

Using Web2.0 Tools to Facilitate the Development and Sharing of Interactive Language Learning Content

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Abstract

In the present context of a growing number of Web 2.0 tools that enable and encourage online interaction, many efforts have already been made in exploring these emerging technologies to facilitate learning. While more and more learners are familiar with the benefits of exploring the free material that Internet provides, teachers on the other hand are still trying to adapt and started to explore the best ways of integrating technology in the teaching activities.

However, this integration is a challenging task for teachers that can raise some key questions such as: Which are the efficient tools to be used? How easy can these tools be integrated in the teaching process? Will the learners be inspired by them and further explore them?

This paper presents how LaProf project answered the above questions by discussing some of the ICT tools used in the project to promote language learning.

LaProf's main goal was to select the best tools that could serve both the users, learners (through and easy to use environment) and teachers or trainers (through an easy implementation and development of teaching materials), but also successfully support the project's main outcomes: language learning units and exercises. After the careful analysis of the target users' needs – professionals in the field of Agriculture and ICT – LaProf has decided that the ICT tools need to answer the following requirements:

- popular and flexible
- freely accesible
- easy to use (not to require specific computer skills)
- interactive

To this end, LaProf learning units, exercises and webquests were designed with the help of the following Web 2.0 tools: a. MediaWiki (<http://wiki.agroknow.gr/laprof/>), b. Learning Folders (<http://lefo.net/>) and c. Laprof Portal (www.language-learning-portal.eu/).

The above mentioned tools were selected considering the following:

a. MediaWiki is the main environment chosen, for being free and accessible, largely used and visible on the World Wide Web. Wiki pages are very easy to set up, maintain and contribute to. They also allow for a good and clear organization of the multilingual learning content into Modules, Units and sections. Wikis are

b. Learning folders or LeFo is a suitable platform for developing the exercises and making them freely available in an open software environment due to its personalized motivating and interactive platform that assists the user during the learning process. It allows different uses such as knowledge input, self-test, class-test and others.

c. An educational Portal that creates a common gateway to learning resources encouraging collaboration and an effective usage and share of information.

LaProf's main resources - learning units and webquests are displayed on the Wiki and contain links to multilingual exercises on the Lefo Platform, that together with other language resources are made available through the LaProf Portal, that provides free access to a wider variety of multilingual learning materials.

The paper will describe the project's outcomes: language learning resources and illustrate how these resources can be created, supported and promoted by the tools selected. It will further discuss related European initiatives that have produced similar and relevant outcomes in the field of language learning.