

The Kielet (Languages) Project of the Research Centre for Foreign Language Education

By Seppo TELLA

University of Helsinki Department of Teacher Education, Finland

Pedagogical context

ICT is used in teacher education, a university course, INSET for language teachers
The target group comprises lecturers in FL/SL education; teachers of foreign languages at University Training Schools; lecturers in foreign languages in language departments of the University of Helsinki. In addition, some language specialists of the Helsinki School of Economics.
The aims of the are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To acquaint FL/SL teachers and teacher educators with educational applications of ICTs and network-based education ○ To share and distribute expertise in the domain of network-based education and FL/SL education ○ To develop FL/SL teaching, studying and learning methodology in using ICTs ○ To enhance mutual collaboration between the different counterparts by sharing a common domain of interest
The following target languages were involved; Finnish (as a second language); English; German; French; Russian; Swedish. Some sessions also attended by teachers of Italian and Spanish. The purpose of each language : Language as culture; language as a repository of information for cross-cultural communication; language as a means of teaching.

3.2 Organisational context

Size of target group: over 30		
Apart from the target group - were other people involved? If yes, who?	How many?	To what purpose?
- fellow teachers	10	Sharing information, planning together, brainstorming, teaching specialised subject areas
- technicians	2	Installing software, solving some technical problems
- evaluators	6	Deciding whether the project could be financed for the following year

- others (please specify):	2	A helping hand (part-time) for organisational purposes; a researcher specialising in visual multimedia
Teaching period		
Varies a lot from 2-hour presentations to 4-day seminars and to 10-hour mini-courses. The whole course spans three years (2001-2003).		
Was distance learning combined with face-to-face instruction? How many hours were dedicated to each?		
DL 20% Face to face 80%		
Comments: Can't be estimated in hours. Mostly face-to-face sessions, with a regular mailing list and documents shared via e-mail and the Internet.		

Motivation for ICT

ICTs are not only the tools I use in my teaching. I regard them as intellectual partners that strengthen my intellectual capacity. They also help create new teaching, studying, learning, communication and working contexts. At their best, ICTs can be described as empowering mediators that enhance a human being's mental & social capacities in a number of ways, especially between teacher and student, as well as between humans, cultures, content and technology.

Description of the course

The case study I am describing is the **Kielet Project ("Languages Project")** carried out in 2001-2003 at the **Research Centre for Foreign Language Education (Reflect)**, Department of Teacher Education, University of Helsinki. The project has been conducted in co-operation with the Department's Media Education Centre.

Reflect: <http://www.malux.edu.helsinki.fi/vk/index.en.htm>

Media Education Centre: <http://www.edu.helsinki.fi/media/>

The Kielet Project is an example of the Virtual University activities at the University of Helsinki.

University of Helsinki: <http://www.helsinki.fi>

The aims of the course were:

- To acquaint FL/SL teachers and teacher educators with educational applications of ICTs.
- To increase shared/distributed expertise in the domain of network-based education and FL/SL education
- To develop FL/SL teaching, studying and learning methodology in using ICTs
- To enhance mutual collaboration between the different partners by sharing a common domain of interest

The **topics** were:

Various educational uses of ICTs, ideas for network-based education (NBE), m-learning (mobile technologies); language teacher as a visualiser (e.g., use of graphics; digital video; visualisations; outlining); language teacher as a researcher (e.g., language corpora; academic writing in English supported by web-based resources); language teacher as a facilitator (e.g., use of IDLEs or groupware programs; e-mail; chat; video conferencing; desktop video conferencing)

One of the major topics for 2003 was visualising the future of the FL/SL teaching–studying–learning process—what will FL/SL teaching be like in 2020?

The **teaching methods/methodologies** used were:

Hands-on approach: Face-to-face sessions, presentations, concrete action. Learning by doing. Learning by imitating. Learning by competing (in groups, usually). Combining data, video, sound, graphics, text.

Minds-on approach: Sharing and discussing theoretical writings dealing with various aspects of the topic. Visualising one's future as a language teacher.

The **teaching materials** used were:

Mostly materials produced by the trainers themselves. Some applications focused on existing FL/SL teaching materials. Some ideas got from the Resource books linked to some software used (e.g., Inspiration). Examples taken from earlier publications which illustrate certain principles studied. Some commercials and advertisements used for analysis purposes.

The **technologies** used:

- Hardware: Mostly PCs, some Macs. Digital cameras and digital video cameras. Scanners. Mobile telephones (esp. communicators). Video conference equipment.
- Software: Inspiration 6-7; Office products; PhotoShop; iMovie (Mac);
- e-mail : yes, together with a web-based mailing list
- internet chats : yes, to some extent
- databases: language corpora
- groupware: BSCW 4.0.6; WebCT
- self-produced audio and video recordings (e.g. to be posted to teacher): testing digital video for cultural capsules (i.e., short videos lasting 7 seconds to 2 minutes)
- video and audio conferencing: iVisit; Tandberg Internet-based VC system
- mobile technologies: some use of Nokia communicators

● What was successful

Courses and presentations directly focused on certain subjects, like teaching culture. Academic writing in English supported by web-based resources. Visualising one's ideas (collaboratively) with Inspiration or similar software. Practical demonstrations of what teachers had already done in their own teaching.

● What was less successful

Participants don't always seem to appreciate the futuristic aspects embedded in the objectives; they tend to prefer a more tangible approach. A lot of variation in terms of teachability, studiability and learnability regarding different educational applications of ICTs.

- Feedback

More links to what teachers are doing at the moment. Concrete tips and advice.

- What I would change next time

First I would try to assure that all participants have enough basic skills in the educational use of ICTs. On the other hand, heterogeneity is empowering to some extent.

- What I would recommend to other professionals in the field

Clarify your own ideas first; then stand up, speak up and shut up while they are working.

Personal data about the author

First name Seppo	Last name Tella
Institution: University of Helsinki	
Street/ No. Siltavuorenpenger/20	City: Helsinki
P.O. Box 9	Country: Finland
Tel. +358 9 1911	e-mail seppo.tella@helsinki.fi
Fax +358 9 191 29626	URL http://www.helsinki.fi/~tella/

2. Professional background

Profession Foreign Language/Second Language teacher educator; specialist in educational use of ICTs
My current occupation is: Educating future foreign/second language specialists mostly for Finnish-speaking schools at the Research Centre for Foreign Language Education (Reflect) of the University of Helsinki Department of Teacher Education.