Chapter XXX
The LAFEC Experience for Language Skills Acquisition

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents the tutoring methodology adopted in an e-learning language course for students in vocational training and higher education as well as staff from small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) in various European countries. The course concerns the acquisition of basic language skills essential to develop effective e-commerce Web sites in several languages. It is based on a student-centered, peer-learning approach that promotes collaboration between students and tutors. It also includes a set of new tools, such as an electronic ontology-based dictionary that allows new forms of putting theory into practice. The chapter presents results from an initial implementation with students from four European countries and China.

INTRODUCTION

The Languages for e-Commerce Course (LAFEC) is one of the courses that have been developed within a Leonardo project that aims to create a three-part online course on how to communicate in the context of electronic commerce. In addition to the courses, this project includes an electronic dictionary for designers and translators of the Web sites of SME-businesses. Besides being used in the language course, the electronic dictionary will also help those professionals draw up foreign-language versions of their commercial Web sites.

The focus of the products is on the target language and cross-cultural factors influencing verbal communication. It addresses language and communication teachers and experts at universities or institutes of higher education, students in different fields at universities or institutes of higher education, SME-businesses that intend to internationalize their Web sites, and marketing and communication experts in companies. LAFEC is a language competences course targeted at developing writing skills for those in charge of writing informative texts on e-commerce Web sites for foreign customers who must take into account the customers' needs and cultural backgrounds.

This course has been planned to provide five European Credit Transfer Systems (ECTSs), thus corresponding to a total workload of 135 hours. The initial implementation was delivered to Finnish, Polish, Latvian, Portuguese, and Chinese students, and took place from October 14, 2006, until April 2007. The students were tutored by three of the language teachers involved in the course development, whose views are included in this chapter, together with the feedback of the few students that have concluded the course. In the following sections, a description of the contents of each module and the corresponding aims and pedagogical strategies will be described.

BACKGROUND

Computer-supported collaborative learning (CSCL) promotes the communication of ideas, materials, and information, and the interactive creation of documents for learning purposes. This collaborative model of learning can be characterized by multiparticipant communication, space and time independent communication, and computer-mediated communication. Harasim (1989) proposes that it is "the process of construction of knowledge by the integration of the student, the teachers, and the specialists in discussions and interactive activities." Several related theories further define this educational phenomenon and scaffold strategies to explore it (Hsiao, 1995), such as Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, problem-/project-based learning, cognitive flexibility, situated learning, and metacognition.

Bruffee (1983) presented a set of requirements that should exist in exemplary cases of student-centered learning environments:

- Students who participate actively in the learning process
- Students who are responsible for the acquisition of their knowledge
- The teacher is a moderator and a facilitator rather than a knowledge transmitter
- The environment allows peer interaction and its evaluation

Furthermore, the collaborative learning environment is successful when there is an effective and working community. Rheingold (1994) suggests the following four steps in the constitution of the physical communities, which can be extended to virtual ones:

- Each individual develops relations with others
- Each individual establishes residence and interacts with other residents

- Each individual recognizes and emphasizes common interests with the community
- Each individual develops the feeling of belonging to the community

An important part of computer-supported collaboration is still based on written communication. This is a process that allows knowledge construction, because it implies a mental process of concept organization for synthesis and transmission (Emig, 1977, p. 123), "as the writing is the representation of the world made visible, incorporating the process and product, the writing is much stronger source of learning than the speech."

Computer mediation provides functionalities expressed in the previous points, but it also allows other mechanisms for the educative interactions. It allows revising, archiving, and recovering past interactions. This electronic log with the transcript of past interactions allows a detailed retrospective and critical analysis of the interaction (Harasim, 1990). This information provides an excellent opportunity to explore the standards of interaction among participants. The analysis of the participative structure, the cross-references between messages, and the general group activities allow creation of a profile of the standards of communication; that is, who talks with whom, when, about what, and what is the frequency of the related messages.

Fundamental for the understanding of the interaction between participants is the study and analysis of communication patterns. Clark and Brennan (1991) define a way to examine the efficiency and success of the communication by dividing it in phases and stages that represent the presentation, acceptance, level of reception, and understanding. This concept can be affected by the following:

- Simultaneous presence of the participants in a determined place
- Visibility of the participants

- Possibility of mutual audition
- Existence of instantaneous communication
- Existence of synchronous bidirectional communication
- Existence of communication out of sequence
- Possibility to go through/analyze the communication

Salmon's (2004, p. 28) methodology for online collaborative learning provides a clear view of the community-building and knowledge acquisition steps:

Individual access and the ability of participants to use CMC are essential prerequisites for conference participation (stage one, at the base of the flights of steps). Stage two involves individual participants establishing their online identities and then finding others with whom to interact. At stage three, participants give information relevant to the course to each other. Up to and including stage three, a form of co-operation occurs, i.e. support for each person's goals. At stage four, course-related group discussions occur and the interaction becomes more collaborative. The communication depends on the establishment of common understandings. At stage five, participants look for more benefits from the system to help them achieve personal goals, explore how to integrate CMC into other forms of learning and reflect on the learning processes.

DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE LANGUAGE COURSE

The pedagogical design assumes that a new educational paradigm is required, focused on the student; adjusted to its characteristics, constraints, and requirements; and relying on CSCL (Vaz de Carvalho, 2005). E-learning platforms together with pedagogical and organizational strategies

can support this new way of learning—more personalized, just-in-time, more fitted to individual needs, and more flexible in content and schedules. This approach is based on a set of guidelines that guarantee methodological coherence among the following modules:

- **Learner centricity.** The course is student-centric. The participating students have the opportunity to learn the target language and culture in interaction with each other. Tasks were developed so that participants deal with tasks and exercises with a perspective of real-life situations. Course participants translate and localize Web pages in cooperation with SME companies and under the guidance of their peer group (Module 5 and Module 6). This brings higher education language teaching closer to the reality of working life and business needs. Studies of international e-business marketing and communication support this holistic approach.

- **Peer learning.** During their tasks, the participating students aim at peer learning by making good use of the target language. All the modules include exercises that lead participants to collaborate/be evaluated by other participants, either in pairs or in groups. This motivates students to critically study each other's written presentations, focusing on language, cultural aspects, and content. The peer learning method enhances the students' skills in giving and receiving constructive feedback and reacting to it in a multicultural environment.

- **Teacher manual.** The teacher manual intends to instruct those who have not participated in the development of the course or are not acquainted with peer or project learning. It provides not only instructions and suggestions to deal with the various tasks and monitor the course participants, but also possible answers to the proposed exercises throughout the course.

- **Educational e-commerce tool or electronic dictionary.** The tool/dictionary is a valuable resource and a contribution toward standardization of the language use on e-commerce Web pages. It is meant for SME employees who create contents for e-commerce Web pages. A dictionary of e-shopping and e-marketing will also help authors write text on the Web; therefore, tasks have been developed to integrate this tool in the languages course.

Taking this set of guidelines into account, each module comprises individual activities and collaborative/peer-learning tasks. Individual tasks include studying theoretical input and self-assessment; searching for and collecting information; submitting assignments; and doing gap-filling, matching, or multiple-choice exercises. These are mainly the first tasks in each lesson, requiring individual research and analysis, thus enabling students to learn at their own pace.

The collaborative tasks include contributing interactively in discussion forums and providing peer feedback on the work of another participant. Depending on the number of course participants, collaboration may take place in small teams, which then report their findings to the course group as a whole. In this way, course participants of various nationalities are led to interact under the basis of peer learning principles (e.g., sharing information in a forum, commenting on each other's work on a certain exercise).

Self-assessment and individual exercises are given immediate feedback (e.g., grade, correction, comments). Those exercises that imply filling in boards, getting information from Web sites, or producing text are to be corrected and commented on by the tutor/teacher or by another course participant. Participants are encouraged to consult the course-colleagues rather than the tutors. Groups change between modules, as this widens interaction among students and contributes to the forming of a global virtual community instead of smaller groups.

The intercultural aspects have a central role in the Language Course—assignments have been developed to lead students to compare their native countries' e-commerce Web sites with Web sites in the target language (i.e., Module 3, Module 5). The exercises are essentially practice-oriented. First, participants are led to analyze real Web site material, then they are required to produce their own material, and finally they are assigned the task of analyzing and commenting on one of their coursemate's production. This way, participants are led to enlarge their vocabulary and knowledge on the specific matter or function, and are assessed in their capability of critically analyzing each other's work.

The course has been designed to be implemented in a Web-based learning environment. It is organized in seven modules, planned to take from 18 to 30 hours depending on the workload involved in each one. Estimates of the time to be allowed for each module and lesson are provided as an approximate guide. Course participants get acquainted with the objectives of each module and specific lesson by clicking on the first link provided under the title. Theoretical details on the subjects dealt with in the lessons and/or language input are provided immediately before the tasks/assignments of that lesson.

The first (Module 0) is only introductory for an easier integration and familiarization of students with one another, with the tutor, and with the e-learning platform, following Salmon's (2004) model. In the first content module (Module 1), students become familiar with the principles of multilingual e-commerce communication by analyzing and evaluating existing Web pages. Aspects of cross-cultural communication relevant to international electronic commerce are also introduced. In the second module (Module 2), students are led to study the presentation of a range of possible product categories and the best way to describe products on e-commerce Web sites. Module 3 refers to the shopping procedure and the instructions given to the user. It intends to make course participants aware of the most appropriate vocabulary and language structures to use when guiding an e-commerce Web site user through the process of making an online purchase. Module 4 provides learning material on how to effectively write company descriptions, organize frequently asked questions, and describe the sales terms and conditions. In Module 5, students are given theoretical background in issues related to the real e-commerce Web sites, and their main task is to translate a Web site in cooperation with another course participant. The last module of the course (Module 6) considers the development of e-commerce Web site text by the course participants, whether individually or in groups (it will depend on the strategy adopted by the tutor/teacher leading the course). The material produced will provide the basis for evaluation and grading.

Next, a thorough description of the contents of each module is presented. The schedules and several of the tasks in the modules, including the divisions of lessons, have been modified, taking into account the experience of tutoring and the feedback students gave to the tasks all along the period in which the pilot course took place.

Module 0: Presentation and Overview

Module 0 includes three lessons, each of them requiring around two hours to be accomplished. In this introductory model, course participants (students and tutor) interact, thus favoring integration and familiarization among themselves, but also with the e-learning platform. Therefore, various tools have been planned to be used in this module: the forum, first used to lead course participants to exchange information about themselves; the quiz, where they have to apply their experiences in online shopping, followed by further discussion in a forum; and the wiki, where course members develop tasks in which contributions regarding advantages and disad-

vantages of online shopping are required. The general objective of this introductory module is thus to lead course participants to be motivated both to systematize and share their ideas, as well as to comment on each other's contribution and to participate in further discussion.

Module 1: Structure and Content of E-Commerce Web Sites

Module 1 is the first content-matter module, and it is planned to take 18 hours of work. It is divided in three lessons, each of them implying a minimum workload of four hours and a maximum of six hours. This module's main objectives are to lead students to become familiar with the structure and elements of an e-commerce Web site, mainly the home page elements and impact, as well as to guide them in the analysis and evaluation both of the information offered by e-stores and of the differences between Web writing and print.

The first lesson in this module (Lesson 1.1) starts by making students work individually so they get to know and process the information required. In a following task, they are asked to read their coursemates' contributions and comment on them, thus leading to the exchange of ideas and awareness about differences and similarities in their choices and Web site characteristics.

In Lesson 1.2, course participants are asked to look up essential vocabulary, being then led to a quiz matching exercise on the contents of the already referred to theoretical information. This assures that they read and understand the information they will need to accomplish the future tasks, which include the detailed analysis of Web site structure and the delivery of sustained opinions on this subject.

Lesson 1.3 concerns the specifications of Web writing and print. Once again, after having become acquainted with the theoretical contents, course participants are led to solve individual guided tasks, followed by peer assessment and exchange of sustained feedback.

Module 2: Product Categorization and Description

Module 2 leads students to familiarize themselves with the appropriate way of presenting product and service descriptions and how to classify and include the products in an e-commerce Web site in such a way that the user may easily find what he or she is looking for. This module is planned to require 15 hours of work. It is divided into five lessons, each of them having a minimum workload of three hours. A theoretical introduction (or language input) to the contents of the lessons is also present at the beginning of each lesson. The tasks in this module are all individual assignments except for the final task in Lesson 2.5, which aims at students' information analysis and exchange in a discussion forum.

In Lesson 2.1, the main objective is to lead course participants to learn about the most common criteria and categories under which products and services are classified on e-commerce Web sites.

Lesson 2.2 and 2.3 aim at language analysis, leading course participants both to analyze and practice specific language structures and vocabulary used in product description. Main aspects dealt with are collocations, noun phrases, adjectives, and all the general technical vocabulary required to describe a product.

In lesson 2.4, emphasis is put on persuasion strategies, language analysis, and text production taking those issues into account.

Lesson 2.5 targets writing practice and peer assessment. The exercises lead course participants first to produce a product description text on their own, and then to analyze and comment on another coursemate's work using the forum tool.

Module 3: Shopping Procedure and User Instructions

Module 3 leads students to analyze the appropriate vocabulary and language structures needed to

guide an e-commerce Web site user through the process of buying online. This module is planned to involve around 18 hours of work. The module follows the procedure a user takes when purchasing a product, from the use of appropriate item search keywords to the check-out process and payment information.

In Lesson 3.1, course participants study the language of button texts and links; in Lesson 3.2, the main subject dealt with is the use of search facilities present in an e-commerce Web site; Lesson 3.3 deals with the language and structures present in the shopping cart functions; and finally, Lesson 3.4 leads course participants throughout the checkout process, focusing mainly on payment methods and conditions provided by e-commerce Web sites.

Module 4: Customer Support Material

Module 4 requires more time from course participants; therefore, it has been assigned a workload of 20 hours. This module concerns activities around the specific customer service material provided in most e-commerce Web sites. The students are led to concentrate on company descriptions (Lesson 4.1), frequently asked questions (FAQs) (Lesson 4.2), and the sales terms and conditions (Lesson 4.3). First, course participants are led to study and analyze real material in the target or in their own language. Then they are required to produce their own material, and finally, they are assigned the task of analyzing and commenting on one of their coursemates' productions.

Module 5: Development of an E-Commerce Web Site

Module 5 is planned for a workload of 25 hours. This module aims at providing theoretical background that will give students solid rationale for their work on a real e-commerce Web site. Course participants are then led to translate and analyze

both their own work and the work of another participant. They compare one of their mother-tongue Web sites with an English e-commerce Web site selling the same kind of products. Next, using the resources provided, students will have to translate their native language site into English. Lastly, the course participants' task is to analyze their coursemates' work.

Module 6: Foreign Language Version of an E-Commerce Web Site

Module 6, the final module of the course, is organized to comprise a workload of 30 hours. Course participants' task is to develop the appropriate text material in English for a real Web site using all the previously learned and acquired knowledge. The project contributions are assessed and graded by the tutor so a final grade may be given to each student participating in the course.

IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF THE PILOT COURSE

The prototype course implementation took place from October 24, 2006, through April 15, 2007. Twenty-eight students enrolled in the course, the majority coming from Finland. A smaller number of students came from Latvia, China, Portugal, and Poland. Although the entire course was online, student could access local tutors in their institutions concerning technical difficulties or course administrative issues.

The Languages for e-Commerce course used the tools available in the Moodle e-learning environment, based on the principle of collaborative learning. Most of the collaboration took place in discussion forums, where course participants sent messages explaining their opinions, their experiences, or what they had discovered regarding a particular topic. Active participation on the part of course participants was therefore essential

and had to be stimulated. By contributing to the discussion forums, participants practiced their language writing standards, which should lead them to feel more confident and fluent in writing. Course participants had to be motivated to use a friendly, positive, and polite tone when expressing their ideas.

Student Feedback

The definition of the characteristics that correspond to students' success in situations of collaborative learning is clearly a complex question. Davie and Wells (1991) propose that the satisfaction and success in these actions derive from the interactions among the participants, from the freedom and autonomy and from the characteristics and abilities of the participants.

The number of students that finally arrived through the end of the course (eight out of the original 28) was not large enough to provide valid quantitative data. So a qualitative evaluation approach was taken. Course participants were asked the following questions:

1. How well did the course meet your expectations?
2. Was the explanatory material provided in each module at a suitable level of difficulty? Please mention any specific examples of material that was either too easy or too difficult.
3. Were the learning tasks provided in each module at a suitable level of difficulty? Please mention any specific examples of tasks that were too easy or too difficult.
4. Did interacting with other participants in the discussion forums help you to learn?
5. Did you get sufficient feedback on your work at various stages of the course:
    a. On the assignments you submitted?
    b. On your contributions to the discussion forums? (Would you like the teachers to comment on, correct, and/or evaluate your English every time you contribute to a discussion forum, or do you prefer teachers to pay more attention to your ideas?)
6. Feel free to add any other points about things that we haven't thought about.

The contents presented in the following paragraphs correspond to the majority of opinions expressed by the students that answered the questionnaire.

Students didn't have many expectations but considered the course title to correspond to its contents, and they felt they had learned specific matter on the subject.

As this was the first online course for me it was all new and I didn't have much of expectations – I just hoped it would work out well. I think that the course was exactly what you can expect from its title. As I had already thought before, the course was useful for me as I am learning the English language. Beforehand I hoped and later really got to know better this language variety – web texts. Only it's sad that the course didn't finish as well as it could have.

Students considered the explanatory materials at the beginning of each lesson to be essential for understanding the tasks, although the language had been sometimes difficult to understand.

I personally think that these explanatory materials were very helpful because otherwise I wouldn't have understood much of these tasks. I do not think that any of the materials was too easy or too difficult – it was just that for some materials the language used was hard to understand at the first sight, but once you got really into it, then all came clear.

As for the difficulty of the tasks, they considered them to be at a suitable level, mentioning only the need in certain cases to look up the definitions

of concepts to be able to understand and therefore accomplish the tasks.

I think that mostly the tasks were quite suitable (maybe except Task 3.2.2 about finding different word forms in a search engine – I much disliked this one and thought it's quite dull). Most of the task formulations seemed difficult at the first sight because the language used was quite scientific and complicated. I had to spend some time getting out the idea what exactly I had to do. The time planned for the tasks mostly wasn't enough. I think that one of the causes for this lack of time was that we as students had to UNDERSTAND the tasks first and sometimes revise some concepts from previous tasks and materials (or even "outside" materials) to understand what is to be done exactly, and only then we could get to the task itself. Of course, this was very time-consuming. For example, I had to look up first what exactly was a noun phrase and a verb phrase to find them in the task, or I had to find what was the difference between Web site and homepage again etc.

As far as student interaction is concerned, the students had a negative opinion: they consider it to be neither objective nor reliable. Furthermore, the students refer to the difficulty of providing feedback to other coursemates that do not provide their contributions early enough. Referring to the feedback from teachers, they highlight the importance of individual correction and/or commenting on students' language mistakes, taking into account that this is a language course. However, they don't consider it relevant to take into account all the mistakes in grading. Important and motivating has also been the in-time teacher's comments to their work.

I think that it did not really help. Although sometimes it was nice to get to know what others think, the opinion of students wasn't too professional and therefore you couldn't trust that. And as most of the time interacting meant giving feedback on

the works of others, I think it wasn't very objective in most cases because nobody wanted to offend anybody else. In some cases, this mutual "feedbacking" even caused unnecessary dislikes among the students. Also this interaction means more stress on time limits – if you have a due date on Wednesday, for example, and somebody posts already on Monday and is waiting for your feedback (which you cannot give until you are through with your own work) – sure, it gets everybody stressed. Moreover, if the teacher starts blaming this somebody for being very slow (although the due date hasn't even come yet), then it gets very unpleasant indeed. This was the case with Jyrki and me at the very beginning (0.1.1).

As concerns the teachers' feedback I can say that it was done very quickly in most of the cases. Bad thing was that we didn't actually get any precise grades – it was just good or very good or not so good. I would have wanted evaluation that is more precise so I know where I am. But the good thing was that we had at least a few sentences of what was good and what was not so good and could be improved. Receiving even a short piece of feedback on every task encouraged me to continue and I didn't feel that nobody is interested in our work (as from the teacher's side). Although on the last exercises this feeling changed a bit.

The students have the opinion that the course was well structured and considered the typology of exercises used (e.g., matching, filling gaps, multiple-choice exercises, tables provided to be completed) quite useful and motivating.

I think that as this is a "LANGUAGES for e-commerce" course, use of English should be considered all the time – maybe not evaluated in terms of grades but commented upon so that we know where we are wrong. Although I don't know how it could really work in discussion forums because it would mean a separate teacher's reply for every post. Also it could have prevented people from

saying things just not to get laughed at. Maybe English skills could be taken into consideration and make an influence on the final grade or something. Anyway – the main attention should still be on the idea.

FUTURE TRENDS

Considering the need and interest of widely implementing and assessing CSCL approaches to Language Learning, the course materials will be available to any interested teacher through a Creative Commons license. Teachers who decide to run the Languages for e-Commerce course will have access to a package of learning materials and activities together with a teacher's manual. This package corresponds to the familiar textbook+teachers' guide+auxiliary material that has become the norm for commercially produced language teaching materials and is provided in electronic form. Therefore, most of the Languages for e-commerce materials can be edited and adapted flexibly to suit the needs of particular groups of participants. Thus, wording of instructions can be changed, texts used as examples can be replaced in order to keep the materials up to date, and additional tasks can be created and added to the course.

Interested teachers must be aware that the actual teaching operations and routines of online teaching differ from the classroom-based kind. All the routines corresponding to classroom management (e.g., setting up groups for team tasks, assigning tasks to particular participants, intervening with extra explanation whenever problems or misunderstandings arise, and above all, providing language correction and feedback) can become quite tedious and time-consuming in an online course, because everything has to be written down and posted to the learning environment.

The fact that participants' contributions remain visible throughout the course makes it easier for the teacher to review each student's development and provide targeted feedback. On the other hand, if certain individuals do not contribute, they are even harder to monitor than the students who skulk in the corners of classrooms. Noncontribution is exceedingly difficult for the teacher to interpret and correct. This problem of falling off contributions followed by exceedingly high drop-out proved to be one of the biggest disappointments of the pilot course, and one for which we have not found satisfactory answers.

Another major problem can be timekeeping. Without the routine of face-to-face meetings to provide structure to the course, an alternative structure consisting of fixed deadlines for each module has to be imposed and compliance strictly monitored. In the prototype implementation, this did not work as planned with the pilot group; we had to be flexible about the timetable and deadlines, which was bound to lead to problems. As a result, collaboration among participants did not work either, because at any given time, different participants were working on different tasks. Furthermore, the time allocated for the course ran out before any of the participants completed the required work. This, in turn, has created ongoing problems for the tutors, who did not expect to have to allocate time to this course weeks after the closing date. The tutor experience is that deadlines that have been determined have to be observed.

Finally, teachers should be aware of the propensity for "flaming." The relative anonymity of all participants in an online environment means that peer pressure to behave sociably does not exist in the normal way. In these circumstances, certain individuals seem to feel free to express themselves inconsiderately or even aggressively toward teachers and/or coparticipants. This occurred in the pilot course and took all the teachers completely by surprise. So it is worth emphasizing from the outset that participants must use a friendly, positive, and polite tone in all their contributions. It goes without saying that teach-

ers have to follow the same rule. When the same feedback message has been typed often enough to numerous students, a note of impatience risks sneaking in. This tone is instantly recognizable by the next student, who will inevitably feel offended and discouraged. This is a danger we have to guard against at all times if a 100% dropout rate is to be avoided.

CONCLUSION

The Languages for e-Commerce was offered as an elective course for students of the higher education institutions participating in the project. The students represented various nationalities, and the level of their English communication skills varied a lot. Some of the students produced high-quality work. It was gratifying to notice that they had learned the principles of good Web communication and that they were able to apply this knowledge to their own work.

There was as large number of dropouts at the beginning of the course. One of the reasons for this was undoubtedly the fact that the students realized that this five-credit course required a considerable amount of student work and was not a way of collecting "easy" credits. This clearly harmed the setting up of the virtual community, as there were several group changes, and personal bonds that were being formed were broken. This also affected the peer learning results, as students didn't feel confident enough with each other in the latter steps.

Some of the timekeeping and dropout problems have also arisen from an unexpected source—difficulty of Internet access in some of the situations in which participants found themselves. This kind of course demands fast and easy access to the Internet. Therefore, participants who were accustomed to working from home, for instance, dropped out if their personal Internet connection failed. Two participants put their work on the course on hold when they moved to France as exchange students. This was surprising and disappointing, because

we expected that exchange students temporarily located away from their home institutions would be a useful target group for these courses.

Nevertheless, the following opinion from a student, together with the global overview of the course, led us to think that although this first prototype implementation had several problems, the approach is successful and leads to an effective intercultural and international language learning process. The second edition, with most of the corrected issues, will start soon and will allow us to test the improvements placed in the system.

Finally, I think that this course shouldn't be stopped despite that the first group (us) haven't finished it completely and in time. It was true that all-in-all the tasks were quite difficult and time-consuming and maybe that is why many people dropped out in the very beginning. Nevertheless, this was one of the most interesting courses that I have ever had. I liked that here I saw the real sites and real language and its use in a modern world and not just some "elevated" theories and sciences. Maybe I liked this course very much also because I generally like computers and surfing in the Internet as such. Well, also I think that people who take up this course should be interested in language more than in commerce ☺ and with quite good knowledge of English to understand the tasks. Last thing – if I hadn't moved to France in the beginning of February I would most probably have finished everything in time.

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KEY TERMS

Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL): Learning based on collaborative methods (e.g., peer learning, discussion, case study, project-based learning, etc.) supported by information and communications technology (ICT).

e-Learning: Learning supported by connected technological systems that provide access to the contents, communication between participants, collaborative activities, assessment, and evaluation.

Electronic Commerce: Process (including methods and tools) to buy and sell products and/or services over the Internet or, in general, conducting financial transactions through electronic means.

Language Learning: Process (including methodological concerns) of learning a language that is not the mother tongue.

Pedagogy. Principles and methods to support education and learning.

Self-Assessment: Process of conducting a self-evaluation of the acquired knowledge and learning objective fulfillment.

Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises: Commercial companies with fewer than 250 employees.