

EuroCatering Language Training (ECLT)

Christian Goethals, Margret Oberhofer, Anne Brindley, Agnes Svendsen,
HELHa (Belgium), Linguapolis (Belgium), GMIT (Ireland), SognVGS (Norway)
christian.goethals@helha.be, margret.oberhofer@ua.ac.be, anne.brindley@gmit.ie,
agnes.svendsen@sogn.vgs.no,

Abstract

www.eurocatering.org is an attractive and interactive web-based language learning tool designed for trainees, students and workers in the Hotel and Catering industry to improve their oral language competences. Communication skills are the essence of foreign language acquisition, especially in this sector where it is hard to find the right staff and where working conditions are often quite stressful.

EuroCatering helps the envisaged target groups acquire the basic specific vocabulary and the communicative competences to function efficiently in a kitchen or restaurant abroad by providing learning materials and instructional support.

It is freely accessible online in 7 languages: English, French, Spanish, Dutch, Norwegian, Slovenian and Galician (to be extended with German, Italian, Finnish, Polish and Gaelic by October 2012) - written, audio and visual.

The website provides realistic language training in virtual scenes in the kitchen and restaurant, illustrated glossaries of professional terminology in 12 languages, a pedagogical tool with interactions and exercises for reinforcement, a glossary of pertinent cultural work-orientation facts for 12 countries, and a video of pertinent gestures for kitchen and restaurant service, all linked to an open-ended learning platform.

It is based on the analysis of trainees' needs and has been developed by a team of language teachers, trainers and administrators in the partner countries (BE, DE, ES, FR, IE, IT, NO, PL, SI and UK), supported by the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission.

The kit has been used extensively over the last 2 years: 50,000 visitors, 9,000 committed learners. It has been integrated into curricula at national level and in different countries.

The Reception / Accommodation area is the next step in the development of our web-based learning tool and will be completed by October 2013.

1. Context

The idea of EuroCatering Language Training (ECLT) [1] course originated at a Contact Seminar organised for teachers of languages by the Swedish Leonardo da Vinci and Comenius National Agency in Stockholm in September 2004. There was a request for a vocational language training course for trainees in the catering (kitchen and restaurant) area. This led to a core group of 5 partners who applied, with 3 additional members, for a pilot project under the Leonardo da Vinci programme (Language competences) at the Belgian French speaking LDV National Agency. The ECLT project started on 01 November 2006 and the final product was launched in October 2008.

With the success of this first ECLT website, 5 of the 8 partners wished to continue developing the product and to extend it to more languages and another area: Reception. This resulted in a new application "EuroCatHos" [8], under the centralised action "KA2: Languages" of the Lifelong Learning Programme, which started on 01 November 2010 to end in October 2013.

In October 2012 EuroCatering will extend the choice of languages and will be available for free in 12 languages (EN, FR, ES, IT, DE, NL, NO, PL, FI, SI, GL, GA) via www.eurocatering.org. The Reception area will be launched in October 2013 and accessible via the same site.

2. Needs analysis

The project started with a needs analysis of trainees, trainers and employers. The study [2] revealed that

- "The work placement is a very important time in the life of a student in the hospitality and catering sector. It may determine his/her view on pursuing a career in this sector. Therefore it is crucial that the work placement should take place under the most favourable conditions.
- Trainees (and employers and employees) are very focused on practicality. They are not interested in theory. Therefore the training tool has to be very practical, incorporate exercises, visual material in order to keep their attention."

Based on this research, the following elements seemed crucial to the training tool:

- Emphasis on the oral and pronunciation, rather than on the written
- Understanding directives, actions and short instructions
- Learning how to construct a sentence in general
- Learning how to construct simple sentences, in answer to "What", "Where", "When", "How", "Why"
- Vocabulary relating to ingredients and produce
- Vocabulary relating to customer-friendliness
- Expressions and vocabulary relating to social life: small talk, basic social contacts
- General vocabulary relating to restaurant and kitchen equipment
- Vocabulary relating to dishes and food specialties.

3. The learning tool

3.1 The concept

The online language tool consists of two main parts: "The Cloche" and "The Tray". The Cloche presents the language course in a safe environment. The Tray provides supporting tools: exercises, a lexicon of professional vocabulary, a portfolio.

The whole language course is built upon a flow chart, which corresponds to the real life situation in the Kitchen and Restaurant. The general concept behind this tool is to put the learner in a real situation, where he/she is confronted with an order, a question, a command by a chef, restaurant manager or customer in the target language and give him/her the necessary tools (vocabulary, expressions, sentences, dialogues) so as to be able to understand and react to the introductory sentence.

EuroCatering optimises learning time which is not possible in situ, it encourages a greater readiness to learn languages in an attractively packaged format and it promotes learner autonomy for those outside formal education.



Fig.1. Eurocatering Homepage

3.2 The Cloche

THE CLOCHE symbolises a safe environment where the learner is introduced to real-life situations in the target language in the kitchen or restaurant (Contextualised language learning). The Cloche presents a flow chart with 34 units representing different scenes in the kitchen area on the left (12), the restaurant area on the right (16) and the common area in the middle (6). All scenes are independent and may be learned in a random order, but it is recommended that the learner starts with the units from the common area (uniforms, numbers).

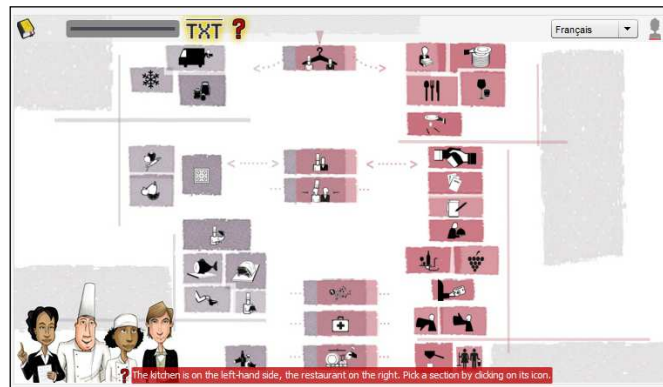


Fig.2. The Cloche

3.3 The Tray

THE TRAY symbolises the open environment, where the learner or teacher can find complementary information, such as:

- A professional dictionary for hotel and restaurant field
- Complementary exercises
- The EuroCatering video/you tube upload TV
- Non-verbal communication: a series of original videos of gestures
- The EuroCatering language portfolio
- Twitter and Facebook links

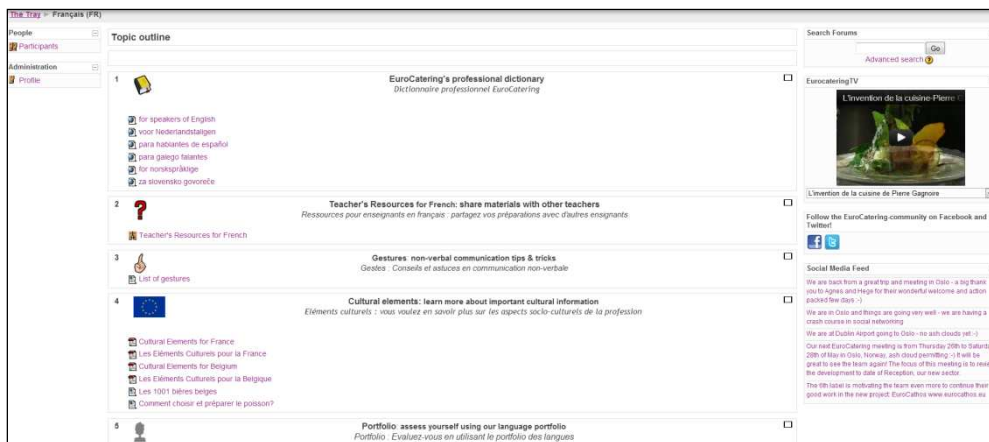


Fig.3. The Tray

4. Impact

Website statistics show an increase in the number of users. By February 2011 [4] there were 30,000 viewings from 126 countries, of which 4,700 were registered visitors. Of these 4,700 visitors, about 2,000 may be considered as committed learners, as they completed 80,000 exercises. By February 2012 [5], there were 50,000 viewings, with 5,000 committed users. Recent statistics show that these figures had increased to almost 9,000 committed users by June 2012.

www.eurocatering.org has been valorised in different countries:

- Belgium: HORECA Vorming Vlaanderen (Catering Training Flanders) adopted the language programme for kitchen and restaurant trainees within the Flemish Catering Schools
- Italy: the Province of Rome, under its labour market inclusion policies, Federalberghi (Roma Hotel associations) will use it as a language learning tool for their tourism and hospitality training programme

- Norway: the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO) has adopted ECLT as a language training tool for immigrants
- Ireland: Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) has integrated ECLT in its Modules 'French & Spanish for Foodies' BB in Culinary Arts and HC in Arts in Hospitality Studies
- Spain: IES'As Fontiñas' (Santiago de Compostela) has integrated ECLT in the language courses for vocational training
- Slovenia, France, Ireland, Norway and Belgium: ECLT has been used by several institutions to prepare students, trainees or workers for placements abroad



5. Awards

Since its launch in 2008 EuroCatering has won a European Language Label (ELL) every year: 2008 in Slovenia, 2009 in Norway and Belgium (Flanders), 2010 in Ireland and Spain and 2011 in Belgium (Wallonia), 6 ELLs in total. It has been nominated by the 2 Belgian National Agencies for the European Language Labels of the Labels [6], ceremony held in Limassol (CY) on 27 September 2012 for the 10th anniversary of Multilingualism in Europe.

In 2010 it also received the CALICO 2010 "Access to Language Education" Award [7], rewarding websites offering exceptional access to language learning resources.

Some of the comments of the different juries:

- ELL (Wallonia), May 2011: The jury unanimously decided to award the 2011 ELL for Higher Education to EuroCatering Language Training for the user-friendliness and online accessibility of a language tool destined to better prepare future trainees in the catering industry. Moreover, the product offers the possibility for extension to other professional areas and languages in addition to the 7 languages already offered.
- ELL (Ireland), 2010: "EuroCatering provides an attractive resource to non-academic, vocationally-oriented language learners both for independent study and for classroom based sessions. Users of the new resource have found it user-friendly and relevant to their vocational needs. Added value comes from the wide variety of languages on offer, including lesser-used languages such as Galician".
- ELL (Flanders), 2009: The jury describes the course as user-friendly, highly emancipatory and accessible for a wide target audience, and praises its multi-lingual approach. Innovative for the jury is the fact that the course also focuses on non-verbal communication. According to the jury, EuroCatering Language Training encourages European mobility and concentrates on the students' needs.
- CALICO's "Access to Language Education" Award, 2010: EuroCatering Language Training was selected out of nine "very sophisticated, high quality websites" from all over the world.

6. Sustainability: What is next?

Since its launch in October 2008 EuroCatering has been maintained online and improved. The second version of the programme has been online since October 2012 and has been modified and updated.

As a KA2-Languages project called "EuroCatHos Language Training" [8], EuroCatering has been further developed under the original name (for dissemination reasons and name recognition). Since November 2011, the new partnership has been working on two main extensions:

- From 7 to 12 languages (English, French, Spanish, Dutch, Norwegian, Slovenian, Galician + German, Italian, Finnish, Polish and Gaelige), using a different software, which no longer requires "Flash"
- A new sector: the Reception/Accommodation area, based on the same language learning concept, in 11 languages. The end product with the Reception area will be available on www.eurocatering.org by October 2013 and will be maintained by the partnership until 2023.

The product is still extendable to more languages, and the whole concept is transferable to different areas (transport, construction, nursing, etc.) and adaptable to evolving software developments such as apps.

References

- [1] www.eurocatering.org has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.
The partnership included the following institution: Haute Ecole Roi Baudouin (now Haute Ecole Louvain en Hainaut), Mons (BE), the coordinating institution; Guidea, Brugge (BE); IES "As Fontiñas", Santiago de Compostela (ES); Lycée Hôtelier La Rochelle (FR); Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Galway (IE); Sogn videregående skole, Oslo (NO); Srednja šola za gostinstvo in turizem Celje (SI); Westwood College for Girls, London (UK) and Universiteit Antwerpen – Linguapolis, Antwerp (BE) as subcontractor.
- [2] "Needs analysis of trainees in hospitality and catering with regard to their foreign language use" by GUIDEA, Keniscentrum voor Toerisme en Horeca, Brugge (BE), 2008
- [3] Languages added in October 2012: German, Italian, Finnish, Polish and Gaelige/Irish
- [4] "Quantitative analysis of EuroCatering, for the period between 06/11/2008 and 06/02/2011" by Linguapolis – University of Antwerp (BE), April 2011.
- [5] Linguapolis, Statistics, February 2012.
- [6] European Language Label of Labels: "The European Label is an award that encourages new initiatives in the field of teaching and learning languages, rewarding new techniques in language teaching, spreading the knowledge of their existence and thereby promoting good practice." See: http://ec.europa.eu/languages/european-language-label/index_en.htm
- [7] CALICO stands for "Computer Assisted Language Instruction Consortium". It is a premier global association dedicated to computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and it is based at the University of Texas (US). See: <https://calico.org>
- [8] www.eurocathos.eu: The new partnership includes the following institutions: Haute Ecole Louvain en Hainaut, Mons (BE), the coordinating institution; Universiteit Antwerpen – Linguapolis, Antwerp (BE), Robert-Wetzlar-Berufskolleg der Stadt Bonn (DE); Instituto de Educacion Secundaria 'As Fontiñas', Santiago de Compostela (ES); Salpaus Further Education, Lahti (FI); Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Galway (IE); Ce.S.F.Or. - Centro Studi Formazione Orientamento, Rome (IT); Sogn videregående skole, Oslo (NO); The Henryk Dobrzanski 'Hubal' Group of Technical Schools n°1, Starachowice (PL).