EXPERIENCE AND TRIAL JOURNEY WITH DIGITAL FILM MAKING FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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Abstract

This paper discusses the experience gathered in establishing digital learning scenarios aiming to include Film Making and short videos in adult education.

Learning today takes place in the context of interaction between formal, non-formal and informal learning. The methodology chosen in the European project 'Digital Film Making for Broadening the Landscape of Informal Adult Education' co-financed by the Erasmus+ Programme is Open Innovation to facilitate more efficient use, co-design and co-creation of digital content, taking into account the changing role of learners, trainers and educational organisations. Trainers have to be able to understand the methodological underpinnings to deliver substantial benefits to their learners.

The trials include experiences with educational videos for refugees in Austria who are offered German language courses during their asylum application process. The experience track includes also lessons learnt from EU Project Management courses. The challenge is to mainstream applications and tools into non-technical contexts. Trial of ICT-based environments for innovative learning experiences and experimentation in language learning and European Project Management training included also 3D tools, learning with mobile phones devices as well as visualisation methods for EU-related matters and language courses.

Keywords: Digital learning, digital film making, educational videos, EU project management, language teaching and learning, open content, e-content development, refugees.

1 INTRODUCTION

This paper describes the experience of European project partners within the framework of the European educational programme Erasmus+ to experiment innovative approaches in adult education. The EU project Broadening the Landscape of Adult Informal Learning with Digital Film Making was successfully carried out from June 2016 to May 2017 coordinated by Skills International GmbH from Austria.

DIGITAL FILM MAKING started in 2016 and integrated the learning outcomes of previous projects, focusing to create an enhanced impact on the learners through videos. The main learning goal was that trainers and staff are enabled to provide innovative learning resources through video lectures. The ability to produce short digital films is a key feature for trainers. Short videos are an indispensible component for Open Educational Resources (OERs) and MOOCs.

This paper discusses the experience gathered in the European project to establish digital learning scenarios aiming to include short educational videos in adult education in German language and alphabetization classes for asylum seekers in Austria. The study presented here follows a transversal approach to strengthen the use of learning and training resources across different sectors and target groups, taking into account the transfer of know-how to basic education for refugees. The learning goals for the adult training provider staff are

1   to use short video lectures for adult education;

2   to apply tools for digital film making including hardware, software and upload;

3   to integrate simple 3D visualisation effects.

Skills International GmbH was founded in 2008 by incorporating results of APS – Regional Contact Point Southern Austria for EU Programmes in the field of research, innovation and training. The trainer's expertise is built upon more than 20 years of activities and more than 40 European projects and numerous regional and national contracts on behalf of Austrian Ministries, Regional Government, Chambers, etc. As a modern training organisation and service provider from Austria, Skills International GmbH is dedicated to the development and provision of innovative learning tools and

content focusing on the needs of adult education, ranging from German language and alphabetisation courses for refugees to European Project Management trainings across Europe. The adult training organization has received an Erasmus+ 2015 Award nomination for outstanding achievements in the program Erasmus+ for the adult education project FANTASY TO REALITY – From Adult Literacy Skills to Augmented Reality. More than 60 onsite training courses have been carried out successfully by SKILLS across Europe along with online trainings and certifications.

The Recommendation "Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults" was adopted in December 2016 by the Council of the EU. The resulting initiative, called "Upskilling Pathways" was adopted by the Council in December 2016. "Upskilling Pathways" aims to help adults acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital skills and/or acquire a broader set of skills by progressing towards an upper secondary qualification or equivalent (level 3 or 4 in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) depending on national circumstances). [1]

One of the key questions for or study is: How can digital learning be used in the Upskilling Pathways Initiative to teach the alphabet and German language to refugees and asylum seekers in Austria?

2 METHODOLOGY

Learning today takes place in the context of interaction between formal, non-formal and informal learning. The methodology chosen in the European project co-financed by Erasmus+ is Open Innovation to facilitate more efficient use, co-design and co-creation of digital content, taking into account the changing role of learners, trainers and educational organisations. Trainers, managers and staff have to be able to understand the methodological underpinnings to deliver substantial benefits in adult education.

Using the Open Innovation method, the training setting is not the usual any longer where the trainer delivers the information and materials and the learners just follow the instructions by the trainer. Co-creation of content requires a partnership between the training organisations and their staff that participate in the joint training event. The method of the structured staff training is based on a joyful hands-on collaborative learning approach.

Broadening the Landscape of Adult Informal Learning with Digital Film Making is an Erasmus+ project aiming to enhance the learning mobility of staff engaged in adult education. Two staff members of Skills International GmbH, Austria took part in a 6 days staff training in the UK in August 2016 in order to enhance their competences in using and creating short educational videos for basic education of refugees in Austria by enlarging the training offer for German language and alphabetisation classes. The staff that attended the training of is a mix between experienced senior trainer and innovative young IT developer. The course was structured as a mixture of indoor and outdoor training activities supported by Joanna Pinewood Education Ltd. from London. The methodology should also consider the enlarged target group in order to transfer know-how about European Union to German language and alphabetisation courses in Austria.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Using videos to teach the alphabet and German in asylum seeker classes in Austria

The DIGITAL FILM MAKING project made a contribution to enhance the international dimension of education by helping adult education providers to overcome the gap between traditional eLearning provision with digitalised training materials. The learning resources must be adapted to the style and structure of Open Educational Resources OERs and MOOCs with the typical short films and personal video introduction.

The learning results were implemented by the trainer of the Austrian project partner in German language and alphabetization classes for asylum seekers in Austria. There was little pre-existing knowledge of how to design and implement the classes for the new target group. We had the chance to trial which types of videos were most helpful in the trainings but also for self-study at home.

The use of short videos was encouraged in alphabetisation classes and German A1 classes in Austria by the trainer Andrea Fenz in 2017, when trainings were financed for asylum seekers in the region of Styria (Austria). The learners were a mixture of people who knew the alphabet already and others who had to learn the alphabet in beginner's classes. Some of the learners were also illiterates in their own language.

The trainer had the chance to teach a number of alphabetisation and A1 classes. Most of the learners had used smart phones regularly to learn language by watching short videos, mainly from YouTube. The next step was to integrate selected short videos into the classes.

For alphabetisation classes, short videos about the German alphabet and numbers up to 20 were selected. Then we added other educational videos which were mainly based on pictures with just a few written words and spoken text added. It showed that most of the videos that were available online were just too difficult for our target group.

As a second step the choice of videos should be opened also for the learners for self-study. Therefore we started a new course in our eLearning Learning Management System in Moodle. First of all, the Moodle environment was just used by the trainer to organize the choice of potential short films.

We originally had started the new Moodle eLearning course on the Moodle of Skills International GmbH SKILLS ACADEMY. As the trainer is also teaching in other organisations, it turned out that it was a good solution to offer the course from another environment. We chose the Moodle that we had installed for the Adult Literacy Grundtvig project http://moodle.literacy-project.com/ and called it LANGUAGE.LAB. This made the teaching easier, as the trainer could select the appropriate video from a choice just by a click in the eLearning environment. As the learners received the website address, they can also access selected videos in the future after the end of the language training courses.

The ADULT LITERACY Trainer's Toolkit – Methods for Joyful Teaching' was also updated with a new chapter about ICT-methods 'Using Videos to Teach the Alphabet and A1 classes for Asylum Seekers in Austria'. [2]

3.2 3D vizualisation for broadening the landscape of informal adult education

Reinforced interaction between practice and research was also the guiding principle of our second Erasmus+ project 3D VIZUALISATION for Broadening the Landscape of Informal Adult Education, aiming to enrich training offer with 3D visualisation effects. The partners Skills International GmbH, Austria, and Joanna Pinewood Education Ltd. from London broadened their skill sets for ICT-based language and literacy training with VR tools and resources. The partners tested methods in classes together with trainers and learners and also with single learners.

One of the obstacles to implement ICT tools and applications by the trainers and learners was found to be cognitive load. In cognitive psychology, cognitive load refers to the total amount of mental effort being used in the working memory. Cognitive load theory was developed out of the study of problem solving by John Sweller in the late 1980s. [3]

We used for example Octagon Studio's 4D playing cards [4] as flashcards to teach the alphabet in adult literacy classes. The smart phone was connected to the video screen and with a special App the smart phone read the content of playing cards, each of them for one letter of the alphabet.

The results were transferred into the DIGITAL FILM MAKING project during the staff training in London.

3.3 Outlook on the integration of the results of Digital Film Making into CREATE – SHARE – GROW - LINKUP

The CREATE Erasmus+ Key Action 1 project started in June 2017 aiming

1   to train adult education staff to create and use practical short videos 'The EU Explained';

2   to implement the educational videos into eLearning environments about European Union and cohesion;

3   to embed the videos as digital learning resources into the broader strategy of Open Educational Resources (OERs);

4   to use the know-how about Europe and values in German language and alphabetisation courses for refugees and migrants and more generally in European project management trainings.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The use of educational videos is very beneficial in language learning. The design of alphabetisation classes for asylum seekers in Austria was quite a challenging task at the beginning. We found educational short videos to be very useful in basic education. It is important that the videos are not too long, so we prefer a length less than 5 minutes. We realized that illiterate learners depend even more on visual learning resources.

The challenge was to select the right choice of videos. Most of the videos were simply not useful for our learners. Many videos that are labeled for A1 German language learners are simply too difficult so that the learners do not benefit enough. It was important to consider the cognitive loading. It was interesting to see what type of videos had the best learning effect. For the alphabet, it was often videos that had originally been made for schools, including songs etc. In the A1 classes, one of the favorite learning videos was based on pictures or drawings with written text added. It explains simple concepts, such as 'einsteigen – aussteigen' (e.g. from the bus), 'einschalten – ausschalten' (das Licht), 'aufmachen – zumachen' (die Türe, die Jacke etc.), 'duschen', 'Wasser kalt – Wasser warm' etc.

The website address of the Moodle eLearning platform LANGUAGE.LAB was passed on to the learners (http://moodle.literacy-project.com). They were given help to enter the website address directly in the smart phone internet browsers instead of starting just internet searches. By having communicated the website address, the asylum seekers and other target groups will be enabled also to access new digital learning resources that will be added in future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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