QuILL

Quality in Language Learning

Implementation of Digital Language Learning Opportunities in Higher Education

Guidelines for Good Practice

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Implementation of Digital Language Learning Opportunities in Higher Education. Guidelines for Good Practice

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CALL – Computer-assisted language learning
CALI – Computer-aided language instruction
CEFR – The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment
CEFR-CV – The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Companion Volume
CFRIDiL – The Common Framework of Reference for Intercultural Digital Literacies
CLIL - Content and language integrated learning
DIGCOMPE – European Digital Competence Framework for Educators
DigEduPol – Digital Education Policies in Europe and Beyond: Key Design Principles for More Effective Policies
DOTS – Developing online teaching skills
EAQUALS – Evaluation and accreditation of quality in language services
EFL – English as a foreign language
ESP – English for specific purposes
HE – Higher education
HOTS – Higher order thinking skills
ICT – Information and communication Technology
LL – Language learning
LOTE – Learning other languages than English
LOTS – Lower order thinking skills
LSP – Language for specific purposes
LT – Language teaching
OA – Open access
OEP – Open educational practices
OER – Open educational resource(s)
OSS – Open-source software
MALL – Mobile-assisted language learning
MOOC – Massive open online courses
TALL – Technology-assisted language learning
TEL – Technology-enhanced learning
TELL – Technology-enhanced language learning
UDL – Universal design for learning

INTRODUCTION

ELISABETE MENDES SILVA
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It is of common sense to acknowledge the important role that languages play in all areas of life, from business and finance to education or cultural frameworks. It is of common sense that learning languages opens many doors, facilitating a myriad of educational and work prospects. In fact, speaking two or more languages proficiently or even in a rather holistic way is a vehicle for an endless world of possibilities not only in education but also in the most diverse political, social and cultural settings.

Nonetheless, language learning has not always been a door open to the world and it was only accessible to merchants, travellers, businessmen, intellectuals or to the ones who could afford an education, either at home or at educational institutions. The concept of formal education was non-existent until the eighteenth century when the Enlightenment movement raised important questions about education and the need to improve peoples' mind through its power and via the creation of schools and universities (Feldges, 2022). However, the concept of popular education would only come to the fore of the political debate in the late nineteenth century. More schools were then built, schools for teachers also became forcefully needed as education was made available to an ever-growing proportion of the population. Teaching was thenceforth based on rote-learning and on rational and empirical approaches to life which reflected on the way learning was instilled into the students' minds. Reading, writing, arithmetic, plus religious instruction, were part of the school curriculum, and teachers were merely instructors (Morgan, 2011). At university, classical languages such as Greek or Latin had a strong tradition, whereas modern foreign languages would only be adopted as a university discipline in the early twentieth century. However, only in the last three or four decades of the twentieth century would modern languages digress from their almost exclusive literary input and grammar focus and sociolinguistics started to realise the importance of the spoken and social aspects of language (Coleman, 2004), coinciding with the emergence of the communicative language learning approach in the 1970s. In secondary schools, modern foreign languages would only be widely integrated in the curriculum in the 1970s, because of a national curricular change in England, also in line with European developments in that field (Dobson, 2018).

The educational system has come a long way since a more behavioural approach was followed. Recognisably, education accompanied and reflected social, political, economic, and technological changes. Nowadays, in Europe and in the western world, education goes much in line with the ideas of progress, not only of a country, but also of a person's individual improvement. The democratisation of education aims at a global education where the humanist values of freedom, equality and justice are meant to prevail as part of a European identity.

Witold and Brock (2000) speak of a "European education" which:

> must show Europeans that they can work more efficiently and live more comfortably together because of mediating educational and professional procedures and the training patterns agreed in the union as part of the economic goals. Extra-curricular activities as much as traditional school curriculum subjects are involved. Pursuits dealing with freedom and liberty, justice and equality, peace and environmental protection will be the new priorities of a European and global education in which the importance of traditional subject matter handed down in national school curricula will decline, giving way to an international interest which is becoming available already. (p. 15)

This emancipation from parochialism towards a more united and international Europe resulted in the creation of an educational framework that put together similar educational structures and practices in the European union member states. Consequently, the European Credit Transfer scheme (ECTS) was created and now applied in all European universities.
Apart from the dissemination of "items of European knowledge", "European Education" also brings to light the importance of foreign language skills. It is therefore crucial to learn languages as a way of facilitating communication and thus enabling people "to live and work anywhere in the European Union" (Witold & Brock, 2000, p. 17).
The communicative competence has, in fact, been one of the crux issues in language learning and teaching since Del Hymes introduced this view in 1972. Earlier language teaching and learning models were based on a purely linguistic approach, ignoring "the social contexts where language was used" (Baker, 2017, p. 13). The Communicative language teaching (CLT), apart from other holistic models of language competence stemming from this umbrella system, e.g., Task-based Learning and Teaching (TBLT), Total Physical Response (TPR), Project-based learning (PBL), was an important influence for the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), published in 2001. In the attempt to promote plurilingualism, among other objectives, this framework "provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc, across Europe." (CEFR-CV, Council of Europe, 2020).
Twenty years have passed since CEFR first came to light, and today, in the age of digital technology, of globalisation, and of continuous migration waves, learning languages resonates even broader and more meaningfully. Learning languages is deemed mandatory in an increasingly technological and more competitive world. Currently, learning languages for specific purposes is a paramount need as, according to Coleman (2005):

> In curricular terms, the acquisition of foreign language proficiency is, today allied to a multitude of 'content' domains, from the literary, cultural, linguistic, sociological, historical and political study of the country where the target language is spoken, through cognate areas such as other foreign languages and cultures, to widely different specialisms from Economics to Mechanical Engineering. (pp. 4-5)

The Council of Europe has also promoted the interconnection between languages and digital technology through several projects and programmes. The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens (Vuorikari, R. et al., 2016, 2022) and the Common Framework of Reference for Intercultural Digital Literacies (CFRIDiL) are two of its most renowned programmes. They are widely referred to in chapters one and six of this publication.
In the wake of Covid-19, a pandemic that has affected the world substantially, all the educational systems were forced to reinvent or/and adapt to the new physical and social conditions. Teachers had to review their core principles that guide them in their teaching practice. The digital world became then the great panacea in education and new learning environments were widely spread. Upholding Muñoz-Luna and Taillefer's (2018) statement, "… beyond the role of technology uses, language teachers and researchers must now explore the field of digital activities and resources." (p. 1), we are able to understand why the QuILL project and this publication, more specifically, are so timely.
The Erasmus+ project 'QuILL – Quality in Language Learning' was approved within the call *Strategic Partnerships for Digital Education Readiness* as it proposes a new insight into the way digital open educational resources (OER) are made available to language lecturers teaching languages for specific purposes or as foreign languages and how they can maximise their use in a qualitative way. One of QuILL's main goal is to provide higher education language lecturers with a substantial number of Open Educational Resources (OER) to assist them in the teaching and learning process. In the QuILL portal, both language lecturers and learners will find many OER for 18 European languages, already tested and validated by students in real teaching scenarios. Apart from that, lecturers will also have available a training package which guides them into the way they identify, use and create online resources.

This publication, containing important theoretical and practical guidelines, is aimed at Higher Education policy makers, as well as Languages for Specific Purpose (LSP) lecturers, to improve the implementation of digital based language learning opportunities in higher education systems. It also intends to present, examine and reflect on the opportunities related to the use of digital technology in the language learning and teaching process.
This publication brings together contributions from the six partners that integrate the QuILL project consortium. Therefore, it consists of six chapters:

Chapter one - Quality in Digital Language Education State of the Art
Chapter two - Quality Criteria and Quality Indicators in OER-Integrated Language Learning
Chapter three - Innovation in Language Teaching
Chapter four - Higher education Student's Motivation to Learn Languages using Digital Technologies and Resources
Chapter five - Implementing Digital Technologies in Language Teaching at a Systemic Level in the HE Sector
Chapter six - Digital Education and LSP Contents in Language Learning and Teaching

Most resources found on the Internet are targeted at learners of English. This is one of the issues that QuILL addresses. Chapters four and five highlight this shortcoming, calling attention to differences between English as a Foreign Language (EFL) / English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and L2 teaching or LSP, hence the need to adopt alternative teaching strategies and to rethink motivation models adequate to LSP or Learning other Languages than English (LOTE).
All chapters address the process of language learning via digital resources and keywords such as "quality" "innovation", and "digital education" are common to all of them. Nonetheless, a division of subtopics was made so that each area could have a more in-depth analysis.
Chapter one provides a wide-ranging literature approach to the state of the art in digital language education in the context of European Higher Education. It addresses recent literature on the topic, in addition to bringing to the fore of discussion projects and programmes carried out by the Council of Europe as a way of attesting the relevance that digital technology has gained over the recent years. According to the literature, the integration of digital tools and resources into language teaching and learning in different European teaching scenarios has proven to be a quality asset to the new teaching and learning paradigm.
Chapter two puts forward important reflections on the complexity of quality in the teaching and learning process, as well as on the concept of good quality Open Educational Resources (OERs) and what it involves from the user perspective. Moreover, the authors identify quality indicators, such as student satisfaction, to measure the progress of digital based language teaching courses in Higher Education. To illustrate these quality indicators, two studies were conducted to examine both lecturers' and learners' feedback on an OER-integrated language course at university. The results obtained suggest that indicators of quality are valued by both learners and lecturers, plus OERs are seen as interesting and motivating supplementary class material.
In **Chapter three,** innovation sets the content of the whole chapter**.** Therefore, practices, approaches, methods, and strategies based on the use of digital technologies are outlined. Based on innovation in educating pre-service teachers in online settings, topics such as blended learning, student self-regulation and student's autonomy in EFL and SLP are addressed.
Chapter four focuses mainly on the issue of motivation and how influential it can be in L2 learning, in different learning scenarios and targeted at different learners. Therefore, addressing needs and tailoring language courses to the specific needs of tertiary students studying LSP is one of the best practices that the authors suggest in this chapter. Moreover, teachers must also involve learners in the process of selecting and designing learning resources, giving them more responsibility and autonomy in the learning process. In addition, the use of digital resources can also account for the increase in

motivation that will result in more effective learning. That way, students will be given the tools to successfully enter the job market and develop future business.

Chapter five examines how digital technologies for language learning and teaching are applied in the higher education sector, mainly through the QuILL database, explaining how resources were identified and selected in 18 European languages. The authors delve into this implementation process, describing its several stages. Best practices on how to make maximum use of digital resources are also addressed as a means to provide decision-makers, lecturers and learners with a set of seven recommendations that will prove useful in their learning and teaching practices either in face-to-face, hybrid or online scenarios.

Chapter six centres on LSP and provides useful guidelines for the identification and use of digital resources in the teaching context. Through the showcase of several tools and case studies focusing on Finnish, Italian and German for specific purposes, the authors exemplify how digital resources can be integrated in the teaching process or used as an alternative to classroom activities. Furthermore, the pedagogical discussion on Open Educational Resources sheds some light on the re-examination of teaching paradigms within the context of the digital turn.

The guidelines brought into play in these six chapters concur with the core principles that guide our teaching practice as higher education lecturers: we want our learners to become motivated and engaged, unfettering them from narrowmindedness, fostering autonomy and critical thinking. In the specific context of LSP, digital technologies equip teachers and students with more tools that will empower them during the learning and teaching process, so they continue to open as many doors as possible.

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