

## EUROCATERING LANGUAGE TRAINING

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### Abstract

*EuroCatering Language Training (ECLT) is a web-based interactive language course and a social platform in 7 languages for the catering sector developed by a project team of language teachers and trainers from Belgium, France, Ireland, Norway, Spain, United Kingdom and Slovenia. Following the second priority of the 2008 European Language Label -languages in the business world the project aimed to:*

- *raise the quality of foreign language teaching as the professional language of gastronomy and hotel industry*
- *improve the linguistically and culturally determined elements of mobility in the same sector*
- *promote the awareness of multilingualism in the catering community and in the public at large, including lesser spoken languages like Dutch, Norwegian, Slovenian*

*The specific objective within this framework was to produce clear, concise and particularly user-friendly and freely-accessible materials and language tools for specialized language teaching and learning in catering sector.*

*The final product of the project is the webpage <http://www.eurocatering.org> which offers a freely-accessible language course (The Cloche) and a social platform for a broader exchange of experience. (The Tray).*

*The Cloche consists off 34 workplace scenes starting with realistic interactions and including more than 400 interactive exercises with immediate correct/wrong feedback. The innovative point of the course is the visual and audio support of all words, phrases and sentences used in exercises. It is available in 7 languages (English, French, Spanish, Galician, Dutch, Norwegian and Slovenian) offering combinations of any 2 languages.*

*The Tray includes professional vocabulary with about 2000 words, cultural facets of the participating countries, video clips with common features of non-verbal communication and the The EuroCatering Language Portfolio which was adapted to the course and created to monitor the students' linguistic progress and self-evaluations of acquired competences in the field of specialized language thus introducing personal responsibility for linguistic and cultural headway into the learning process. The portal also offers various possibilities of exchanging professional and/or mobility experience in the form of blogs, videos, live chat and forum among all people active in the fields of gastronomy and hotel industry. The webpage lends itself to independent or guided learning as an add-on to any language course in the catering sector.*

*By actively participating in, and contributing its own expertise in this project the Secondary school of catering and tourism Celje has upgraded its long-standing tradition in educating catering and tourism personnel as well as strengthened the role of Leonardo da Vinci projects as a constituent part of its international school policy.*

### 1. Introduction

ICT is a key mechanism to create more social and economic opportunities for EU citizens and improve their access to quality services, also for education and training. [1] ICT for learning is not only improving learning but has the potential to transform the learning and teaching processes and offer as such other and novel ways of education and training next and together with more traditional schooling. The impact of ICT use on learners is closely related to its potential to innovate the teaching and learning approaches. The reviewed studies showed that learner-centred guidance, group work and inquiry projects result in better skills and competencies and that interactive forms of e-learning

can lead to a more reflective, deeper and participative learning, learning-by-doing, inquiry learning, problem solving, creativity, etc. all play a role as competencies for innovation and can be enriched and improved by using e-learning. The challenge is to nurture new and innovative learning approaches, to ensure that teachers and parents are aware of their potential and to support them in curricula, teaching guidelines, and teacher training. [2]

### **1.1 ICT as a lifelong learning opportunity**

ICT-enabled social network and improved connectivity provide also valuable new lifelong learning opportunities and models bridging the distinction between learning, work and leisure. In particular, young people are integrating ICT seamlessly in their everyday life and relying on their peers to develop their skills. They call for bringing organised learning approaches closer to their everyday practices, emphasizing ICT as communication and collaboration media.[3] ICT provides the means to support personalisation, where learners are also considered to be knowledge builders and creators and not just the recipients of transmitted knowledge.[4]

## **2. Project team**

The two-year Eurocatering Language Training project was developed by an international team of teachers and trainers from seven European countries (Belgium, England, France, Ireland, Spain, Norway and Slovenia) within the Leonardo da Vinci language project. Seven general meetings were held during this two years and eventually the final meeting with the dissemination conference.

### **2.1 EuroCatering language training (ECLT)**

ECLT is a web-based package of language tools focused on professional language skills and intercultural competences for the hotel and catering sector. Professional glossary ( a glossary of some 2,000 words or phrases) with sound files and images (1000 original pictures to illustrate this concept) has been set up in 7 languages for the catering sector. ECLT is divided into two parts: The Cloche and the Tray.

#### **2.2 The Cloche:**

is an interactive online language course in 7 languages for trainees or future workers in the catering area, illustrated with 34 different scenes in the kitchen, restaurant or common areas. The starting page is a chart with icons covering the scenes in the kitchen and in the restaurant and topics common to both working areas (numbers, time expressions, hygiene and uniforms).The scenes start with realistic interaction and include more than 400 interactive exercises with immediate correct/wrong feedback. All exercises (words, phrases, sentences) are supported by picture, sound and text. This feature is very important for the users learning less widely used languages as beginners because they are not limited to reading skills in the target language in order to practice speaking. Situations at their workplace (classrooms for cooking and restaurant service at school, workplaces during their training) are authentic. Each scene starts with a set of exercises, using single words, followed by phrases and finally by sample dialogues.

#### **2.2 The Tray:**

is a social platform including professional vocabulary with about 2000 words, where interested people can find (and add):

- additional material to the online course: a printable glossary, cultural elements, non-verbal communication, blogs, photo-albums, comments, evaluation surveys
- cultural facts information list: lists of pertinent cultural elements per country in EN and FR of the different participating countries, providing additional support to future trainees or workers in the catering sector

- gestures video: film illustrations of how you express some feelings in gestures, ... in the restaurant and kitchen in different countries
- ECLT Portfolio: the Language Portfolio adapted to the course content of our online course, designed for the catering sector

## 2.4 The main targets of this project were:

a) to produce a linguistic survival kit

Starting with a needs analysis (based on interviews with trainees, trainers and caterers in industry) we drew up a survival glossary kit for the kitchen and restaurant to which we added sound files and images. There are a total of 2126 lemmas, 1011 sentences, 963 pictures. In total, 35 respondents were interviewed; 20 trainees, 6 training supervisors in schools and 9 training supervisors in a restaurant or hotel, 18 in Belgium, 12 in Ireland, 3 in Norway and 2 in Slovenia. The main objective of this survey was to get a view on what the most important language-related problems are that trainees encounter during their work placement abroad. As far as language issues are concerned, we also wanted to look at:

- the motivations for selecting a work placement abroad
- the preparation for the work placement
- the perception of the cultural differences (including non-verbal communication)

Based on their experience, what would trainees and training supervisors ideally expect from a language training programme?

The work placement is a very important time in the life of a student in the hospitality and catering sector. It may determine his/her view on pursuing a career in this sector. Therefore it is crucial that the work placement should take place under the most favourable conditions. A lot of factors play a role in determining the success of a work placement. However it is clear that when the work placement takes place in a foreign country, the language becomes a very important factor. Dialogues and interactions have been drawn from real-life professional situations in the kitchen and restaurant. These communications are presented in an interactive manner. Trainees (and employers and employees) are on the whole focused on practicality, they mainly want to "do" things and are not interested in theory. Therefore the training tool has to be very practical, contain a lot of exercises, visual material, in order to keep their attention. Vocabulary is related to restaurant and kitchen equipment, to dishes, food specialties, ingredients and customer-friendliness. Expressions are related to social life; small talk, basic social contacts. Trainees should learn how to construct simple sentences in answer to "What", "Where", "When", "How", "Why", and also understand directives, actions, short instructions and simple sentences in general. The cultural components provided by each partner provide additional pertinent professional orientation. A social platform has been created so that the trainee and teacher may contribute their own experience and add material for trainees' cultural and professional preparation.

b) to provide trainers with a transparent language tool

Our Eurocatering Language Training Portfolio may be adapted to the contents of the programme. It cannot be divided into levels based on the Common European reference framework since it provides elements of highly specialised language elements. It contains the 3 constituent parts of the common ELP model, language passport, language biography and dossier.

c) minority languages

We have also provided all our glossaries, sound and image files, all learning content and the social platform in the minority languages Galician, Slovenian, Dutch and Norwegian. We have created access to online training which may be used as part of a taught course or as an independent study course.

d) to motivate and stimulate trainees and trainers to enhance their self-development, extend opportunities for life-long learning and employability

We have employed a graphic designer to enhance the quality of the imaging with a view to making it a seriously attractive programme to young trainees. Voices and images of the 5 characters, Head Chef, Trainee Chef, Restaurant Manager, Trainee Manager and Customer, are adapted to a suitable age profile and the characters are such that they are easily identifiable to trainees.

The social platform is a means to motivate and stimulate learners to use our programme and through interaction with other trainees will further develop their competences even more. A portfolio can be completed and used for evaluation purposes by the trainee or trainer to motivate to further acquisition of pertinent language skills. The distracters provide interest, curiosity and challenge.

The flexibility of the learning flow allows the trainee to move freely to different sections as needed with the option of a structured learning path. It is pedagogically structured to provide progression from basic communicative skills to sophisticated task specific interactions. The emphasis is on the acquisition of oral and aural communicative skills in conjunction with pertinent professional skills.

### Conclusions

The feedback from the pilot implementation of the course with smaller groups of students and teachers was very positive with regard to:

- Focus on practicality
- Multiple exercises
- Stimulating visual and audio prompts
- Language for the specifics of the kitchen and restaurant
- Real-life situations in the professional context
- Easy anywhere /anytime access
- 42 possible language combinations
- User-friendly pathway supported by lexical, cultural and visual materials
- Online glossary including images and sounds which may be used independently from the course as a dictionary
- Non-verbal communication in video format
- Language portfolio adapted to the language acquisitions of the specific sector
- Cultural elements of practical work-oriented information linked to the catering sector
- Open-ended social platform allowing possibility of development, adaptation and interaction for trainees
- Flexibility to introduce further languages/sectors
- A new teaching/learning approach
- Work with computer
- Strong visual and audio support instead of dry translations
- Simple instructions at every step of the course
- Possibility to choose the workplace scenes according to their professional orientation
- Immediate feedback correct/wrong
- Easy monitoring of the progress by simply ticking off the checklists in the Portfolio
- Immediate recording of one's progress (after the user has registered the programme records every set of exercises per scene that has been completed correctly – the user can look up and print his/her Eurocatering certificate with his personal data and number of the completed tasks i.e. scenes at any time)
- interesting items on the Tray (e.g. Eurocatering TV with humorous videos, many useful links),
- flexibility in terms of time and place of learning (doing exercises at home, in internet café or any place with internet access).
- better motivation and active participation of all students in the ICT classroom
- more time for individual approach and work with students (particularly those with dislike to languages or poor previous knowledge);
- many exercises were done on students' own initiative showing competitiveness as additional motivation);
- better/correct pronunciation of words acquired through the course;
- Interest in other languages available in the course although they are not taught at school (e.g. Spanish and Dutch).

Web-based materials, new methods and training of language teachers in vocational education make the pupils more confident in performing their tasks within workplace-related language teaching, that is why the old teaching approaches and learning strategies must be changed.



## References

- [1] COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT, "The use of ICT to support innovation and lifelong learning for all"  
<http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc/sec2629.pdf>
- [2] STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT, "The use of ICT to support innovation and lifelong learning for all"  
<http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc/sec2629.pdf>
- [3] STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT, "The use of ICT to support innovation and lifelong learning for all"  
<http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc/sec2629.pdf>
- [4] STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT, "The use of ICT to support innovation and lifelong learning for all"  
<http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc/sec2629.pdf>
- [5] "Eurocatering Language Training", <http://www.eurocatering.org>