

East Speaks West, West Speak East. Two Continents, One Classroom

Edith Flores Wolff

Global German Youth Connect (Germany)
efw2010@googlemail.com

Abstract

Asia -Europe Classroom Net: Two Continents, One Classroom

East Speaks West, West Speaks East is an ICT- based collaborative project of Asia-Europe Classroom Net.

Language learning in the 21st century! Gone are the days when language learning is very much limited, costly and a matter of privilege. Language learning has evolved through the years through ICT web tools. It has become more innovative, inventive, alive, collaborative and fun, too.

It gives European and Asian students the chance to share, teach and learn their respective languages. Students are encourage to "rediscover" the wheel of language learning: assimilation - listening, repetition and immersion. This project concentrates more on experiencing the essence of the language . We help learners to feel the language ; cadence, rhythm, intonation, melody and its other intangible properties away from the traditional grammar approach. We believe that language learning starts from getting to know it the same way we learned our mother language from the very start. Through ICT web tools application, the teachers and learners of two continents are working hand in hand in the process . They continuously discover ICT tools to effectively learn the language and transport knowledge.

ESWWSE Pedagogy of language learning has got two phases: Language Production Stage and Language Learning Stage.

Language Production Stage requires translation from English to mother language and recording.

Language Learning Stage requires "assimilation" which is "listening- repetition –immersion". This gives the students the chance to get to know the intangible properties of the foreign language they are learning.

Learning materials and all activities produced by the students are uploaded, could be viewed and downloaded from the website.

1. Introduction

It has been said that the need to learn a foreign language is as old as the human history. Teaching of modern languages originated from studying and teaching Latin in the 17th century. Until the 18th century, teaching of modern languages did not become a part of the curriculum of schools in Europe. The study of Latin was largely academic concentrating on the grammar and translation. At the onset of the 19th and 20th century, various language learning and teaching methods were tried and tested. This development has gained momentum until the 21st century. From the grammar school of the 16th to 18th centuries to the present, language teachers and learners are now using the internet. Language learning websites, language portals and even virtual based language schools are defying distance and time between learners and teachers. East Speaks West, West Speaks East : Two continents, one classroom, joins this development in language education. Its pedagogical approach aims to answer the needs of the 21st century learners without discarding the positive elements of the traditional approaches of language learning. Though this project is very much practical oriented, it still holds on to the teaching and learning of the "grammar of the language". Only that the approach is more flexible. Members of this project experience language learning on an



interactive, functional and structural view. We do not believe in isolating each of this view from one another. Hence, an immersion in the language learning process.

1.1 ESWWSE pedagogy

This project addresses the Generation Z or the Internet Generation of Europe and Asia. It is very interesting to note that experts, educators or teachers have different views about these learners in relation to their ICT knowledge, deftness or skills . Interestingly, the views of ICT experts and teachers become conflicting as they go into practice. Some says that this generation is well-integrated with technology as they have been growing up on websites specifically for their consumption prior to learning how to speak. They were trained or bred early to be social-media savvy by their parents. They have grown up or born into the world which is connected through technology. On the other hand, some says that not all students are tech savvy. And they are not all social networkers. They have been taught or were raised in a household by parents who are totally sceptical and wary of any form of online-only relationship. This generation Z or the internet generation are digital generation only in a very limited sense. With this generation profile in mind, this project tried to introduce the students in the method of language learning without alienating tradition or modernity. It aims more to find a middle ground which is best suited for learners.

In this project, European and Asian students are teaching and learning from each other. They are being encouraged not just to consume from the net but also to contribute their knowledge for the benefits of others. Learners are rediscovering the “wheel of language learning” through assimilation: listening, repetition and immersion. Then bringing this forward, creating a collaborative platform in the net by utilizing or applying the ICT web tools.

Faster, more efficient and affordable internet access made the idea of “Two Continents, One Classroom” possible which could be considered as a major breakthrough in education. Language education has greatly profited from this. The availability of Open Source ICT web tools for free or for a very low cost help students and teachers carry out the task expected from them during the duration of the project, Language learning has gone a long way and has become more active . From books, to LP records, to audio cassettes, to CDs, to MP3 and now the Text -to- Speech Software which is available on the internet for no or very low cost at all.

Discovering cultural diversity through the language

The internet, television, social-media, travelling, and other avenues make young people more informed about what is going in their world. Youth travel represents an estimated 20 percent of all international travels and is growing rapidly. 70% of young people travel with diverse purposes such as to learn a language, to volunteer, work and study and to learn the culture of other countries. All these factors make young people more open and accept cultural diversity on a global scale. Increasing awareness of this cultural diversity would be good for them in this rapid globalization. Making young people understand that a language could not only serve them as a tool of oral communication but a means to get to know and examine the cultural differences and similarities from the language perspective could be very useful and exciting. Furthermore, the students are being given the chance or are made to think about their own language which they do not normally do.

The following schools have participated in this project

Table 1: List of participating schools

Country	Name of the school
Bulgaria	Private English Language Secondary School - Chelopech
	32nd Foreign Languages Secondary Secondary School, Sofia- Bulgaria
Germany	Global German Language Connect
Hungary	Szent István Gimnázium (St. Stephen Secondary School)
India	ApeejaySchool
	St. Marks Girl Sr. Secondary School
Italy	Liceo Scientifico Tecnologico
Indonesian	SMK Negeri 9 Bandung (State Vocational High School)
Malaysia	Tengku Muhammad Faris Petra Science Secondary School
Mongolia	Kharkhorin Secondary school #: 2
Singapore	Singapore Polytechnic
Philippines	World Languages & Learning Centre
	Hope Academy of Rizal
Taiwan	Dept of Foreign Languages and Literatures National Taiwan University

2. Project Mechanics

This project follows two stages: Language Material Production Stage and the Language Learning Stage.

2.1 Language Production Stage

The primary material used for this project are known or popular fairy tales around the world. Fairy tales were utilized as the primary material for this project because if there is something that these young people shared once in their lifetime, these are the fairy tales of their childhood. The prior knowledge of the students as to the plot, characters, sentences, vocabularies of the tales are being utilized and being considered as an advantage. This acquired knowledge lessens the burden of understanding of the material used for the upcoming task. The fairy tale, written in script form, is provided to the learners from the very beginning. Nobody is allowed to deviate from the script. Other script of the fairy tale is not allowed to be utilized. Nobody is allowed to write a story of their own.

The Phase I of this project starts with the translation of the script into their mother tongue. We encouraged the students to submit their translation in Latin alphabets and in original script if it is available. Our students from Delhi, Mongolia, Bulgaria and Hungary have submitted the translation in their own script. This would be submitted to the project coordinator for immediate uploading at our website. An audio recording of the same translation would be carried out by the students. At this stage, the students become aware on how difficult it is to produce an audio language material as most of them can not manage to speak slowly in their own language even if they are told that this material is the most crucial for the learners. Once this is done, it would be submitted and uploaded at our site. The students are also requested to note down their experiences during the translation and recording while completing the Phase 1 of the project.



2.2 Language Learning Stage

At this stage, the students are now about to start the Phase 2 of the project which is the Language Learning Stage. They would start by choosing the language they would like to learn from the languages available at our website. Asian students are going to choose a European language and the European students are going to choose an Asian language. They would then start with intensive listening of the recording that their counterparts produced for them and repeating the same. It is a listen- repeat- listen process at this point. Our main concern at this stage is to guide or help the learners to assimilate the language; its cadence, rhythm, intonation, stress, etc..

Though we focus more in the assimilation of the language, we are aware that there are many students who would like to immediately understand the sentences or words they listen to, This is where the importance of producing a uniform tale or script is being fully understood by the students as they are listening to the same script they translated line by line in their own language. Their knowledge gained during the translation and the prior knowledge of the tales during their childhood would help or guide the students to follow the tale they are listening to.

It is mentioned that the students biggest difficulty in Phase 1 is producing an audio recording of the tale suited for beginners. At this point, it is very interesting to note that the students are beginning to realize how important it is to produce an audio recording so their counterparts would be able to follow, learn and understand the language they are learning.

Once the students become confident, they would be recording the fairy tale in the language that they would like to learn. Upon submission, the audio recording would be uploaded at our website. The project members who are native speakers of the country would then be notified and requested to listen to the recording and post their comments about the recording. The students are always happy and excited to listen to other members speaking their language learned from the material they produced for them.

After the audio recording in a foreign language , students are highly encouraged to stage a play embedding the cultural aspect of their respective countries. They are given the free hand in the manner of staging their play. At this stage, the students actively "experience" the language. Through acting the students apply their knowledge of the language as to its intonation, pronunciation, cadence and so on. By "acting it out" through body language, gestures and movements, the students gain deeper understanding of the language . This method strengthens as well the retention of vocabularies, sentences and phrases in the language that they are learning.

Table 2: ICT web tools applied for the project

Audio and Video recording programs/ tools	Basic open software	Video Publishing Sites	
Audacity	Audacity	Youtube	
DVD maker	Text to Speech Translator		
Slide maker	Tagxedo		
Movie Maker	Wordle		
Green Screen	Quizlet		
	Audio Converter		
	Video Converter		
	Google Docs		

3. Evaluation

The students positively welcome the pedagogical approach of this project. The prospect of getting the chance of knowing a foreign language which are not normally available or not a part of their school curriculum excites them and serves as a motivating factor. Furthermore, students and teachers alike have the chance in applying their knowledge of ICT web tools, manage website, networking with other members through our networking sites and learning more web tools which are not known to them yet. In addition, teachers and students learned that ICT web tools and working online for all its worth also carry with them certain problems. The following are the major hurdles that were encountered during the duration of our project:

Problems in general

1. Different Time Zones of students
2. Lack of time of students and teachers in some schools
3. Lack of creativity of some teachers and students

ICT related problems

1. Internet access
2. Internet speed
3. A very low number of computer technician to help the teachers and students when problems occur.
4. Lack of knowledge of some students and some teachers in the application of web tools
5. Very low exposure of teachers and students to free software which are available on the internet which could be utilized as alternative solutions when technical problems occur; e.g. managing and transferring files, files conversion
6. Very high internet security at schools

Additional note as to other use of this method

It must also be added that this project could serve as medium in motivating students who have learning difficulties in schools like those who are suffering from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. The students could actively learn the language through acting. This has been proven true as it was applied in one of the participating schools.



References

1. Meloni M., Sponza N., Kvilekval P., Valente M.Carmela, Bellantone R., La dislessia raccontata agli insegnanti, Firenze, Libri Liberi, 200
2. Coseriu, Eugenio, Geschichte der Sprachphilosophie, A. Francke Verlag , 2003
3. Fischer, Steven Roger, Eine Kleine Geschichte der Sprache, dtv, 1999
4. Eisenhut Werner, Die lateinische Sprache, Artimes Verlag, München und Zürich, 1985
5. Matthew Caines, Best bits: breaching the digital divide - how could HE better use the internet?, http://www.guardian.co.uk/higher-education-network/blog/2011/aug/02/best-bits-digital-technology-higher-education?CMP=tw_t_gu
6. Angela Cross-Bystrom, What you need to know about Generation Z, <http://www.imediaconnection.com/content/27425.asp>