



English Language Learning through Innovative ICT Solutions that Promote Enculturation and Role-playing

Hariklia Tsalapatas¹, Olivier Heidman², Rene Alimisi², Elias Houstis¹

University of Thessaly¹, Centre for Research and Technology Thessaly² (Greece)
htsalapa@uth.gr olivier.heidmann@gmail.com ralimisi@gmail.com enh@uth.gr

Abstract

In today's networked world, virtual mobility for know-how exchange and enrichment of informational resources is as common-place as physical mobility. Professionals typically resort to a lingua franca, such as English, French, or German, for efficient communication in the world of work. This is a result from the need for accurate understanding to ensure the elimination of misconceptions, effective business processes, the development of trusting business relations, and even safety. Training programs exist that aim to build basic competencies for communicating on everyday life and professional activities in a foreign tongue. However, most of the mainstream approaches for foreign language learning, including the learning of vehicular languages, focus on developing knowledge of the use of the language in the country of origin. Most widely accessible language learning approaches fail to integrate the diverging use of a lingua franca by non-native speakers. For example, a professional who uses English as a vehicular language for basic and professional communication in different regions, e.g. Germany, Spain, France, Italy, or Scandinavia will be faced with widely varying pronunciations that are affected by native languages as well as additional so called "transfer effects": influences on syntax, choice of words and expressions, and more. In addition, communication with peers is more effective if an individual is well versed into cultural information and practices to help establish a good relationship as well as to avoid pitfalls, such as in-avertedly insulting a business peer; for example, common practices on initiating a business conversation, on introducing themselves, on continuing and closing the communication.

Lately, the perceptions about language learning are evolving: instead of forcing all individuals to speak with one particular accent and one particular way, there is a shift towards embracing the richness of European cultures as this is manifested in the diverging uses of vehicular languages. In this respect, situated language learning can be advantageous by enabling the design of learning activities that familiarize an individual with specific work-related situations in varying cultures.

This paper presents siLang, a serious gaming approach that is based on the Brown et al [1] model for situated cognition. siLang exposes learners to the use of English language by native as well as non-native speakers aiming at providing opportunities for enculturation and role playing within a real-life context. Serious-gaming technology, virtual microworlds and innovative learning content are being used to promote interaction, conversation and verbal communication tasks. Validation activities will take place in Greece, Norway, Italy, Portugal, and Estonia involving undergraduate students, professionals and workers.

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References

- [1]. Brown, J. S., Collins, A., & Duguid, P. (1989). Situated cognition and the culture of learning. *Educational Researcher*, 18 (1), 32-41.