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E-learning
in a translation course

Pros and cons

EQIBELT 2007

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

- 23 departments
- c 6000 students
- c 500 teachers
- *Omega* e-learning system (Moodle)
- Introduced in 2004
- now 4000 student users & 250 teachers
- 280 online courses, 20 depts.

Translator education

- No pre-graduate programs in translation
- Translators educated at departments of modern languages (70%)
- Until now:
  - four-year B.A. degree program in two languages
  - one-year vocational M.A. in translation
- Bologna process:
  - three-year program in two languages (B.A.)
  - several second-cycle tracks (two-year M.A. program in translation)
  - additional one-year course in interpreting
- Dept. of English

Translation courses

- 2006/2007
- 3rd-year Croatian-English practical translation course
  - 90' contact hours per week; 2 semesters
  - c 60 students (in 3 groups)
- 4th-year English-Croatian practical translation course
  - 45' contact hours per week; 2 semesters
  - c 80 students (in 6 groups)

Online component

- Complements f2f class work with online activities and resources
- Students download assignments & feedback, take part in forum discussions, use the glossary feature, share links

Case study

- Open-ended questionnaire survey
- Distributed by direct mailing to course participants (150)
- Asked to list the pros & cons, as well as suggestions
- 45 responses

Students' view: the pros

- lots of useful material – links, resources...
- all in one place
- accessible from anywhere, 24/7
- time-saving
- user-friendly, intuitive
- if you miss a class, you can still get the assignment & feedback
- getting information & news in time
- you can be in touch with course events at all times

- facilitates communication between teacher & students, students & students
- possibility to contact other students even if you don't know them personally
- makes students with poor ICT skills use computer more often & improve those skills
- students with a disability can participate in a translation course more fully

- enables better & more efficient work in f2f class
- the whole course is more dynamic
- the course is taken more seriously by students
- makes the course more systematic and better organized
- you have a record of what you've done so far
- possible to get back to previous topics & assignments
- space for extra material for those who are interested

- insight into other people's translations - eye-opening
- learning from other people's mistakes, not just your own
- revised translations are anonimous – no embarrassment & everyone can learn
- allows more indepth analysis, at peace
- students improve their typing skills by handing in translations in electronic format

Students´view: the cons

- feedback too general, not individualized enough

- less need to communicate with the teacher in f2f mode

- the computer cannot replace teacher

- some students do not have access to the internet at home

- occasional server problems

- what if your computer breaks down

- once the course is over, materials are no longer accessible (cf. traditional notebook)
- time-consuming until you learn how to use it
- a nuisance if you do not like typing
- unattractive interface design
- log-in procedure too long

Students´ view: suggestions

- e-learning should be used in more courses / by more teachers
- there should be a more individualized approach
- more exchange among the students, e.g. in forum discussions
- more tasks that would require online collaboration among the students
- more additional materials
- students should be taught how to use the system at the beginning of the course

- the interface design should be more attractive
- other students uploads should be visible
- best translation weekly contest
- more use of students' glossaries & terminology databases
- stricter control of what the students are doing

The teacher's view: pros

- □ less pressure on f2f classes
- □ better insight into students' work
- □ possibility to give assignments & feedback more efficiently
- □ easier to keep in touch with students
- □ possible to look at student translations before f2f class & focus on problem spots – beter preparation

The teacher's view: cons

- a lot of extra work for the teacher
- teachers not paid for online work
- at the beginning, hard to get the students to adopt the system

Conclusions

- E-learning is useful, efficient, time-saving, practical
- very rewarding for the teacher
- valuable enrichment for f2f classes
- but care should be taken to provide initial ICT training for teachers & students
- individualize learning
- create a virtual community, get the students involved
- the teachers should be rewarded for online work

Thank you for your attention!

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