

The LeTS Project: Language eTeachers Services

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Abstract

The "LeTS: Language eTeachers Services" project is a successful example of an effective application of elearning in the field of language education and training.

The project was funded by the European Commission in the framework of the Leonardo da Vinci Programme.

The LeTS project has developed tools and services addressed to language teachers and trainers who wish to include ICT and eLearning among their teaching methods. The tools and services developed are available online on the LeTS project portal (<http://www.leonardo-lets.net/>).

1. Introduction

Effective language teaching requires the teachers and trainers to possess particular personal resources and skills. The teachers should therefore have regular re-training opportunities, particularly on topics relating to the great potential offered by the application of new technologies to language teaching.

The advent of new information and communication technologies has created new teaching and learning methods putting the traditional role of the teacher and trainer up for discussion.

In the context described above, the LeTS project is addressed to language teachers and trainers who are specialised in the teaching of foreign languages in a professional context. The project aims to give these individuals the skills and motivation for managing changes and for taking up new challenges, through the creation of innovative training opportunities, which take into account the emerging needs of teachers and trainers.

2. The Project Objectives

The main objective of the LeTS project is to update language trainers and teachers giving them the essential skills for offering quality language training, which is characterised by a high degree of flexibility and personalisation and that is delivered through the efficient application of ICT.

The LeTS project therefore has the aim to give language trainers and teachers who work in the professional training sector the skills for:

- *identifying, evaluating and selecting* the best e-learning products and methodologies for the teaching/learning of a foreign language in a professional context.
- *using* e-learning products and methodologies efficiently for the teaching/learning of foreign languages in a professional context, both as an alternative and integration to traditional training methodologies.

- *creating their own e-learning courses* for the teaching/learning in a “professional” context.

3. The Main Project Activities

The main activities of the **LeTS: Language eTeachers Services** project, are:

- Creation of three online courses addressed to language teachers and trainers focusing on the application of ICT to language teaching. The three courses are: *Research and Evaluation of e-Learning Material for Language Teaching and Learning*; *Effective use of e-Learning products for Language Learning*; *Development of e-Learning Materials for Language Learning*
- Creation of an online database of elearning based products for the learning of the 20 European languages. These products are tested and evaluated by language teachers in the 9 countries involved in the project and then are validated by language teaching experts.
- Collection of elearning experiences carried out by art teachers so as to identify the best practices available in the field in the nine European countries involved in the LeTS project.
- Selection of technical tools for the creation of e-learning courses: e.g. software; authoring management systems; platforms etc. which have been experimented successfully by other teachers for the development of e-learning products in the field of language teaching.

4. The Main Project Results

The LeTS project had developed an integrated system of services which allow teachers and trainers of languages in a professional context to:

- Competently access e-learning language training offers, recognising both their advantages and limitations, applying also a methodological-technological analysis.
- Acquire the skills to use these products efficiently both as an integration and an alternative to traditional classroom based training.
- Acquire the skills to create their own e-learning products for the language training of specific target groups.

The tools produced in the framework of the *LeTS: Language eTeachers Services* project are accessible on the project portal (<http://www.leonardo-lets.net/>). The portal consists of the following main sections:

- 1) Availability of **on-line training courses** on the following themes:
 - a. *Research and Evaluation of e-Learning Material for Language Teaching and Learning*. This course provides language teachers and trainers with the skills to identify, evaluate and select the best e-learning products and methodologies for the teaching/learning of a foreign language in a professional context.
 - b. *Effective use of e-Learning products for Language Learning*. This course provides language teachers and trainers with the skills to use e-learning products and methodologies efficiently for the teaching of foreign languages in a professional context, both as an alternative and integration to traditional training methodologies. This training package also focuses on the potential of e-learning products which can be re-modelled and adapted in order to respond to different needs.
 - c. *Development of e-Learning Materials for Language Learning: Methodologies and Techniques*. This course provide language teachers and trainers with the skills to create their own e-learning courses for the teaching/learning in a “professional” context. This training

package also concentrates on the practical methodologies to be adopted in the creation of an e-learning training package both from a methodological and technical point of view.

- 2) On-line **database of products for the teaching and learning of 20 European languages in a professional context**, selected and evaluated by language training experts. For each product a detailed description and evaluation form was completed which allow for language teachers and trainers to select the most suitable products to meet the needs for their target groups.
- 3) On-line **database of e-learning experiences carried out by language trainers and teachers**. Language trainers and teachers who have been involved in previous or current e-learning and/or ICT based language project described the experience carried out as well as its strengths and weaknesses also comparing the experience with traditional teaching methods.
- 4) On-line availability of an **Interactive form for the evaluation of e-learning products and technologies for language learning** and of a “ready to use kit” which contains a selection and review of technical tools and software for the production of e-learning material for language learning in a professional context.

References

<http://www.leonardo-lets.net>