First Steps of Hermes Offers 4 in 1: Project-Based Reflections

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Abstract

The current trends in learning and teaching less widely used languages may considerably affect the implementation of multilingualism and preservation of the linguistic and cultural diversity in Europe. The use of ICT in language learning/teaching has increased accessibility of language resources and their adaptability to individual needs. ICT have changed the interaction pattern between learners and teachers (tutors), they suggest a variety of learning modes and offer better adjustment options in terms of time, place, intensity, cost and other factors. The present paper deals with designing language learning materials; the author reflects on the newly developed course (www.hermes-world.com) and shares her observation of the changes in teaching/learning attitudes.

The First Steps in Hermes (FS Hermes) project team have produced an on-line and CD-Rom based course in Greek, Hungarian, Lithuanian and Turkish (A1 level CEF); the course is targeted at young learners; it can be used both in class and for self-study. The underlying principle of the course is to meet the actual needs and expectations of the target group regarding their specific attitudes, lifestyle and preferences. The choice of the target group was based on the assumption that, due to the widespread of communication means, the increased mobility and learning options, young people would have specific expectations regarding language learning resources. The initial needs analysis (NA) carried out both in formal (universities, schools) and informal settings determined the choice and shape of the course materials; the results of NA also give food for thought and further research into learning strategies and language didactics in general. The paper presents the content of the course and its supplementary materials – Teacher’s book and Learner’s Manual, it tracks the main stages of the project work and reveals the dynamics of the creative cooperation between various types of institutions that constitute FS Hermes project team: a publishing house and an ICT company (Greece), a language school (Hungary), a university (Turkey) and a language centre for adults (Lithuania). Further on the author presents the results of the piloting carried out in various learning settings and a short comparative analysis of learners’ and tutors’ feedback. The final conclusions on the course applicability and FS Hermes project results suggest possible future development in ICT-based learning resources for less widely used languages and teaching/learning methods.