

AN INNOVATIVE M+E-LEARNING SOLUTION FOR BETTER INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS IN EU COUNTRIES

Tsvetelina Petrova Petrova

Technical university of Gabrovo

Irena Pavlova Rashkova

Technical university of Gabrovo

Abstract

The paper considers an innovative product developed within European project "E-bridge for Mobility" based on the m+e-learning methods. It provides a detailed description of its components (language course, mobiles, screensavers, basic law, pictiography and web 2.0 e-society) placing emphasis on the content, function and impact. In addition, the paper views the advantages, disadvantages and possibilities of m-learning, as well as the support possibilities of e-learning.

Keywords: migrants, integration into a foreign country, language course, survival kit, m+e-learning.

INTRODUCTION

More and more Europeans are looking for opportunities of professional development in many countries of the Old Continent. Exploring of the specific nature of many cultures, learning of foreign languages, as well as valuable experience result in the fact that people become more and more open to new job proposals and opportunities. And though they still have much to do, each year there is a growing awareness of gaining new experience under cooperation with their neighbors.

While more and more Europeans are decided to make use of the opportunities to work in another European country, it is still necessary to deepen knowledge and emphasis on the information campaign related with benefits of the occupational mobility.

A great problem in the search for a job are administrative regulations, office procedure, as well as the country language itself, that already at the start discourages the EU citizens from undertaking any attempts at the occupational mobility.

Therefore the European project "E-bridge for Mobility" elaborated within K3 is working on developing an innovative m+e learning solution for better and faster integration of immigrants in the country of destination, in particular UK, Spain and Germany.

EXPOSITION

In order to support people who want to change the place of residence for the purpose of searching for a different workplace, cultural area or possibility of additional education, the project provides European citizens with a new mobility solution containing the following aspects: Internet language courses, mobiles (product for mobile phones), basic law, screensavers, pictiography and WEB 2.0 e-society.

1. Project products

The key product of the project is the **Internet language course** which involves learning English, German and Spanish at the A level, and learning to move in reality of England, Germany and Spain, targeting people from Bulgaria, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, who plan to go there to work or continue their education. The course is more like a survival kit for somebody entering the Western European labour market, than a regular course, i.e. apart from gaining purely linguistic knowledge the immigrants get to know the cultural, social and legal specifics of the respective country. It consists of 14 modules, each lesson has a different number of components, such as content, FAQ, multimedia, vocabulary, exercises, grammar. Learning is accompanied by the use of

multimedia materials. Course content includes such issues as self-presentation, preparations for the travel, methods of acquiring information, accommodation, the labour market, education, health and care system and social security, shopping opportunities, bank services, introduction to the country cultural and social life, etc. The language course is based on the following methods: CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), VOLL (Vocationally Oriented Language Learning) and IML (Integrated Micro Learning). It is run on a platform where users can register and have access to didactical content in various forms (usually multimedia). The platform is available on the project web site: www.2mobility.eu.

Mobiles is a set of applications intended for mobile phone use. This product is a kind of continuation of the Internet language course but in a very short form. It uses the potential of a mobile phone: its availability, simplicity of navigation and options of multimedia content presentation. The applications include words and sentences linked to the 14 subject areas of the language course. Taking into account that people use different mobile phones it is difficult to prepare a material that would be compatible with all models. That is why the materials are accessible in two ways: it is possible to download them with an Internet browser installed in a telephone or to download them from the project web site to a computer and then transfer to the telephone (with an USB cable, Bluetooth, etc.).



Fig. 1 Mobiles

Basic law includes interactive forms involving basic legal issues that relate to living and working in England, Germany and Spain. It provides the migrants with the most often used forms and documents. The Basic law refers to the Internet language course which

presents standard communicational and official situations, where one is forced to use this type of documents. These documents are different for each of the 3 countries (England, Germany and Spain) and are selected from original documents currently used in the above mentioned countries. The documents and forms can be printed and saved as a PDF file and are available on the project web site both as element of the language course and separately in Basic law section.

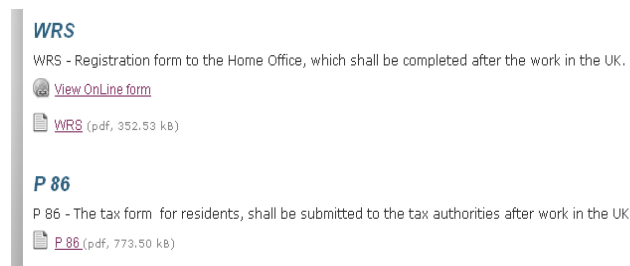


Fig. 2 Basic Law English

Screensavers and wallpapers support the acquisition of English, German and Spanish language. They are developed in 3 language versions and their topics are connected to the language course – the main product of the project, and are animated. The screensavers support the language acquisition as an independent multimedia material and are an important component of the didactic materials. They are prepared both for mobile phones and computers. Each user is able to download them from the website of the project and then install them on their computer or mobile phone a screensaver.

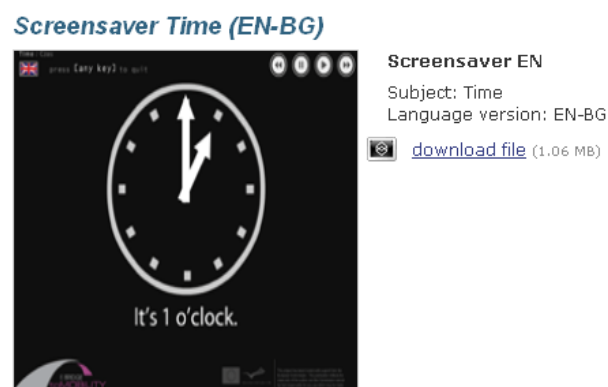


Fig. 3 Screensaver

Pictionary (dictionary + glossary with pictures) is a multimedia glossary presenting

the basics of a language and some vocabulary. It presents in a simple and intuitive way a word used in the language course or that is important because of its usage in a particular communicative situation. The pictonary is common for the 3 languages, which means that each entry is illustrated with a graphic element (graphics, photo, animation) and is translated into all languages of the project. Moreover there is a pronunciation of each word (in English, German and Spanish). Under every entry there are examples of usage provided by the service editors and by the users within the WIKI community tool. This product is available on the project web site in the Pictionary section.

WEB 2.0 e-society contains 3 functionalities activated on the web site of the project: podcasting, Wiki and blogs. The podcasting enables placing audio and video files. It includes both didactic materials placed by the project team and materials placed by the users. The Wiki serves for building an e-society connected with the language course which discuss and exchange information concerning the most important issues: departure, work, offices, everyday life, etc.). It is available in Bulgarian, Polish, Romanian and Slovakian and is moderated by the project team. The functionality of this tool enables the cooperation of many users. Moreover, the users are able to learn the principles of updating web sites, and, in particular, they get aware of methods for creating links, editing texts and placing items on web sites. The primary function of the blog is to provide information related to the labour market in a particular country, formalities and anything, which is worth knowing when one thinks about changing place of work and residence. In addition, the author of a blog places links to other web sites, thematically related to the project. In the language course there are references to the blogs.

2. Project methodology

All products are based on the **e-learning** and **m-learning** methods. M-learning is e-learning by means of mobile communication devices. M-learning provides learners with a variety of learning possibilities: access to

documents and libraries, access to quizzes in the form of questions or games, intended for self-assessment, receiving of archived lectures or real-time ones, access to video materials and audio libraries, reading of asynchronous messages, displaying learner's performance, participation in virtual learning communities. M-learning has been recently introduced since it has certain advantaged in comparison with other learning paths:

- *encourages participation* – learning can be implemented anywhere and anytime. Therefore, people who are not able to attend face-to-face training (due to business or geographic location) can do m-learning;
- *improves self-esteem* – operating with a variety of information and communication technologies provide learners with self-esteem that they can cope with digital revolution and find better job opportunities due to the acquired ICT skills;
- *builds virtual communities* – learners can support each other by sharing learning materials and discussing concepts and opinions thus building a sense of cooperation;
- *provides learner-oriented learning* – learners can choose their place, time and pace of learning regardless of their teacher/tutor;
- *gives impaired people better access to learning* – mobile devices has different hardware and software applications for each impairment unlike face-to-face learning where information is usually verbally or visually presented;
- *provides e-assessment (SMS tests)* – in many cases learners miss their tests because of late transport or other unpredictable circumstances. With SMS tests learners can choose the time and place for doing the test;
- *gives each learner an opportunity to manage their personal information* (e-mail, schedule, messages from tutors and other learners);
- *provides e-portfolio* – learners can review their personal e-portfolio at any time. In this way they can track their progress, think of their future learning interests and possible career paths.

Of course, m-learning has its own disadvantages such as: limited memory, processor and battery, small screen, lack of common operating system and hardware platform, difficulty in accessing information from the web or animations, limited possibility for adding other devices, quick depreciation, difficulty in printing documents if there is not a network available, lack of good meta cognitive skills, relatively high prices.

Therefore, e-learning helps here. It provides the following possibilities: learning paths, groups of learners, a variety of interactive exercises, course descriptions, personal and public forums, schedules with assignments and deadlines, published messages, published documents

in any format (text, PDF, HTML, video), wikis for common documents, statistics of learners' activities.

CONCLUSION

The m+e learning solution enables potential migrants to better and faster integrate into a new living and working environment providing them with an innovative tool to “survive” in a foreign country.

REFERENCE

- [1] www.labour-mobility.com
- [2] www.educause.edu/ELI/LearningTechnologies/MLearningandMobility/12397
- [3] www.2mobility.eu