Mission Possible: Increasing Learner Motivation and Language Skills through an Online Learning Platform

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Abstract

The ISPY Key Activity 2 (Languages) project began in 2010 and aimed to encourage the learning of languages and culture through an innovative and task-based approach. The project aimed to have a positive impact on developing language and intercultural skills and focused on improving intercultural dialogue in Europe and reinforcing language skills that are relevant to the workplace.

The project consortium, led by the University of Wolverhampton, comprised 6 partners from 6 different countries; United Kingdom, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Romania and Spain. The consortium brought together a wide range of complementary relevant pedagogical and technical expertise and experience from a range of organisation types.

The project, with its espionage theme, was aimed at developing both general and vocational language skills for learners in upper secondary and pre-vocational and vocational education whilst also developing supporting pedagogical guidelines and recommendations for teachers and practitioners.

The key objectives of the project were to develop an online learning platform for learning general and vocational language skills in the languages of the partnership, develop problem-solving challenges and develop supporting material for teachers and practitioners.

During the project a research and contextualisation phase took place which focused on the situation regarding ICT and language learning in the partner countries and piloting and testing of the platform and resources.

The paper will present the key findings from the research and contextualisation in relation to all 6 partner countries and the overall summarised findings.

It will also present the findings of the piloting and testing of the resources which was undertaken by teachers, learners and other language professionals from the partner countries. The piloting and testing aimed to gain feedback from users, and other stakeholders, in relation to elements such as content, ease of use, functionality, effect on attainment and enjoyment levels, potential for use, design, storyline and technical issues. The paper will focus on the elements of the pilot results concerned with the use of ICT.

The University of Wolverhampton is also involved in a number of other European projects which focus on ICT for Language Learning and these will also be referenced in the paper. These include a Transfer of Innovation project which focuses on an interactive DVD game and a Key Activity 2 (Languages) project which focuses on the development of media based online resources for language learning by migrant groups.