole.

One of the obvious advantages of an e-portfolio is that it is immediately available to all who have been given access to it, once the learner has created/updated it, independent of time or geographical constraints. In an adult education course of the nature of the one envisaged, it represents an invaluable tool to provide a sense of community and to encourage exchange beyond the infrequent face-to-face meetings.

6.2 EVoQs and formative/ongoing assessment

The EVoQs system can also be used by learners to map their progress, ticking off the descriptors of language skills acquired as their learning progresses and providing evidence of these in the form of, for example, recordings using Skype or other recording facilities. The envisaged online co-operation between participants should provide ample opportunities for work-related role-plays of this nature. The simulation described below provides an example of how this may be done.

7. Summative evaluation

Whilst formative assessment is considered assessment for learning, summative assessment is characterised as assessment of learning. Summative assessment most often sets out to provide information on the product's efficacy, that is, its ability to do what it was designed to do.

However, within the context of "May I help you, madam?", the initiator wishes to know if, after the course, its staff are able to perform adequately in English to be able to provide the necessary service to its (potential) clients.

With this in mind, and mindful of the fact that one of the aims of "May I help you, madam?" is to provide teachers with models and guidelines for assessment, the project team decided to set up a simulation to test the oral performance of a candidate at the defined level of competence in the key skills defined above in 4.2.2.

7.1 A sample task

Listening and speaking (oral interaction) task:

Level B1 simulation

Situation: a customer calls your adult education centre and would like to book a German course. You should show the examiner that you are able to do the following:

- answer the phone politely;
- ask the customer to hold the line;
- offer him/her a variety of German courses, telling him/her the day, time, venue and costs of the course;
- deal with simple, predictable questions from a customer;
- provide some information about the teacher and the materials used in the course, if the customer asks for it;
- deal with routine enquiries from customers;
- take down factual information needed from the customer to enrol (name, address, bank account, etc.);
- end the telephone conversation politely.

7.2 A (recorded) simulation demonstrating application of evaluation criteria

To be able to illustrate and evaluate different systems of assessment of language learners' skills, a simulation of a test situation, based upon the above descriptors, was set up, using Skype and its recording facility "Pamela". The actors were a native speaker of English, acting as a potential customer, and a Polish German-speaking colleague from the E-VOLLution workshop acting as a member of staff of the adult education language institute.

7.3 Evaluation criteria

The E-VOLLution working group on evaluation, assessment and testing used two sets of standardised criteria to evaluate the "candidate's" performance and recorded their decisions for future reference and discussion by interested colleagues. After listening to the conversation described above, they exchanged views on the various interpretations of the terminology of the CEFR and assessment tools which were applied to find out whether the different tools applied would achieve more or less identical results – or not.

7.3.1 EVoQs evaluation criteria

One group used a slightly adapted version of the EVoQs evaluation criteria established for oral performance at level B1, based upon the choice of descriptors chosen above (c.f. 4.1.2 and 4.1.3) for the particular language functions the chosen target group would need to master to perform adequately in English at their workplace. The following table shows the overall criteria used in the EVoQs system.

Speaking B1

Activity Type	*Assessment Criteria* The performance evidence must fulfil **at least 12** of the following criteria:
1 Information exchange and goal-orientated co-operation 🗝 Competence is demonstrated in a broad range of routine activities in which mainly factual information is obtained and provided. **2 Transactions: Exchanges involving obtaining and providing goods and services** 🗝 Competence is demonstrated in routine activities in which services or goods are provided or obtained. **3 Conversation** 🗝 Competence is demonstrated in conversation on common day-to-day topics. **4 Formal / informal discussions and meetings** 🗝 Competence is demonstrated in discussions about **job-related, routine** activities and processes. **5 Job interviews** 🗝 Competence is demonstrated in simple job interviews involving routine activities. **6 Arguing a case** 🗝 Competence is demonstrated in delivering clearly structured, short statements (explanations, reasons, summaries, accounts etc.) in routine job-related events and meetings. **7 Speaking to an audience** 🗝 Competence is demonstrated in delivering simple, prepared talks (presentation, toast, announcement).	The candidate … 1. ☐ uses appropriate interrogative forms to successfully acquire information; understands all questions asked 2. ☐ uses technical words and phrases related to his / her work in an appropriate way to provide routine work-related information 3. ☐ uses appropriate expressions to ensure understanding (repair strategies) 4. ☐ uses pronunciation, intonation and pace of speech so that he / she can be understood without undue effort 5. ☐ uses polite verbal conventions appropriate to social context showing awareness of intercultural difference where necessary 6. ☐ summarises routine agreements and arrangements 7. ☐ uses appropriate forms of greetings and leave-taking 8. ☐ offers help, expresses thanks 9. ☐ recommends goods / services; advises customers, discusses prices 10. ☐ provides (and understands) information on prices, quantity / number, size, colour, quality, etc. 11. ☐ expresses simply a wide range of feelings and views 12. ☐ expresses agreement or polite disagreement 13. ☐ intervenes, requests / grants permission to speak 14. ☐ contradicts politely / appropriately 15. ☐ explains, gives reasons in simple terms 16. ☐ reports on events in simple but clearly structured language 17. ☐ apologises appropriately; expresses regret

7.3.2 KMK-Fremdsprachenzertifikat evaluation criteria

Page 53 ff. of the document describing the KMK-Fremdsprachenzertifikat www.hamburg.de/contentblob/69118/data/fremsprachezertifikat-kmk.pdf) referred to above provides descriptors for the evaluation of oral performance in test situations in German.

BEWERTUNG INTERAKTIVER LEISTUNGEN (STUFE III, B2)

Globalbeschreibung: Der Prüfling kann berufsrelevante Gesprächssituationen sicher in der Fremdsprache bewältigen. Er kann dabei auch die Gesprächsinitiative ergreifen und auf den Gesprächspartner gezielt eingehen. Er kann auf [...] Mitteilungen komplexer Art situationsadäquat reagieren. Er kann [...] Sachverhalte ausführlich erläutern und Standpunkte verteidigen. Er ist dabei fähig, landestypische Unterschiede in der jeweiligen Berufs- und Arbeitswelt angemessen zu berücksichtigen. In Aussprache, Wortwahl und Strukturengebrauch ist die Muttersprache ggf. noch erkennbar. Er verfügt jedoch über ein angemessenes idiomatisches Ausdrucksvermögen.

Punkte	**Interaktive Kompetenz und Aufgabenbewältigung**	Punkte	**Sprachbeherrschung** *Accuracy, fluency, range, adequacy, comprehensibility*
15 - 14	Die Situation wird durch häufiges Ergreifen der Gesprächsinitiative und wiederholtem, gezielten und geschickten Einbezug des Gesprächspartners vollständig bewältigt. Die Aufgabe wird differenziert bearbeitet und effektiv gelöst.	15 - 14	Aussprache und Strukturengebrauch sind weitgehend korrekt; Wortwahl und Redewendungen sind dem Anlass gemäß gewählt und weitgehend idiomatisch verwendet. Die Äußerungen sind spontan, flüssig, verständlich und eindeutig.
13,5 - 12	Die Situation wird durch Ergreifen der Gesprächsinitiative und gezielten Einbezug des Gesprächspartners weitgehend bewältigt. Die Aufgabe wird systematisch bearbeitet und fast durchgehend gelöst.	13,5 -12	Aussprache und Strukturengebrauch sind überwiegend korrekt; Wortwahl und Redewendungen sind dem Anlass gemäß gewählt und weitgehend idiomatisch verwendet. Die Äußerungen sind nahezu spontan, fast durchgehend flüssig, verständlich und klar.
11,5 - 10	Die Situation wird durch gelegentliches Ergreifen der Gesprächsinitiative und Einbezug des Gesprächspartners überwiegend bewältigt. Die Aufgabe wird weitgehend bearbeitet und zufriedenstellend gelöst.	11,5 -10	Aussprache und Strukturengebrauch sind überwiegend korrekt, der Redefluss wird gelegentlich durch Fehler unterbrochen, aber diese behindern das sofortige Verständnis nur geringfügig. Ein Bemühen um situationsangemessene und idiomatische Ausdrucksweise wird deutlich.
9,5 - 7,5	Die Situation wird unter gelegentlichen Einbezug und häufiger Mithilfe des Gesprächspartners noch überwiegend bewältigt. Die Aufgabe wird noch ausreichend bearbeitet und im Wesentlichen gelöst.	9,5 - 7,5	Aussprache, Strukturen- und Wortgebrauch sind nicht fehlerfrei, erfordern jedoch nur wenig Rekonstruktionsleistung vom Zuhörer. Ansätze zu situationsangemessener idiomatischer Ausdrucksweise sind erkennbar.
7 - 4,5	Die Situation wird nicht mehr ausreichend bewältigt. Der Gesprächspartner wird kaum einbezogen. Trotz Mithilfe des Gesprächspartners wird die Aufgabe nur stellenweise erfüllt.	7 - 4,5	Die Aussagen enthalten entweder sinnstörende Fehler und / oder nicht den Sinn störende Fehler sind derart häufig, dass sie das Verständnis unangenehm behindern. Ansätze zu situationsangemessener idiomatischer Ausdrucksweise sind kaum zu erkennen.
4 - 0	Die Situation wird nicht bewältigt. Der Gesprächspartner wird nur ansatzweise einbezogen. Trotz Mithilfe des Gesprächspartners wird die Aufgabe nur ansatzweise oder gar nicht erfüllt.	4 - 0	Eine verbal wie strukturell stark von der Muttersprache geprägte unidiomatische Ausdrucksweise behindert das Verständnis erheblich. Das Gemeinte ist an etlichen Stellen nicht verständlich und / oder muss vom Zuhörer mühsam rekonstruiert werden.

The grids have two columns with the headings “Task achievement/management” and “Quality of the language applied”. The table has six horizontal rows, following the German marking scheme, ranging from “excellent” to “unsatisfactory”. The bold line below the fourth row indicates the pass mark. Each field contains descriptors and the range of score. Both columns are of equal importance, that is, if the total score of an assignment is 30 (as it is for oral examinations), the maximum score is 15 in each column. The pass mark is 7.5, etc. The description fitting best is marked in each column, and the scores are summed up.

7.3.3 Results of the simulation

While the working group was listening to the simulation described above, the different testing tools were applied by the members of the working group, working in two different sub-groups using the criteria listed in 7.3.1 and 7.3.2 respectively, at the same time. After the mutual comparison of the individual results, the working group came to the conclusion that both testing tools applied in the workshop had led to very similar results – an outcome that had not been expected. It was also agreed that the tools of the KMK-Fremdsprachenzertifikat, which had been completely new for some members of the working group, had served their purpose very well.

8. Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter was to give an overview of some of the tools available for testing and assessment in VOLL contexts based upon the specific need of a colleague in the group in the Graz workshop. As the envisaged course was relatively limited in scope and required only a narrow selection of descriptors, it makes no pretence at being comprehensive. We are quite aware that assessment, testing and evaluation encompasses far more than what has been described here, but hope that this contribution will encourage colleagues to explore the tools mentioned and to go beyond and explore the full range of materials now available, and to follow the rapid development of new approaches and instruments in this area.

There is no doubt that Web 2.0 and other new tools offer better and more efficient possibilities for assessment procedures than was previously possible, but new forms of assessment for the new modes of communication which are evolving are sorely needed.

In addition, we have observed that there is a great need for training in assessment procedures amongst VOLL teachers. The optimistic assumption that the use of ICT media in online or computerised testing will automatically lead to improvement in foreign language skills is not shared by the group, if such tools are the only means of assessment. We firmly believe that appropriate and effective evaluation, assessment and testing in foreign language learning and teaching requires a considerable amount of learning time and effort with all parties involved and cannot be left simply to the application of e-learning components. However, we do

believe that if we embed assessment and testing procedures in a principled, didactic approach, and implement them by drawing on known and well-tried pedagogical practice, the use of ICT will certainly lead to better linguistic profiling and an overall improvement in competence and performance on the part of VOLL learners. And, finally, we would like to add a word of caution with regard to the CEFR and the European Language Portfolio. This chapter has been concerned with evaluation, assessment and testing, but we would like to emphasise that the CEFR and ELF should not be seen simply as tools for testing/evaluating language proficiency. One of the principal tasks of these materials is to provide instruments to initiate discussion and debate on common terminology and descriptors for describing language proficiency in Europe – something which has been sorely missing to date.

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E-VOLLution: Exploring cutting edge applications of networked technologies in Vocationally Oriented Language Learning

Edited by Anthony Fitzpatrick and Robert O'Dowd

This publication is targeted at:

- VOLL trainers in vocational schools, adult and continuing education, universities of applied sciences and in-company training
- Multipliers as trainers of the above-mentioned groups
- Teacher trainers in educational training establishments
- HR staff in charge of in-company (language) training

E-VOLLution looks at the basic e-skills which 21st century workers need: strategies for effective online research, the ability to evaluate and use online sources of information; the ability to create multimodal content like presentations and learning materials, the ability to use traditional tools such as e-mail as well as Web 2.0 applications such as blogs, wikis, videoconferences and social networks for effective cooperation and collaboration in VOLL contexts.

For further information and materials relating to this publication, visit the website: http://www.ecml.at/projects/voll

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