Language Teaching in Live Online Environments.

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Abstract

This paper reports the concept development and evaluation results from the project LANCELOT (LANguage learning with CErtified Live Online Teachers). LANCELOT is funded by the Leonardo da Vinci programme of the European Commission. In LANCELOT a training programme for live online language teachers has been developed which covers the technological, methodological and intercultural aspects of live online language training. Concepts for the use of current online communication technologies and suitable language teaching methods in a virtual language classroom have also been developed within the project. These concepts are integrated by means of an innovative pedagogical concept for online teaching and learning called Web-Didactics. In order to verify that it is ready for the market, the training programme recently underwent thorough testing and evaluation..

Keywords: Christian Swertz, Rosa Schultz, Katharina Toifl:

1 Background

In recent years, numerous new technologies have been developed which have opened up opportunities for innovative language teaching and learning. One of the most interesting developments for Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) are synchronous communication technologies, such as audio or video conferencing. Since synchronous communication plays an important part in language learning the new opportunities are obvious. However, there is a lack of training programmes for teachers entering the

market of live online language teaching which take into account the range of possibilities that these new synchronous communication tools have to offer. At the same time, there is still a lack of teaching methods that describe how languages can be taught with the help of synchronous online communication tools, and that also take into account intercultural aspects.

In LANCELOT, we have developed a teacher training programme to meet the growing demand for adapting language teaching methods to synchronous online environments taking into consideration technological possibilities and intercultural aspects by focussing on the following four research questions:

1. Which online tools are available and suitable for synchronous language training?
2. Which language training methods are appropriate for online language teaching with synchronous tools?
3. Which aspects of intercultural communication have to be taken into account?
4. How can tools, language training methods and intercultural aspects be integrated in an online teacher training programme for synchronous online communication?

Tools, methods and intercultural aspects, explored in research questions 1-3, each belong to different knowledge domains. Thus the fourth question addresses the need for a concept that is capable of integrating the three other concepts. Our thesis is that this can be accomplished by the innovative WebDidactics ontology which was used in LANCELOT.

1.1 Tools in Online Teaching and Learning

Technological developments in the last years have brought forth an abundance of innovative online communication tools. In this regard it is of particular importance that synchronous technologies are now accessible to a con-

siderable number of people. LANCELOT has addressed the question of how these tools can be used effectively to support the communicative setting of a live online language classroom, and what knowledge needs to be conveyed in the teacher training programme to apply them accordingly.

Synchronous online interaction makes numerous ways of communication possible. Jonathan Finkelstein (2006) defines the following five functions which are served by synchronous online settings: instruction, collaboration, support, socialisation and informal exchange, and extended outreach. In synchronous online teaching the language trainer has to keep these functions and their realisation in mind. This can be accomplished with the support of a wide range of tools, both synchronous and asynchronous, which can be applied in online language teaching and learning. Apart from the web conferencing environment which lies at the centre of synchronous online teaching and learning, other asynchronous and synchronous tools may be used to support and guide the learning process. Some of the most frequently used synchronous tools are instant messaging and voice over the Internet Protocol (VoIP – Voice over Internet Protocol); asynchronous tools often include email and fora. These tools serve as alternative spaces of communication and support the actual virtual classroom. However, this heterogeneity of a constantly changing selection of tools leads to a research problem: since each of these tools specifically has a structure, features, and thus an impact on learning, the trainer needs to be aware of the nature of each tool in order to be able to choose the appropriate one for the respective teaching method.

Our understanding of this impact of tools on learning is based on a specific media theory. According to this theory a medium is material substance used as signs by humans. From this point of view computer technology is a medium, but it cannot differentiate between the sign and the matter. (While people know the difference between the word “tree” and a real tree, this difference does not exist for a computer.) In the computer the algorithms are the matter itself, they do not serve as signs. Therefore, algorithms can be understood as media. Still, people are able to express ideas in algorithms, e.g.

in the tools used in online language training. Thus, each tool for synchronous online teaching and learning has to be regarded as a different medium with a certain impact that is related to the ideas expressed in the algorithms (Swertz 2007).

In order to train teachers to apply these increasingly diverse tools (or media) in their teaching, a new form of teacher training methodology is called for. LANCELOT not only aims at developing methods for language training with the help of these technologies: it is, at the same time, developing a training program for live online language trainers on how to transfer their teaching to the virtual classroom. Thus, these technologies have to be considered both as learning objectives and as a medium for the teaching methods in the professional training programme. As familiarity with the tools is both a learning objective in itself, and a necessary condition for the competent implementation of teaching methods, objectives and methods become interrelated. This allows for an integration of hands-on experience and theoretical knowledge - i.e: theoretical knowledge about the technologies is conveyed and applied in the training that is delivered through the technologies. Thus, the issue of enabling the teacher to experience these technologies at the same time as he or she learns about their theoretical background has to be addressed.

1.2 Adapting Language Teaching Methods

The implications of applying novel tools in language teaching were another focus for the development of the LANCELOT programme. It seemed logical to assume that applying new technologies to language teaching would raise the need for the development of new language teaching methodologies. In fact, however, it soon became clear that, since the technological restrictions of early CALL have become a thing of the past, language teachers are actually able to use well-established methods in their online teaching without having to change them significantly. This means that the novelty of the tools - or the medium - is a means of transferring established methodolo-

gies and contents, and not a cause for inventing new ones. At the same time, we must not forget that a change of the medium will have certain implications for language teaching which had to be considered in LANCELOT.

Whether language teachers have been using the Communicative Language Teaching approach, the Direct Method, the Oral Approach, or a blended methodology in their face-to-face teaching, new technologies offer possibilities to transfer the respective method to the virtual classroom. Therefore, language teachers do not have to learn anew how to teach languages, or adapt to new methodologies. However, they do have to become familiar with the new tools and learn how they can adapt and adopt these tools for their own purposes. Thus, the research problem we defined here is how language teachers become familiar with the tools and learn about the adaptation process.

It is important to note that the tacit knowledge (Polyani 1983) inherent in the tools (in accordance with our understanding of tools as media, see Section 2.1) does have an impact on language training. This is because electronic hardware, which is the basis for fast and worldwide communication, and software which offers multi-channel (video, audio, text, images) communication, are two of the factors that implicitly influence language training. One of the implicit changes is the distance between people.

Distance is an essential factor in language training since it influences the possible modes of communication and the social relationship between the people. The concept of distance has been changed by the above-mentioned hard- and software in two respects. On the one hand, the internet makes it possible that teachers and learners may be situated in different regions all over the world. Thus the physical distance is great. In contrast, however, the physical distance between the participants themselves and the recording devices, webcams and microphones used by the participants is minimal. This leads to a communication situation where communication partners appear to be only a few centimetres away in both image and voice. In fact,

their voices are recorded from a distance that one would usually only experience a few seconds before a kiss. Consequently, synchronous online communication produces a rather close and intimate situation between people who are physically far apart.

According to McLuhan (1992), online communication can also be described as a “hot culture”, or “hot media culture”. This hot culture is a consequence of the frequent use of computer technology, which can be described as a cold medium. A cold medium involves people in the medium on a subconscious level. This involvement depends on the physical resolution of the medium. For instance: a traditional photograph on paper has a higher resolution than a web cam (35 mm - film is capable of resolutions above 100 million pixels, while current webcames obtain 1 million pixels). The photograph shows many details; the image is sharp, clear and has high contrast. Thus, the senses do not have to add much information in order to interpret the image. Web cams, on the other hand, show unfocused images with few details and low contrast. Thus the senses do have to add information before the picture can be interpreted – the observer is involved in the medium. This involving tendency is typical of hot media cultures.

The hot media culture resulting from the use of a cold medium needs to be taken into consideration when designing live online training. Hot media culture leads to certain expectations regarding communication. People in a hot media culture expect to be involved, to be close to each other and to have the opportunity to participate actively. For people not used to a hot media culture, this is quite demanding, and might lead to misunderstandings and insults, which may eventually even result in flame wars (endless insults in online fora). Therefore, in LANCELOT, the issue of introducing language teachers to a hot media culture has to be addressed.

1.3 A New Teacher Role in an Intercultural Setting

As language teachers move from the traditional classroom situation to the

live online environment, they will have to rethink their role. In redefining the role of the teacher we have to take into consideration the hot media culture which calls for an involving classroom environment as well as intercultural aspects which potentially are of particular importance in the virtual classroom.

According to some researchers, applying new e-learning tools increases the demand for a new teacher role: the role of the teacher as instructor is moving towards the role of the teacher as facilitator, as "guide on the side", consultant and resource provider (Hootstein 2002, Berge 2003). In addition, Berge also sees teachers as becoming expert questioners rather than providers of answers. The teacher now provides a structure to support the work of the learners on the one hand, and encourages self-direction on the other. At the same time, the student's role in a live online learning setting also changes from recipient to active constructor of his or her own knowledge, i.e. to an autonomous, independent and self-motivated manager of his or her time (Berge 2003). These changes in the teacher role are taken into consideration for the live online learning setting that is the focus of the LANCELOT teacher training course.

In this setting, teachers and learners actively engage in dialogue, and share their knowledge, which also requires changes in a teacher's communicative competences (Ambrose 2001). The teacher facilitates the learning process of each individual student within a constant communication process. Furthermore, new collaborative tools offer a wide range of possibilities for group work and collaborative activities in an e-learning environment. The teacher encourages the students to make use of these tools and moderates the process of group communication where necessary.

While new online tools do not require the use of completely new language teaching methods, they do not force teachers to redefine their role in the classroom from scratch either. Group work and the subsequent moderation of the group process has been a well-established teaching method in schools

for a long time. Most of these old concepts, such as strategies for group building, providing tasks for groups and allocating different roles within a group, are transferable to an online environment. However, as traditional group work was conceptualised for the possibilities of the traditional classroom setting, where only one room is available for all learners who are present at the same time, the concepts need to be adapted to the structure of heterogeneous synchronous online communication tools.

Additionally, we have to take into consideration the aspect of culture, which forms the background for the research conducted in LANCELOT. In distance language courses, intercultural communicative competences take on a great deal of importance. The high demand for native speakers in language teaching cannot always be covered easily in all countries or regions (e.g. it may be difficult to find a qualified Finnish teacher, who is a native speaker, in the Austrian countryside). Thus, live online or distance learning courses are appreciated as they facilitate cross-border communication, without the necessity of travel. It is therefore quite likely that people from different cultures meet in the online course and learn together. The basic idea of LANCELOT - namely using traditional teaching and learning methods in a slightly changed communication situation - faces a challenge when taking into consideration intercultural aspects: in different cultures classroom communication follows different cultural patterns. Moreover, teaching styles will typically also differ from culture to culture: while British teachers might prefer a task-oriented teaching approach, Turkish teachers often prefer a more lecture-oriented instructional design - accordingly, students from different cultures expect different teaching styles. Thus, this heterogeneity of teaching styles and the role of the teacher is another research problem, together with the heterogeneity of tools and methods, for the research conducted in LANCELOT.

2 A Training Programme for Live Online Language Teachers

The digital culture that has emerged from the development of computer technologies leads to a demand for a new theory of signs, language and speech, which will, in turn, lead to a new theory of language learning. However, as theory is not able to determine educational practice, and LANCELOT focuses on actual teaching, we did not meet this challenge with theoretical reflections, but with practical experience. Theory is used to identify problems that have to be dealt with in practice. Furthermore, adapting teaching to the hot digital culture and developing a suitable media habitus (Swertz 2007) are learning objectives that can only be reached by participating in the digital culture. These learning objectives are met in LANCELOT, as learning how to teach with the help of new media is done through the new media themselves.

The actual training programme aims at integrating the three strands (language teaching methodology, tools, intercultural aspects) and covering the problems described above. The key concept to connect the three strands in a heterogeneous environment that allows for individualised learning in an involving community is the didactical ontology used in LANCELOT.

2.1 Web-Didactic Concept for Integration

The integration of the three different strands considered in LANCELOT, namely language teaching methodology, tools and intercultural aspects, leads to the need for a new teaching and learning concept which allows for linking these aspects into one teaching and learning scenario. LANCELOT takes computer technology as a starting point for the development of this new concept.

One of the aims of a pedagogical knowledge organisation is adjusting content to media. This has been a challenge for pedagogical theory since Guten-

berg invented printing. Comenius, one of the founders of pedagogical theory, reflected on Gutenberg's invention as early as 1657. Comenius described books as an innovative technology and an important medium for teaching that allows us to not only improve tuition, but also to offer new forms of learning, and to help the lower classes. The novelty of computer technology puts us in a similar situation, as it also offers new forms of learning that have to be met with a new pedagogical theory.

Meder (1998) and Swertz (2000) have demonstrated in theoretical analyses that computer technology is structured in a specified way which calls for a corresponding organisation of the content. This organisation has to offer individual paths through the content for learners, thus demanding that teachers produce individually navigable hypertexts. In such a learning environment, individual navigation becomes an implicit learning objective: therefore, learning in this environment can be regarded as both teacher-directed and self-directed at the same time.

In order to support individual navigation, we need to provide navigation tools that reflect the structure of the content. This means that the demand for individual navigation reflects the structure of the medium and directed navigation reflects the structure of the content. In turn, this twofold reflective structure meets the structure of an algorithm-processing medium. To correspond to this structure we have to offer navigational aids allowing the learner to navigate individually and efficiently.

In light of these considerations, Web-Didactics (Meder 2006, Swertz 2004) was developed based on educational theory (Hönigswald 1927), knowledge organisation theory (Buder 1991) and traditionally successful pedagogical models (Flechsig 1996). These theoretical findings were transformed into a didactical ontology. This ontology is expressed as a metadata system that uses vocabulary which provides an aid for navigation. It allows for an automatic rearrangement of content according to varied educational models. By providing authors of educational content with this metadata system, they are

also supported in producing high quality content. Another advantage is the issue of quality assurance which is made easy by the fact that the material can be easily evaluated according to the metadata system. In what follows, we will explain the basic principles of this ontology.

The Web-Didactic ontology consists of a local hierarchy placed in a network topology. The local hierarchy consists of three layers: Media Units, Knowledge Units and Learning Units.

Media Units are classified by their media type, e.g. “Text”, “Table”, “Image”, etc. Knowledge Units consist of one or more Media Units with the same knowledge type, such as “Definition”, “Example”, “Strategy”, “Checklist”. Learning Units consist of one or more Knowledge Units referring to the same topic, such as “Intercultural Communicative Competence”, “Web Touring”, “Language Teaching Methodology in a Virtual Classroom”. The Learning Units are organised as a thesaurus and interlinked by classified "Relations" (e.g.: “Intercultural Communicative Competence” is on the same level as “Web Touring”, but includes the Learning Unit “Awareness in ICC”). These “Relations” make up the topology.

Subsequently, each “unit” or webpage is classified by three different categories – it may, for instance, be a “Definition” (Knowledge Type) regarding the topic “Intercultural Communicative Competence” (Learning Unit) in the form of “Text” (Media Type). Another example would be a “Checklist” (Knowledge type) regarding the field of “Web Touring” (Learning Unit) in the form of a “Table” (Media Type). On the basis of their individual learning types, the learners can decide whether they would like to start off learning about a topic by taking a look at an example or maybe, if they are more fact-oriented, at a definition.

The Learning Units can further be sequenced in Learning Blocks, allowing for a structured organisation of the course as an alternative to the individually navigable hypertexts.

There are three levels where Web-Didactic modelling is applied within

LANCELOT:

- The set-up of each Learning Unit
- The sequencing of the Learning Units
- The interrelation of synchronous, asynchronous and peer-to-peer activities

By modelling these three levels, the correlation between the three strands is established. In LANCELOT these principles have been applied as follows:

According to the principle of adjusting content to media (Comenius), the three strands of the LANCELOT course (technology, language teaching methods and intercultural communication) need to be presented in adequate, and therefore different, media. Computer technology provides different types of media, such as text, graphic, video and fora. Web-Didactics uses this characteristic of computer technology to support the production of content in a way that not only corresponds to the needs of teacher and learner, but also to the way content needs to be adjusted to media. Consequently, e.g. the technology-related Learning Units consist of other Knowledge Types and Media Types than the Learning Units on intercultural communication or language teaching methodology [for a detailed description see Section 3.2].

The Learning Units are combined in twelve Learning Blocks. Each block covers one week in the course and consists of a sequence of Learning Units dealing with a topic related to one of the three strands. While the Learning Units offer asynchronous materials, the main focus of the course is on synchronous activities. This has been taken into account by referring to synchronous peer-to-peer activities as a link between synchronous and asynchronous aspects: the strand-specific asynchronous learning material of the different Learning Units is integrated by means of synchronous peer-to-peer activities in order to meet the requirements of an involving culture.

Synchronous peer-to-peer activities form the link between asynchronous

self-study and the synchronous group sessions. For this purpose, the Knowledge Type "Peer-to-Peer Activity" has been added to the Web-Didactics metadata vocabulary. In the Knowledge Unit "Peer-to-Peer Activity" the trainees are for example asked to develop their own teaching scenarios. These are subsequently presented in the synchronous group sessions which offer the chance for the trainees to present the skills they have just acquired in the peer-to-peer and self-study activities and to get direct feedback from the trainer.

Web-Didactics makes it possible for the trainees to navigate individually through topics via the alphabetical Index of Learning Units on the platform, or to study the weekly amount of learning material in the pre-sequenced learning blocks. At the same time synchronous and asynchronous activities are connected.

How this system was applied to support face-to-face language teachers in becoming live online language teachers will be explained in the next section.

2.2 Learning Objectives for Language Teachers

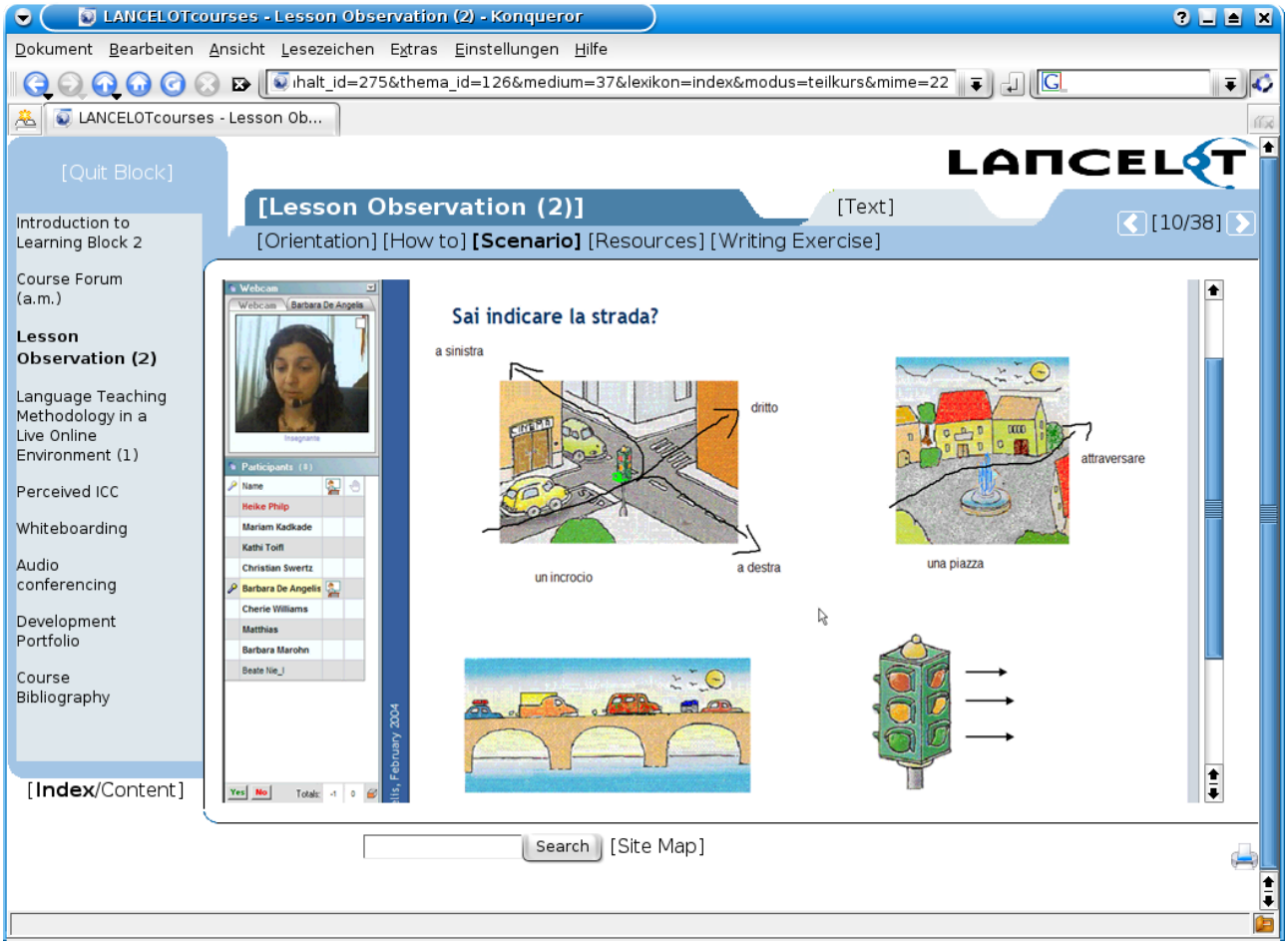
As mentioned previously, one of the primary challenges for synchronous online language teaching is that of establishing an involving community while referring to traditional methods. Knowledge on how to handle the new tools and how to adapt traditional teaching methods to the heterogeneous, individualising and reflective digital culture is required.

2.2.1 Language Teaching Methods

As a means of conveying expertise on how to transfer established teaching methods to a more involving and individualised culture, examples of such teaching scenarios were created to serve as case studies for the course participants. These case studies were subsequently put up for discussion.

For these case studies, an experienced live online trainer conducted a lesson applying a particular tool and language teaching method. Typically, the case studies show how concepts familiar to any language teacher, such as promoting listening skills, or correcting errors in spoken language, can be transferred to the live online environment. The case studies are provided in different types of media, that is, in written form (describing the situation) and in audio-visual form (from a conducted and recorded teaching session) in order to support individual navigation and reflection; they are connected with a task, asking the participants to discuss and reflect on these examples, and to develop their own scenarios in order to establish their individual way of teaching languages synchronously online. The participants are thus challenged to develop competences to design their own individual teaching scenarios for a live online environment.

With this method, the methodology strand of the LANCELOT trainee course does not depend on a particular teaching approach. The objective is not to show one "correct" way of how the respective tool and method have to be applied, but to enable the experienced language teachers to find their own individual strategies, by transferring methods which they use in their own classroom teaching to the live online environment. In order to support generalisation, a variety of tools is used.



Screenshot 1

This example and activity-oriented strategy is fostered by Web-Didactics in that it offers appropriate Knowledge Types: Examples, Tasks, and Scenarios (which hold the case studies for the purpose of lesson observation) as can be seen in Screenshot 1., thus providing a pedagogical model that meets the challenges explained above.

2.2.2 Recommending Tools

The challenges in recommending synchronous online tools are their hetero-

geneity and the issue of learning about these tools and through the tools at the same time. Unlike methodology-related knowledge, the application of tools in a live online environment is not an area of expertise of the typical LANCELOT trainee. Thus, we developed three steps to meet this challenge.

- Firstly, the LANCELOT course provides the knowledge about tools which is needed to make a well-informed decision regarding which tools are ideal in which situation. This includes detailed information on what tools are available, where and how they can be obtained, and a detailed description of their features.
- Secondly, the trainees use the various tools in the framework of the course, starting with the most familiar ones and moving towards more complex and unfamiliar tools. Thus, they learn through different tools. At the same time, they are provided with examples of how tools may be used in the virtual classroom. Email communication is typically used at the beginning of the course in order to help ease participants into familiarisation with new tools, as well as for general announcements regarding assignments or time and place of the synchronous sessions. Instant messaging, on the other hand, can be viewed as the "virtual hallway" (Nicholson 2002), where students can meet and chat informally, ask for directions or inform others of changes. Fora serve as a "home base" where students can discuss the learning materials with their peers or ask for (technical) support. In case there are technical problems in the online environment, voice and text chat (e.g. Skype) can be used as a back-up tool.
- Thirdly, the trainees start to grow familiar with the tools which are typically new to them by using them in involving peer-to-peer activities (appropriate for a hot media culture) and applying them by developing an example of an online training session.

In order to cover these three steps, the technology strand conveys factual knowledge about the tools, and assigns tasks related to these tools. The

Web-Didactics system supports this by providing Knowledge Types such as Descriptions, Checklists, How To's, Tools and Glossaries. This model reflects the concept of learning that is called the decision-oriented model within the Web-Didactics ontology.

2.2.3 Intercultural Aspects

Intercultural aspects affect LANCELOT in three ways:

1. the project consortium consists of people from different (teaching and learning) cultures;
2. the language teachers participating in the course originate from different cultures;
3. the learners whom the language teachers will teach after taking the LANCELOT course are from different cultures, which, in turn, will also differ from those of the language trainers.

Intercultural knowledge is particularly important for language teachers in a live online environment, as this medium is independent of local meetings, and thus potentially favours intercultural groups.

In order to be able to encounter difficulties typical of intercultural communication, the LANCELOT teachers reflect on their own cultural background, and how they are influenced by it. This approach is based on the assumption that when people know themselves better, they will also know their culture better and, as a result, will be more competent in other cultures (LANCELOT training course). These reflections are embedded in detailed theoretical knowledge and are divided into the following areas:

- Knowledge
- Attitude
- Respect
- Interaction

- Awareness
- Role behaviour

Web-Didactics enables this self-reflective approach by providing the following knowledge types: Reflection, How To, Task, and Explanation.

2.3 Connecting Heterogeneity

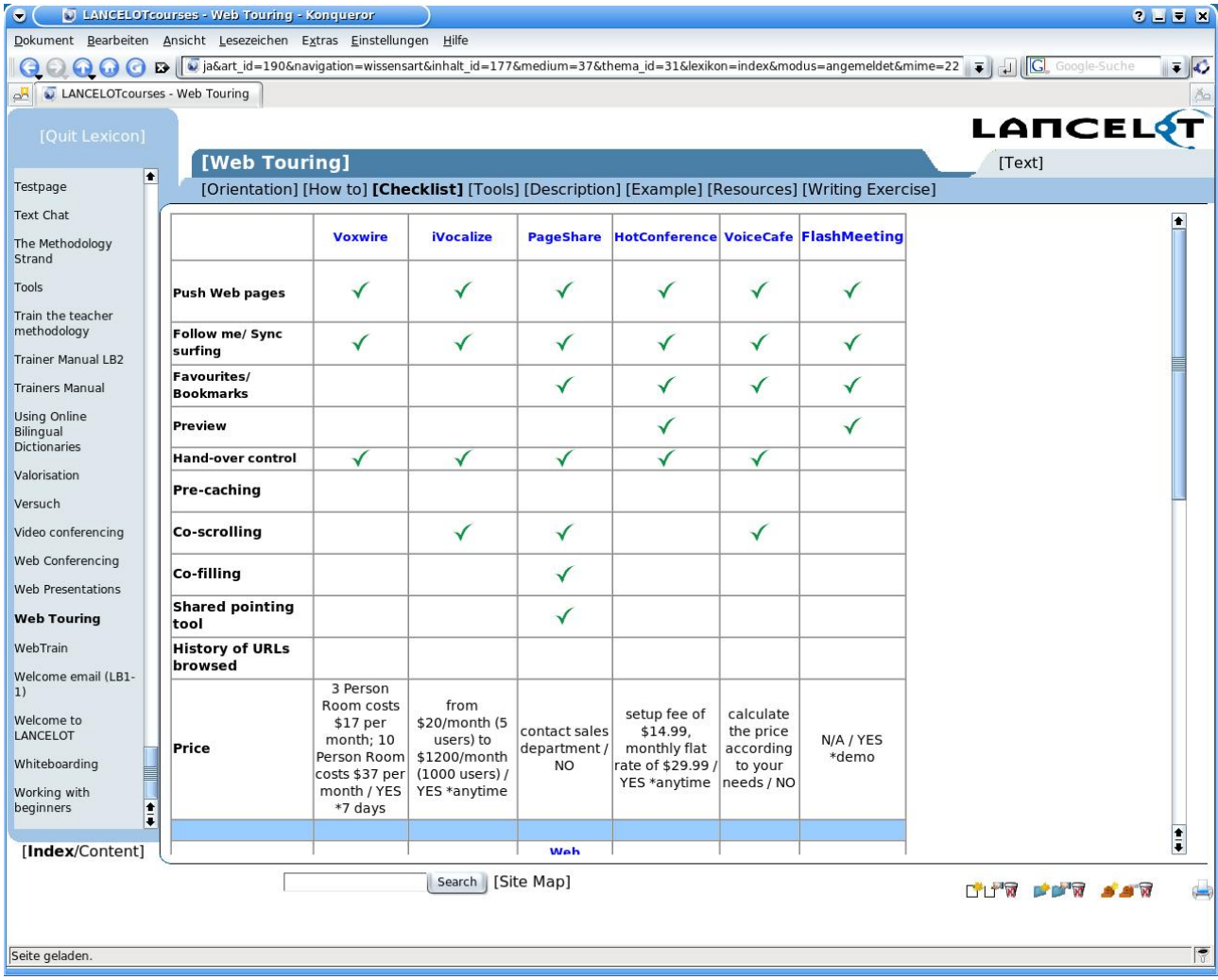
It has been shown that Web-Didactics is able to accommodate each of the three strands in LANCELOT (language teaching methodology, tools, intercultural communication) in answer to our research questions. Furthermore, it successfully connects the three strands by combining asynchronous (readings, writing exercises, other asynchronous tasks) with synchronous elements (peer-to-peer activities, group sessions) within the LANCELOT teacher training programme as follows:

1. Language teachers participate as learners in an online session using a certain tool, e.g. an icebreaker activity using a whiteboard.
2. Language teachers reflect on this usage and think about their own experiences as learners in these activities. This reflection takes place during the weekly live online session. This is done synchronously online to guide the participants in reflecting the present experience, so as not to neglect its immediacy.
3. Language teachers access asynchronous teaching material with background information on the teaching method, the tools and intercultural aspects.
4. They develop their own teaching strategy in a peer-to-peer activity, i.e. they meet live online with other learners and develop a short teaching sequence. This peer-to-peer activity forms the link between asynchronous self-study and the synchronous group session with the trainer.
5. The language teachers perform their teaching example in the online

classroom with the respective tool. The teaching example is commented on by peers and the trainer.

2.4 Training Language Teachers: Assessment, Supervision and Coaching

The tasks of training language teachers in the online environment also comprise tasks to guide the trainees on their way to becoming professional live online language teachers. In LANCELOT, reflection and problem solving



	Voxwire	iVocalize	PageShare	HotConference	VoiceCafe	FlashMeeting
Push Web pages	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Follow me/ Sync surfing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Favourites/ Bookmarks			✓	✓	✓	✓
Preview				✓		✓
Hand-over control	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Pre-caching						
Co-scrolling		✓	✓		✓	
Co-filling			✓			
Shared pointing tool			✓			
History of URLs browsed						
Price	3 Person Room costs $17 per month; 10 Person Room costs $37 per month / YES *7 days	from $20/month (5 users) to $1200/month (1000 users) / YES *anytime	contact sales department / NO	setup fee of $14.99, monthly flat rate of $29.99 / YES *anytime	calculate the price according to your needs / NO	N/A / YES *demo

Screenshot 2

are supported by specifically adapted forms of e-moderation, supervision and coaching. These strategies help them meet the assessment criteria. Assessment is a further task to be accomplished by the LANCELOT teacher trainer.

In assessment, the role of the teacher trainer is that of a first assessor. After the first assessment (explained later in this section), the task is passed on to an external assessment institution (International Certificate Conference – www.icc-europe.com)) to guarantee the quality of the LANCELOT course. Upon successful completion of the course, the trainees receive the LANCELOT certificate with the ICC stamp.

Assessment in the teacher training course is conducted via two traditional tools: a development portfolio and an observed live online teaching practice. The development portfolio serves as a record of the learning progress throughout the course, and is essentially a collection of the work undertaken in the course, such as essays, discussion tasks, peer-to-peer activities, etc. 80% of the specified work has to be completed as a minimum requirement for assessment. This form of assessment allows for a self-determined presentation of accomplishment, thereby connecting both the external perspective of the assessors and the perspective of the learner. Additionally, it is not sufficient to focus only on learning results to support life long learning, but the learning process itself must become the subject of reflection (Haecker 2005).

The second part of the assessment consists of an observed live online teaching practice. In the final two weeks of the 12-week training course, the trainees conduct a teaching session themselves which they plan and prepare in advance. These individual scenarios are then assessed according to the following Areas of Competence: Professional Values and Practice, Language Subject Knowledge and Understanding, Intercultural Communicative Competence, Subject Knowledge and Understanding, Technology Subject Knowledge and Understanding, Lesson Planning and Target Setting, Teach-

ing and Learning Materials, and Teaching. The assessment criteria are communicated in advance via the course handbook, which is made available to the trainees at the beginning of the course.

While these traditional assessment strategies are easily applicable, they also support the change of role and the habitus which is demanded from the teacher trainer. The involving and individualising structure of the programme raises the demand for continuous reflection on the learning process, which, at the same time, calls for the development of a new role for the trainer. The trainer becomes a facilitator by introducing the learning environment(s), helping to establish a group process, promoting the group communication process, implementing the learning process and promoting the development of the new role as a live online teacher.

This role of the trainer as a facilitator is complex, and consists of three different sub-roles: The trainer as e-moderator, as supervisor, and as coach. Therefore, the following three methods are introduced in the LANCELOT train-the-trainer programme to provide the trainers with background knowledge that helps them to facilitate the trainees' learning process:

- First, the method of e-moderation established by Gilly Salmon (2001) was adapted to the needs of the LANCELOT course. She developed a 5-stage model describing the learning process participants go through; from the very first steps in an online learning environment and in computer mediated communication (CMC) up to their competent use of CMC for their individual learning process and needs. She combines this with information on the tasks of an e-moderator to support them in succeeding in this process. Her 5 steps are: 1) becoming familiar with computer mediated communication (access and motivation), 2) online socialisation, 3) information exchange, 4) knowledge construction and 5) development. These are the phases which the participants of the LANCELOT course have to go through during the very first weeks of the course. Developing

competences in using the e-learning platform and various online communication tools including web conferencing systems is the precondition to participate successfully in the LANCELOT course. The 5-stage model guides the teacher trainers in becoming aware of the learning process the participants have to go through in these weeks and, furthermore, provides guidelines on how to support them in this phase of the course. This support is of great importance to avoid frustration and the feeling of excessive demands, and needs to be provided right from the beginning of the course up to the point where trainees are able to make use of the different learning materials, online communication, and live online experiences for their personal learning process. E-moderation in the LANCELOT course means, on the one hand, guiding the participants through the learning process described above. On the other hand, it also means moderating the communication process within the group, in the live online sessions and in the course fora as well as teaching in the live online sessions.

- Secondly, the trainer now teaches under new circumstances (see above). In the LANCELOT programme, he or she first demonstrates a new tool, and how it can be used for teaching, and then asks the trainees to reflect on the observed teaching scenario. This reflection process is initiated by the trainer with the help of supervision strategies. These strategies offer the possibility to assist the trainees in developing their own way of teaching live online and finding their own role as live online teachers. In its basic meaning, supervision is a kind of counselling that assists people in reflecting on issues and questions of their professional life, to solve them and to find alternative ways of acting upon them. The LANCELOT trainers support the participants in finding their role as live online language teachers. It is important to note that supervision does not mean offering ready-made solutions or tips, but rather assisting trainees in finding their

own solutions by analysing their problems together with them.

- Thirdly, the trainer supports the trainees in their learning process, encourages them in their learning, in managing their time, or in establishing an environment of intercultural awareness. Therefore, the concept of coaching was adapted to the special needs of the LANCELOT course.

As contemporary literature (Tomaschek 2003, Reichel 2005) indicates that there are certain difficulties in defining the difference between supervision and coaching, we developed these specific understandings of the two terms for the purpose of the project only.

Supervison and Coaching as well as e- Moderation are tasks the trainer takes on during the LANCELOT course to support the trainees with various issues in their development process to becoming live online language teachers. LANCELOT provides the teacher trainers with helpful information regarding time management, intercultural group management and appropriate provision of feedback.

3 Evaluation Results and Future Trends

Formative evaluation was conducted in the framework of a pilot test run of the programme with 23 participants in two courses. Participants from Austria, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden, Turkey and the United Kingdom attended the pilot test run. Qualitative interviews with the pilot trainees provided the project team with a range of vital results which have been taken into account for the final product. One of the main results is that 21 out of 23 participants actually finished the course, which corresponds to a considerably low drop-out rate.

The evaluation shows that the reflective strategy works well. Participation was successfully activated and a strong learning community was created. Although the course centred around social activities (group sessions and

peer-to-peer activities), trainees still asked for more communication and exchange of knowledge in the evaluation. There was a particularly high demand for personal and social exchange. This shows that the involving strategy was the right choice. An interesting fact was that even within the LANCELOT team itself, the synchronous communication needs arising from the change from the print to the digital culture, i.e. the more involving culture, were underestimated.

The same problem arose from transferring the practical experiences of the trainees to practical applications using the new tools. Despite the setup of the course, trainees said that the practical dimension of the course did not receive sufficient attention. This can again be understood as a result of the change from print culture to digital culture, which was identified correctly, but not put into practice sufficiently. Nevertheless, the demand for more social communication can easily be considered in the final version of the programme, since the high level of theoretical input was based on readings, which will subsequently have to be reduced. This will move the balance a good bit further towards the practical aspect of the course.

Further difficulties were observed with regard to the usability of the asynchronous learning platform, a greater workload than originally anticipated, and uncertainty as regards the tasks which had to be handed in for assessment. Further criticism concerned the participant number: based on the assumption that not all the course participants would finish the course, we started off with two groups: one with 12 and one with 11 participants. However, as only 1 person dropped out per course, we finished with 11 and 10 participants respectively. The course participants felt that, although they had valuable exchanges with the other course participants asynchronously in the fora and synchronously in the peer-to-peer activities, their time of participation in the synchronous group sessions was not sufficient, due to the high number of participants. Their feedback pointed to an ideal number of 4-6. Positive feedback, on the other hand, was given for the general course setup (LANCELOT methodology), the peer-to-peer activities, which serve

to integrate the three strands (methodology, intercultural aspects, and technology), and the quality of the written materials.

These results will be integrated so as to improve the final product, the LANCELOT course, which will then be made available to everyone under the Creative Commons License for public use. The training course and the accompanying trainer manual will be published as single file for text processors, and as Sharable Content Object Reference Model package (SCORM package) for Learning Management Systems (LMS, e.g. Moodle). Additionally, the material is provided as a ready-to-use online course at http://www.lerndorf.at/lancelotcourses/. In our view, this course will be an important contribution to the professionalisation of the rapidly growing live online teaching market.

4 Literature

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5 Key Terms and Definitions

Virtual Classrooms: Virtual classrooms are integrated internet applications that offer a set of conferencing and collaboration features for synchronous online teaching and learning. The minimum set includes the ability to speak (voice over IP), watch (webcam), present and work collaboratively (white-board) and enables the participation of larger groups.

Synchronous Communication Tools: Synchronous communication tools are internet applications where messages between the participants are transmit-ted with a delay below 0.5 seconds (chat, videoconferencing). These tools make it possible for participants to communicate synchronously (at the same time) regardless of the time zone or place they are in.

Tools: The tool in online communication is the software used. The software has to be regarded as a medium. A medium is material substance used as signs by humans. The qualities or features of the medium have an influence on online communication.

Intercultural Communication: Intercultural communication occurs when cul-tural differences create dissimilar interpretations and expectations about how to communicate competently.

Methodology: A Methodology is a set of rules and procedures that describe how content and learning objectives can be mapped to teaching and learning processes. While being mapped, the rules and procedures are interpreted and applied by teachers as responsible subjects.

Web-Didactics: Web-Didactics is an ontology of teaching and learning models expressed in a metadata vocabulary. The vocabulary is used as a guideline for teachers and as a navigation aid for learners.

Hot Media Culture: In a hot media culture mainly cold media are used. Cold media have a lower resolution and address more senses than hot media. People in a hot media culture expect an involving communication style with a high degree of participation.

Heterogeneity: Heterogeneity in the context of live online learning is the range of methods, tools, cultures and individual attributes of teachers and learners that interact in the teaching and learning process.

Supervision: In live online training, supervision supports the learners in reflecting their own experiences regarding the teaching and learning experience including intercultural aspects and tools usage. Supervision deals with planned reflections on a specific problem introduced by the teacher.

Coaching: In live online trainings the aim of coaching is to resolve specific problems that may occur in the online learning process. This covers technical and social issues as well as questions regarding the content. Coaching deals with unforeseen, specific problems introduced by the learner.

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