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The DOTS project: Developing Online Teaching Skills

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The use of online tools in educational settings has become ubiquitous, yet effective online teaching requires very specific skills. To provide teaching professionals with an opportunity to develop such skills in a language learning context, the DOTS project (http://dots.ecml.at) was launched with support from ECML. The team is currently creating an online resource in the form of a Moodle workspace populated with bite-size training activities. Through these activities, teachers and trainee teachers of languages who want to extend their teaching into online spaces can develop and enhance their skills. The training materials are by no means limited to technical information and advice, but aim to increase the pedagogic quality of online language teaching. The training kit will provide self-training materials and worksheets that can easily be integrated into existing language teacher training programmes. Communication tools will also be integrated to make the workspace an interactive platform for communication as well as a resource for training materials. This will include forums dedicated to different topics, wikis for collating examples of good practice, and links to other online training spaces. The materials and tools are suitable both for relative novices with basic computing skills and for more advanced users who want to exchange their views and share their expertise on online language teaching.

The bite-size training materials will be presented in a searchable form, with sorting criteria including level of ICT skills of teacher and students, a variety of tools or applications, and language. As a unique feature of this workspace, the materials will be available in various languages including English, German, Spanish, Catalan, French and Croatian. Sequences of training activities will also be suggested, including a basic explanation of the tool, reasons for using it in language teaching, best practice pedagogy, and suitable tasks for the language classroom. Each sequence ends with reflective tasks leading to interactive exchanges on the workspace.

The project is based on socio-cultural and constructivist pedagogic principles (for more information, see Stickler et al. 2010: http://eurocall.webs.upv.es/index.php?m=menu_00&n=news_16#dots), using the concept of experiential learning to help language teachers explore the potential of teaching with ICTs.

From the start of the project, the DOTS team have worked in collaboration with participants at the workshops organised by ECML, incorporating their ideas and suggestions into the workspace and encouraging teachers to try out the skills acquired during the workshops in their own practice. The project was given the opportunity

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to publish its initial findings in an online journal (*Teaching English with Technology* at http://iatefl.org.pl/call/callnl.htm). Matching the unique working methods of DOTS, the team invited workshop participants to make contributions that reflected their own experiences with online teaching. Following the evaluation of the online activities by participants at a workshop in March 2011, the bite-size DOTS activities will be finalised and published in two ways: first, as an offline resource presented on a datastick and second, as an online resource in the Moodle workspace with the opportunity for shared reflection through online communication tools and shared best practice via (wiki) uploads.

We hope that the online workspace, containing contributions from workshop participants and users of the training activities, will eventually develop into an online community of practice, where more experienced teaching professionals can share strategies for developing online teaching skills and where novice users can also take part and receive support. The project team's future plans include:

- expanding the list of technologies (e.g. mobile technologies) and different online environments (e.g. Second Life);
- exploring new pedagogical aspects (e.g. teacher development through reflective activities, cultural appropriateness);
- examining the collaborative element (e.g. linking with existing online repositories);
- investigating policy and assessment issues.

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Majority language instruction as a basis for plurilingual education – *Mehrheitssprachenunterricht als Basis plurilingualer Erziehung* (MARILLE)

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This project is unusual as an ECML project in that it explicitly does not deal with foreign or second languages. Our working term 'majority language', used in the project title, denotes a language variously referred to as a 'national' or 'official' language, a 'language of instruction' or a 'language of education' in Beacco & Byram's 2007 report (http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/guide_niveau3_EN.asp), but that has recently been termed a 'language(s) of

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