

## A New Way to Learn Languages Online: Language Lab and European Mobility

Valerio Amorese<sup>1</sup>

Language Lab S.n.c, Italy<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*Our online intensive courses are module-based and divided into six levels (A1/A2/B1/B2/C1/C2) corresponding to the internationally recognized standard knowledge levels. Each level consists of 25 lessons of increasing complexity. These online lessons are made available to everyone through a computer platform (Moodle Cloud) which allows participants to freely follow the lessons at any time and gives them the possibility to attend the same lessons repeatedly. The platform Moodle Cloud becomes an integral component of the language training. It is an organized system which includes online tests, review exercises and detailed corrections to allow the teacher to monitor the progresses of the participants and provide them with immediate feedback. Each participant is required to send the written exercises required in each unit (5 per level) to a specific email address. Corrections are made within two days. Each level also includes 10 tutorial hours during which the main issues will be examined, and personal abilities will be tested. The tutorial hours are necessary to improve the speaking abilities. The completion of a level normally requires a period of six weeks. Each lesson is based on a specific topic and consists of grammar explanation videos, audio comments and tests that allow the students to identify immediately any mistakes made. Teaching material can be downloaded and stored separately, and the exercises can be done iteratively. The relationship between teachers and participants as well as review and written exercises highlights a high-quality level of the results achieved by each participant (very good speaking, understanding and writing skills). The learning contents made available are clear and comprehensive and don't require any updating.*

**Keywords:** *e-learning, online language learning, European mobility, multiculturalism;*

### Introduction

Language Lab offers English and German online intensive courses mainly addressed to Italian students. Our commitment is to provide participants with appropriate language teaching aimed at achieving the level of language required by the country of destination. Our courses are divided into levels that refer to the CEFR. Our linguistic training is designed to raise intercultural awareness and knowledge therefore these courses are to be considered real training courses. Over the last years thanks to our online courses many students have gained a linguistic and cultural knowledge necessary to face the first steps towards integration and to make the best of the opportunities provided. Each participant with his own personal and cultural background actively contributed to carry out this project. Recognizing individual differences is the best way to create a better future. Different people who share a common desire: European mobility, which is a great personal, professional and social opportunity and above all a human enrichment. The added value offered by our project lies in the opportunity to embrace diversity considering it a step towards personal growth and not an obstacle. This growth implies therefore learning how to see things from new perspectives. Unlike young people who are more familiar with a different concept of "Europe", adults over 35 may be less willing to accept changes. In our opinion this is the first obstacle that must be overcome. This is possible thanks to human relations and the sharing of life experiences of those who make it through. We are enthusiastic of the work done so far and it's important to explain how we work and our success lies. During this experience we noticed the importance to teach them the language and the culture at the same time. Because language and culture can't be separated. Language is the expression of culture and culture is the mirror of the language. So, our purpose is to ensure effective and tailor-made language training, meeting the needs of each participant and supporting them from a psychological and motivational point of view as well. The key of our work is our ongoing support to participants (from a psychological and professional point of view). We try to keep their motivation alive and participants must put all their efforts in order to achieve their goal.

### **Description of the project**

Online intensive German courses (individual or group lessons) are addressed to candidates with a concrete employment prospective abroad in order to acquire a short-term Telc Deutsch B2 certification.

### **Teaching methods**

The courses are intended for restricted groups of motivated learners, mainly Italian speakers given that grammar explanations are based on specific differences between Italian and German language. The aim of the courses is to provide participants with a solid preparation (conversation, writing, reading and listening skills) in order to take and successfully pass the "Telc Deutsch B2" final test. The online courses are module-based and divided into four levels (A1/A2/B1/B2) corresponding to the internationally recognized standard knowledge levels. Most of the participants are also required to start from Level A1. Should a sufficient basic/good knowledge be assessed, learners will be placed at the most suitable level. The regular completion of a level is a necessary and indispensable condition for moving up to a higher level. Each level consists of 25 lessons of increasing complexity. These online lessons are made available to everyone through a computer platform (Moodle Cloud) which allows participants to freely follow the lessons at any time and gives them the possibility to repeat the same lessons over and over again. The platform Moodle Cloud becomes an integral component of the language training. It is actually an organized system which includes online tests, review exercises and detailed corrections so as to allow the teacher to monitor the progresses of the participants and provide them with immediate feedback. Each participant is required to send the written exercises required in each unit (5 per level) to a specific email address. Corrections are made within two days. Each level also includes 10 tutorial hours during which the main issues will be examined, and personal abilities will be tested. The tutorial hours are necessary to improve the speaking abilities. The completion of a level normally requires a period of six weeks. In case of necessity, the period can be extended.

### **Available training material**

Each lesson is based on a specific topic and consists of grammar explanation videos, audio comments and tests that allow the students to identify immediately any mistakes made. Teaching material can be downloaded and stored separately, and the exercises can be done iteratively.

### **Benefits of the project**

- free access to the contents of the lessons at any time of the day;
- monitoring of the progress made thanks to tests, interactive exercises, sections to review your learning, corrections of written exercises as well as interpersonal relationship between teachers and students;
- continuous support and assistance to all participants for any problem encountered, by telephone or through other interactive tools (what's up);
- high levels of involvement of the participants motivated by ambitious goals that can be reached in a short time;
- compared to a traditional onsite course, the online course allows cost savings (classrooms, educational material, etc.) and brings together learners in different locations creating a peer group to learn from and with.

### **Learning outcomes**

The relationship between teachers and participants as well as review and written exercises highlighted a high-quality level of the results achieved by each participant (very good speaking, understanding and writing skills). The learning contents made available are clear and comprehensive and don't require any updating. This course is intended for students who are eager to make efforts and to achieve excellent results, in a short time, by understanding and using the German language. The course is focused on the cultural aspects. Language and culture are inseparable: language is the mirror of culture, in the sense that language and people can see a culture through its language. Learners are supported not only from a merely linguistic point of view, but from a psychological point of view as well. All the aspects associated with an important change of life are considered and promptly transmitted to the learners. We prepare them to effectively integrate in a new country and make them feel like part of it.