

Hook up! to Languages – Enhancing the Mobility of Young Europeans through ICT And Language Competence

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Abstract

Language continues to be a critical issue in the internationalisation of European Higher Education, functioning too often as a barrier rather than as a bridge to intercultural relations in general and increased academic mobility in particular.

In response to this, the European University Foundation – Campus Europae (<http://www.campuseuropae.org/en/>), an enhanced mobility network for students and staff made up of 18 universities across 16 European countries, set up Hook Up!, a two-year Project, co-funded through the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme, dedicated to the building of a virtual language learning platform. This language learning platform supports the goals of Campus Europae itself, providing the support needed to sustain mobility, to achieve academic success, and to ensure the acquisition of B1 level competence in at least two European languages.

The Hook Up! platform uses an integrated, blended language learning approach developed collaboratively by language teachers from the participating universities, and offers tuition at A1 to B2 levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CE, 2001), through a virtual campus available on Moodle, complemented with interactive online activities using Skype and Wiziq, for example, as well as face to face tuition.

In order to facilitate the development of Campus Europae and of a community of Campus Europeans who are prepared for study and work in diverse language and cultural environments, Hook Up! provides preparation in the language of the host country before the mobility period, on-going tuition during the study period abroad and opportunities to continue using and developing language competence after the period of study abroad.

Besides Portugal, 15 countries and 17 universities participate in this Project, developing language learning modules on-line in twelve languages. Amongst these languages are some of the lesser taught and less widely known languages of Europe, constituting an added value to this project. The modules are available online on the Moodle platform (<http://languagelearning.campuseuropae.org/>) permitting the complementary learning of any of the languages available. The teaching and learning is supported by technologies, such as: Skype, Wiziq, DimDim, Survey Monkeys, Hot Potatoes, among others.

This paper will focus on the case of Portuguese and the development of on-line modules and blended tuition within Hook Up! since 2009. We will look at the challenges faced in the setting up of this collaborative international initiative, the products developed and the impact of this innovative approach on the learners themselves and their learning.