

Get Networked and Spy Your Languages

Mercedes Rico*, Paula Ferreira,
Eva M. Domínguez, and Julian Coppens

University of Extremadura, Santa Teresa de Jornet, Mérida, Spain

Abstract. Our proposal describes ISPY, a multilateral European K2 language project based on the development of an Online Networking Platform for Language Learning (<http://www.ispy-project.com/>). Supported by the Lifelong Learning European Programme, the platform aims to help young adults across Europe, secondary and vocational school programs, learn a new language and gain insights into the cultural knowledge implicit to those languages. Conducted by the University of Wolverhampton in collaboration with five other countries in Europe (Spain, Poland, Netherlands, Germany and Romania), the project will promote interaction between learners from different countries who will partly work together to learn a new language via a set of spy missions promoting problem-solving challenges, deductive tasks and collaboration through extension activities in the Moodle platform. The ISPY platform can be used to support face to face in class teaching or outside instruction to enhance language acquisition. It is designed in short scenes in flash movies and comprises a set of ten espionage missions. Available in each of the target languages, all of these multimedia pills consist of a range of activities including photo stories, video presentations, Webquests, quizzes, listening and extended tasks that call for collaboration through a moderated forum. Each country will also have the option to add extra activities in a Moodle application created purposely for the project, additional tasks which, in essence, are new spy missions for those who have already been awarded as ‘Qualified’ spies.

Keywords: interaction, language learning platform, Moodle, spy missions, training.

1. Introduction

Considering the changes in mobility experienced during the last decades and bearing in mind the growing need to learn languages for academic, professional, and occupational purposes, or simply for personal interests, language learning has become one of main aims of our society (Fisher & Baird, 2007; Frohberg, Goth, & Schwabe, 2009). For

* Contact author: mricogar@unex.es

the sake of this growing dynamism, and if second language acquisition relies on a far broader scope than a number of hours of instruction in class – learning is not confined to the four walls of your classroom. Should teaching be bounded by these physical limits?

In this context, the main European policy initiatives, established in the [Council of Lisbon \(2001\)](#), emphasize the development of ICTs in education. With the purpose of breaking down physical barriers and easing teaching and acquisition, ICTs enhance the creation of alternative language-networked environments and promote intercultural understanding to open new opportunities and perspectives for language learning.

Our proposal describes ISPY, a multilateral European K2 language project based on the development of an Online Networking Platform for Language Learning, a platform which aims to help young adults across Europe, secondary and vocational school programs, learn a new language and gain insights into the cultural knowledge implicit to those languages.

2. Method

2.1. Methodology and phases

Conducted by the University of Wolverhampton in collaboration with five other countries in Europe (Spain, Poland, Netherlands, Germany and Romania), the project will promote interaction between learners from different countries who will partly work together to learn a new language via a set of spy missions. The application is also devised to work on problem-solving challenges, deductive tasks and collaboration through extension activities in the Moodle platform.

Regarding the project's development and methodology, we can distinguish four main phases. The contextualization stage has involved each partner carrying out a detailed research covering a range of general education and specific language information concerning their home country. After this phase, we moved on by setting the chosen environments and writing scripts and activities. Thirdly, according to activities and content design, the project will consist of two parts: an interactive game created in short scenes in flash movies where users are given inputs for developing their skills by using motivating material and learning scenarios, and; a Moodle application where they study thoroughly the topics learnt during the game and interact with other students. The last stage will be evaluating the project (June-October 2012). Students from general and pre-vocational education and training will trial the new platform alongside teachers and trainers.

2.2. Course description

Designed in short scenes in flash movies and comprising a set of ten espionage missions, the ISPY platform can be used to support face to face in class teaching or

outside instruction to enhance language acquisition. Available in each of the target languages, all of these multimedia pills consist of a range of activities including photo stories, video presentations, WebQuests, quizzes, listening and extended tasks that call for collaboration through a moderated forum.

During the missions users will need to learn key language skills such as booking hotel rooms, using money, telling the time, ordering food, arranging meetings, purchasing travel tickets and reading documents in order to complete the modules. Once a learner has completed all 10 modules s/he will be recognized as a “trained spy”. Each country will also have the option to add extra activities in a Moodle platform created purposely for the project, additional tasks which, in essence, are new spy missions for those who have already been awarded as ‘Qualified’ spies.

3. Discussion

The proliferation of ICTs has generated the creation of alternative language-networked environments promoting intercultural understanding and opening new opportunities and perspectives for language learning. Lessening barriers, the ubiquity of technology has allowed people to interact on a global scale, setting new instruction grounds for the effective fusion of those elements (language acquisition, cultural understanding and ICTs). In our case the outcome of the project will be an encouraging spy games-based language proposal. Although we cannot provide final discussion at this stage, we will continue working on the final completion of the project to ensure the creation of a network platform for language learning.

4. Conclusions

The interest of this project focuses on the development of an interactive platform which fits the needs and preferences of young adults and trainers, especially by setting new instruction and learning grounds for an effective fusion of language acquisition, cultural understanding and ICTs. The goal-based language missions in which the platform is based facilitates the learning process, makes users aware of their progress and become more deeply involved in their learning. Likewise, teachers will be better-equipped with a wide range of material and tools, improving consequently the quality and effectiveness of education and training outside the four walls of the traditional classroom.

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