



Online Materials for Medical Purposes – the MedLang Palliative Care, the Glottodrama and take care Projects

Anca Colibaba¹, Colibaba Cintia², Irina Gheorghiu³, Stefan Colibaba⁴

¹Universitatea Gr.T.Popa, ^{1,4} Fundatia EuroEd, ² Universitatea de stiinte agricole si medicina veterinara Ion Ionescu dela Brad, ³ Albert Ludwigs University Freiburg, ⁴ Universitatea Al. I. Cuza
^{1,2,4} Romania, ³ Germany

Abstract

The article analyses online materials for teaching/ learning medicine in international contexts, created by three European projects (The MedLang Palliative Care, the Glottodrama and Take Care projects). The MedLang Palliative Care project helps doctors, nurses, students and language teachers manage the environment successfully (medical situations) by ensuring sustainable medical courses on operational procedures in palliative care, in six language contexts that result in good health outcomes for patients and greater professional satisfaction for all the actors involved in a medical situation across Europe. The main objective of the Glottodrama method is to stimulate students to learn a foreign language by turning the common classroom into a theatre company united by a common goal (project-work). The Glottodrama method was implemented with foreign students from several countries (attending the School of Medicine) studying Romanian as a foreign language. Introducing the use of a video-camera inside the classroom was not an easy task as it is not a teaching tool commonly used in classrooms. Most of the resulting films were uploaded on YouTube so that students could watch them and practice outside the class. Videos were used to engage students in a variety of interactive activities meant to improve pronunciation, oral comprehension, prediction skills, creativity or speaking and writing skills. The Take Care methodology promotes an innovative, communicative and collaborative approach. Students' different learning styles have also been considered: a wide range of online exercises have been devised which require students' progressive involvement in terms of their emotional, visual, auditory or kinesthetic abilities. All these materials, which are the main content of an online textbook for Romanian encouraging students' e-learning, are available free of charge on the University platform.

1. E-learning

There are several definitions of e-learning already in literature. Most authors consider e-learning as any learning process happening in a digital environment or even any use of the computer in supporting learning. The simple use of the computer is not enough. It is true that e-learning depends on internet technology, which gives specific support to the learning process. However, learning can only take place when individual skills, interests and abilities are taken into consideration. Learning is an active, personalized, constructive and social process. When learning, students build new knowledge on their previous experience and knowledge." E-learning encompasses all forms of electronic supported learning and teaching, which are procedural in character and aim to effect the construction of knowledge with reference to individual experience, practice and knowledge of the learner. E-learning is part of the new dynamic that characterises educational systems at the start of the 21st century, resulting from the merge of different disciplines, such as computer science, communication technology, and pedagogy. Consequently, the concept of e-learning can be expected to continue to evolve for a long time. In today's world, learning needs change very quickly and the concept and functions of e-learning must continuously be adapted to these needs." Information and communication systems act as specific media to implement the learning process, where knowledge must be constructed by the learners themselves.

The production of the e-learning materials for teaching/ learning medicine in international contexts, created by the three European projects (The MedLang Palliative Care, the Glottodrama and Take Care projects) and the students' interaction with the learning material started from a solid analysis of the needs of the target groups, which resulted in detailed profiles of the learners. The materials are based on a range of activities, which can be selected by learners according to their level. The learning material is made up of flexible components adapted to the individual experience and knowledge of the learner. In terms of interaction with learning content teachers or tutors can upload files on the platform at this moment but there is no such opportunity for the learners. Since learning with real text books



provides an opportunity for personal annotation, digital environments should also allow for such personal interventions. It is a requirement that should be considered in the future.

2. Target groups and Romanian context

The need for adequate materials for teaching/ learning Romanian has become vital in the past years. In Romania and the Republic of Moldova Romanian has become an international language for studying medicine and biology. In Romania there is a growing number of international students; in Iasi, for instance, the number of international students studying medicine is well above 2,000. Chisinau, the capital of the Republic of Moldova, faces the same situation. Europe has become a mobile world and the European Union policy encourages multilingualism which has often proved to be a personal advantage under the circumstances of the economic crisis and which ensures flexibility and mobility in the search for jobs [1].

3. E-learning materials created through European projects

3.1 The MedLang Palliative Care project

The Palliative Care MOOC project has created an Educational Toolkit for Medical Communication, which promotes standardised operational procedures in palliative care in six language contexts. The Educational Toolkit presents protocols of fundamental standardized basic clinical manoeuvres in palliative care. It has created videos that capture simulation of medical manoeuvres based on palliative care protocols. The videos are accompanied by linguistic worksheets on aspects of vocabulary, grammar, communication and cultural issues. The materials aim at enabling students to get familiar with the practice clinical skills required in real practice situation; they also support and develop skills for medical communication (situations, gesture, speech, vocabulary, interaction, culture-specific behaviours and adaptation of the medical act to cultural issues) and provide support for autonomous learning practice skills for the students of medicine, in-service nurses, volunteers in healthcare or social centres or any person who may be experiencing palliative care situations [2].

SOSMOOC project course relies on 20 videos illustrating medical protocols performed in situational medical interventions, accompanied by specific medical communication between a patient, a doctor, a nurse or a family member. It not only provides state of the art medical content and skills in various languages but also places the content in a variety of medical situations in which doctors and nurses communicate with patients. Each video presents a medical protocol through a communicative situation, which has been considered in terms of its vocabulary, grammar structure, functions, and cultural elements. These linguistic elements are introduced, practised and consolidated through a wide variety of learning activities, covering all language skills [2].

Each video is accompanied by a vocabulary glossary and grammar explanations so that the video content is processed from a variety of perspectives: linguistic, cultural and functional point of view. Worksheets on aspects of vocabulary, grammar, communication, cultural aspects have been developed to support the language teachers to use specialized content for trans-disciplinary CLIL teaching.

Each video focuses on several activities [2]:

- Identification of the vocabulary/ structure/ function and cultural elements in each video
- Creation of vocabulary glossaries, grammar explanations and materials on cultural issues for each unit
- Negotiation with the medical experts acceptable medical solutions for the cultural issues
- Collection of activities and selection of activities to ensure students' acquisition of the vocabulary/ structure/ function/ culture in each video
- Identification, selection and elaboration of tasks for each activity
- Identification and selection of online evaluation devices for the activities
- Encouraging students to contribute to cultural issues.

3.2. The Glottodrama project

The Glottodrama project produced materials which gradually introduced Romanian to international medical students studying in Romania. The new language material based on doctor-patient funny dialogues was taught and practised in a very creative and dynamic way under the guidance of two teachers - drama and language [2]. Once the initial teaching unit was launched into the class the students were encouraged to improve it. Students were given the opportunity to contribute to the materials so that these met their own needs. Students' first performance of the dialogues was filmed. Most of the resulting films were uploaded on YouTube so that students could watch them and practise outside the class. Videos were used to engage students in a variety of interactive activities meant to



improve pronunciation, oral comprehension, prediction skills, creativity or speaking and writing skills [3].

A certain inhibition on the part of the students was noticed at the beginning of the course; it disappeared once the students got familiar with the camera and became aware of the role of the video clips. "Although at the beginning I didn't feel too comfortable while being filmed, in time I got used to it and I enjoyed the reflection session: I was funny in the video clips and so was everybody! So why bother about being filmed!...I found talking about the activities fun and I realized that these activities helped us with language learning. Once we spotted our mistakes we worked on them and we soon noticed the difference in our performance". Students perceived the reflective sessions on the video recordings as a necessary part of any foreign language course as they provided an opportunity for self-evaluation development in terms of language, behaviour, pronunciation or acting [3]. "Reflection sessions are necessary in learning a foreign language". The video films drew students' attention towards their mistakes and helped them focus and work on them. Given the multicultural aspect of the group cultural differences and similarities stirred interesting discussions on the language learning process, the role of breathing in speaking, significance space in different cultures, improvisation, creativity, movement, feelings or facial expressions.

3.3. The European project "Take Care- A Healthcare Language Guide for Migrants"

The European project "Take Care" - has created online linguistic instruments facilitating and enabling communication between immigrants, medical personnel and people of the host-country in a wide range of situations. These materials can be freely downloaded from e-learning university platforms. The materials include: two-sided sheets (similar to medical admission forms) with common questions such as "Do you have headaches?" or "Do you have any allergies?" to which the patient is expected to tick the answer, a medical glossary in the shape of a fan, organized around 12 medical topics (insurance, healthy lifestyle and prevention, accidents/emergencies/injuries etc.), a phrase book introducing an imaginary migrant family, whose health related story familiarizes learners with several health situations, a medical route poster illustrating healthcare systems in the project countries as well as cultural tips since healthcare practices are often influenced by faith and religious beliefs [4]. The learning material offered covers pronunciation, vocabulary, oral and written comprehension, oral and written production and verbal exchange at the A1/A2 level. The organization of the content of the book is in line with the modern approaches used to teach languages worldwide. Their constructivist basis embeds digital techniques of learning through collaboration, reflection and autonomy, while always applying formal knowledge acquired in the classroom to new real life contexts [4]. The authors' main objectives in devising the methodological strategy of the book are the development of integrated communication skills, the applied usage of grammar, the interactive teaching and progressive learning through the joint collaboration of all actors- students and teachers alike [5].

4. Conclusions

The online materials for teaching/ learning medicine in international contexts allow students to practise medicine in clinics and hospitals all over Europe after finishing their academic medical studies. They improve the teaching and learning of languages and promote European linguistic diversity and intercultural awareness. Furthermore, they enhance the international dimension of education and training, in particular through cooperation between institutions in higher education and facilitate the exchange, flow and co-creation of knowledge.

The online materials are favoured by students because they are student-centred. Students can control their learning experience and change it so that it meets their personal needs. In addition, students are in control of the time they want to spend on their learning. They can learn at their own pace, spending more or less time on the item according to their needs. The materials are interactive and hands-on. Learners use a variety of online means, which stimulate their involvement.

E-learning allows for a challenging combination of activities, which is engaging and reinforces learning. The same message can be perceived from different angles and through different means thanks to the facilities that the internet offers. The students can also visit and revisit or replay sections of the course which they did not understand the first time. It encourages sharing and it can lead to a learning community, which helps and supports students with their learning.

References

- [1] Albert Sangrà, Dimitrios Vlachopoulos, and Nati Cabrera Building an Inclusive Definition of E-Learning: An Approach to the Conceptual Framework, <http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/1161/2146>
- [2] Colibaba A., Cleminte A., Dinu C. (2013). Learn foreign languages through drama Synergy.

Proceedings of the International QUEST - ASE - ISQALE Conference 2013 "Improving Standards of Quality in Language Education and Research" vol. 9, nr. 2.

[3] Colibaba, A. (2013). Language learning: MIND and BODY. Proceedings of the 10th International Scientific Conference eLearning and software for Education, Bucharest

[4] Colibaba, Anca, Ioana Crețu and Claudia Dinu. Take Care Project – Developing a Healthcare Language Guide for Migrants. International Conference "Improving Standards of Quality in Language Education and Research," March 2013, Bucharest, Romania. Unpublished conference paper, 2013.

[5] Crețu Ioana, Colibaba Anca, Dinu Claudia. TAKE CARE PROJECT – online collaboration developing the transversal competences of international medical students The 10th International Scientific Conference eLearning and software for Education Bucharest, April 24-25, 2014