

Leonardo da Vinci Project “Healthy Languages”

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Abstract

The project »Healthy Languages« was carried out within a two-year project »Leonardo da Vinci«. It is the result of the cooperation of 6 partner countries: Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Austria, Germany, Great Britain and Italy. The project began in 2003 and was completed in 2005.

The aim of the project was to create learning material for health workers, aiming primarily at practical nurses and registered nurses who are non-native speakers. The purpose of this material is to provide the user with the basics of the professional language (Slovenian, English, German, Italian and Czech), which would facilitate the communication between them and their clients. With the help of this material the learner can acquire the basic communication ability necessary to successfully communicate in the working environment.

The results of the project are course books with a CD of recorded dialogues in five languages (SLOVENŠČINA V BOLNIŠNICI, IM KRANKENHAUS, HEALTHY LANGUAGES, ITALIANO IN OSPEDALE, CESTINA PRO ZDRAVOTNIKY), a CD with a five-language glossary of terms related to health care and nursing, and a CD with admissions documentation in five languages.

The results of the project can facilitate non-native health workers find employment in the countries, which took part in the project. The course book SLOVENŠČINA V BOLNIŠNICI) is one of the first attempts to introduce Slovenian as a professional language to its non-native speakers.

As health care is rapidly becoming more international, it has become evident that there is a demand for health care workers fluent in a second language.

Due to this foreseeable demand in the participating countries, teaching models and teaching packages are being planned in the foreign or second languages German, English, Italian, Slovenian and Czech. These models will comprise 60 to 100 instructional units/studying hours. The target groups for the program are both native and immigrant workers. (e.g. nursing staff from East Asia or from the associated European countries). While the native target group needs medical second language skills, the immigrant workers need the language of the host country as well as medical second language skills. The needs of both native and non-native consumers of the medical health systems have been taken into account and patients will be reached either via a general foreign language (e.g. English, German, Italian) and/or by way of health related and interculturally acceptable communication aids (e.g. multilingual signs or health fibula).

In methodology and didactics the following was planned:

- A clear differentiation between general and professional or client-specific language and intercultural competence. Health care professionals should be able to deal with patients and patients' needs in general/emotional support as well as in health related matters i.e. the case at hand thus contributing to an efficient, effective and cost saving (also subsequent costs) treatment
- The consideration of autonomous/self-controlled forms of learning/acquisition of competence. The sufficiently trained professional staff in the respective health systems can be expected to use autonomous/self-controlled forms of learning; using new information and communication technologies. For that purpose, health-related information files as well as links to professionally relevant service centres/services are offered within the program. These mainly serve the project's health care professionals in widening their chances of learning and attaining professional competency. They receive the necessary instructions from the planned teaching models or learning packages.
- Inclusion of the persons involved (target groups and consumers) in the design and decision process. In order to guarantee ,in principle, a citizen friendly/democratic as well as an

extremely practical approach to the project procedures and results, the primary project target groups (specialist staff on several levels of the involved health systems) as well as the consumers (work immigrants and their relatives as well as foreign tourists) should be involved in the on-going development in planning, strategy, implementation and evaluation work.

As previously mentioned, it has been taken into account that the training target groups may be “native” or “immigrant” workers of the respective health systems. With the consumers it has been taken into account that immigrant workers as well as tourists rely on the respective health systems.

Planned results as regards content:

- Teaching materials for the education of native and foreign specialists in the health service in German, English, Italian, Slovenian and Czech
- Development of CD-Roms in these languages
- Instructions for autonomous learning such as teaching methods for the new information and communication technologies.
- Certification model as proof of the acquisition of appropriate qualification. The students/participants are certified after finishing each working package by the executing institution in agreement with the responsible body of the social and health service.

Methodological and didactical plans are:

- A clear differentiation between general and professional or client specific language and intercultural competencies;
- The consideration of autonomous/self-controlled forms of learning/acquisition of competency
- The use of new information and communication technologies as well as
- inclusion of the persons involved (target groups and consumers) in the design and the decision process of the project.

The Coursebook SLOVENIAN IN HOSPITAL

The coursebook entitled SLOVENIAN IN HOSPITAL (SLOVENŠČINA V BOLNIŠNICI) forms part of a whole set of learning material. Apart from the book there is a CD of recorded dialogues, a CD with a five-language glossary of terms related to health care and nursing, and a CD with admissions documentation (the admissions form) in English, German, Italian, Slovenian and Czech. All the material has been produced as part of the project Healthy Languages (Zdravi jeziki) within the framework of the European educational project Leonardo da Vinci. It is the result of the cooperation of five European institutions. These are: Srednja zdravstvena šola Ljubljana (Secondary School for Nursing Ljubljana) from Slovenia; Alpha & Beta, a language school from Bolzano, Italy; Eurostaff (a Czech-American agency which develops educational programs for health workers) from Prague, the Czech Republic; Volkschochschule from Stuttgart, Germany and Newham College of Further Education from London, Great Britain. The project was coordinated by the Berufsförderungsinstitut from Salzburg (BFI), Austria. BFI works to develop vocational education and professional language in various professional areas, one of them being health care. The supporting members of the project were three Austrian hospitals: Allgemeines Krankenhaus der barmherzigen Brüder from Salzburg, Krankenhaus Hallein and Krankenhaus Oberndorf.

The fact is that also health care, like many other fields of life and work, is nowadays being affected by the process of globalization. On the one hand people travel a lot and seek health services worldwide, while on the other hand we are witnessing a greater flow of workforce in the field of health care. These processes create a growing need for the specific knowledge of foreign languages. The purpose of this material is to provide the user with the basics of the professional language (Slovenian, English, German, Italian and Czech), which would facilitate the communication between those who offer health services and their clients.

The coursebook with CD »SLOVENIAN IN HOSPITAL« is a book designed for health workers who want to learn Slovenian as a second or foreign language at elementary level. It is primarily aimed at practical nurses and registered nurses. The book is intended for health workers who are non-native speakers of Slovenian, but have finished their education or are still studying and feel the need to learn professional language. The purpose of this book is to help the learner to acquire the basic communication ability (linguistic as well as strategic) necessary in order to be able to successfully communicate in the working environment.

Since the material is aimed at learners who want to obtain the elementary level of language (restricted to the specific professional area), the level of knowledge is marked from A1 to A2 in accordance with the standards and scales of the common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEF). We need to emphasize at this point that A1 and A2 are just approximations because standards to evaluate the level of knowledge have not yet been set for Slovenian. In other languages these specifications depend more or less on the subjective estimations of language experts. The authors of the Slovenian book would also like to emphasize that because of the specific characteristics of the Slovenian language (its considerable flexion) it is difficult to expect a learner with only elementary knowledge of Slovenian to be able to use professional language autonomously. In this case A1 and A2 should be considered more like guidelines to indicate that the book, together with the teacher's assistance, is useful mostly for those who are already able to use basic Slovenian in everyday situations (users of Slovenian as a foreign language at A1 and A2 level), yet want to expand their knowledge of the language in the specific area (terminology, communication patterns) of the professional language. The book thus focuses mainly on the specific terminology and communication patterns which a health worker (a practical nurse, a registered nurse) will need in everyday situations at work, particularly when communicating with patients. The book includes more or less routine, highly predictable and repetitive situations and the vocabulary is, except for professional terminology, mostly elementary. This means that the user who wishes to acquire the knowledge (patterns, vocabulary) intended in this book will remain a speaker of Slovenian at the elementary level. However, the knowledge of professional language acquired will be expanded to the field of his/ her professional activity. The learner will thus be able to confidently communicate in some everyday, routine and repetitive situations, using the suggested patterns.

The book consists of four thematic modules. Each module is divided into units. The theme of the first module is the hospital with its rooms and departments, and medical professions. As well as this the user gets acquainted with the vocabulary related to various activities dealing with the admission of a patient to hospital and life in hospital. The second module focuses on the human body, on the functions of its particular organs, diseases and injuries the body may be subjected to, and various ways of treatment. The third module presents various kinds of medical examinations as well as the whole procedure related to an operation, preoperative and postoperative activities. The last module presents the dismissal of a patient from hospital and possible ways of rehabilitation. Throughout the eleven units the whole process of hospitalization is presented: from the admission to hospital to the dismissal of a patient from hospital. As a health worker (or one who is still undergoing education) the learner should be familiar with all kinds of routine situations which are part of this whole process. What is new for the learner is Slovenian terminology and communication patterns useful when communicating with patients in these situations. Each unit begins with clear illustrations which represent different objects, people and activities provided with Slovenian descriptions. Each unit then continues with short, schematic and hopefully useful dialogues. These dialogues have been recorded on the CD. The words, expressions and communication patterns acquired throughout the units should be consolidated with exercises which are included in each particular unit. In order to help not only the learner but also the teacher, we have added charts and tables, short warnings and descriptions of some difficult particularities of the language, which can be found in the so called »First Aid Box«. The focus of communication activities is on listening and speaking skills (in the exercises also reading comprehension). This partly derives from the expected level of knowledge but also from the nature of the health care profession, and the basic purpose of the book which is to enable and facilitate direct communication between the patient and the health worker whose language of communication is actually a foreign language. The most important vocabulary from each module is listed at the end of the module, where there are also exercises to practice and assess the acquired knowledge.

The material has partly been tested during the process of creation.