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Course Material Design Using the New Technologies in Language for Specific Purposes Teaching and Learning

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Abstract

The study aims to present a course material design of a French specialized language developed using the new technology resources, as part of a distance study program in the field of civil engineering. The course was designed as a learning tool of French for specific purposes in the technical universities. The study presents the theoretical and methodological approach that was founded on the development of the course, the course material structure, the proposed educational resources, traditional and electronic, to meet educational objectives, the importance of using technical means of information and communication in order to improve the foreign language teaching and learning.

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1. Introduction

The integration of new technologies into the educational process has opened the way to the reformation of the educational system, both on a undergraduate, as well as a graduate level, to the rethinking of the pedagogical methods, strategies and resources used in the teaching, learning and assessment process, according to the type of training envisaged: on site, e-learning, distance learning or mixed (blended learning).

The application of new technologies within the educational process involves the adaptation of the content of the training programmes, of the teaching and learning strategies and methods and of the educational resources.

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The usage of new technologies in the field of foreign language teaching entails a careful analysis of the principles applied when designing the pedagogical resources developed using ICT or multimedia aids, thus creating “new research leads in the foreign language teaching and learning” (Develotte, 2007).

This study aims to present the design of a specialised French language course developed by using new technology resources. The course entitled *Le Français du bâtiment (French for Civil Engineering)* was designed as an e-learning tool for learning French as part of technical university specializations in the field of civil engineering. The manner of designing such material corresponds to a university training objective: “the internal creation of pedagogical resources by a member of a teaching staff” (Demaiziere, 2004) targeting a specific audience.

The article describes the theoretical and methodological framework, the course structure (overview, objectives, skills, content, resources) and the content of a course unit considered as being representative of the topic course material.

The research subscribes to the theoretical and methodological approach supplied by *CEFRL* (2001), according to which the foreign language teaching and learning is based on developing communicative language competences, supplemented by the results of the research conducted in the field of specialised language teaching, especially French, in what regards the pedagogical and methodological principles for the “competence approach”.

2. Specialised language teaching at a university level

2.1. Terminology

The syntagma *specialised language* or *language for specific purposes* is generally used to indicate a linguistic sub-system that combines linguistic peculiarities of a specialised field, studied in relation to the general language. In a more narrow meaning, the term refers to an approach used in foreign language teaching that targets a specific audience. The theoretical studies related to the teaching of specialised French employ phrases such as *français sur objectif spécifique / french for specific purposes* (Parpette et Mangiante, 2004) or *français langue professionnelle / professional french language* (Mourlhon-Dallies, 2005). In current studies, the term *language for specific purposes* tends to be replaced by *communication for specific purposes*, which entails the usage of the specialised language in specific professional communication situations (Guerguieva-Steenhout 2008 : 33).

The syntagma *communicative competence in specialised language*, used in this study, represents the learners’ or users’ ability to communicate by making use of the resources of a specialised language in specific contexts.

2.2. Aspects of specialised language teaching and learning in academic fields

Foreign language teaching and learning at a university level corresponds to precise training objectives orienting the curricular design according to: the type of training (philological or non-philological profile), the specificity of the training (general or specialised), the students’ training needs (study or placement mobilities, linguistic training in order to be integrated within the labour market etc.), institutional constraints (the linguistic politics of an institution, the duration of the training, human resources and materials available, the type of partnerships with the professional environment) or exterior (the economic context, the foreign languages spoken within the geographical area where the training takes place etc.).

Specialised language training is part of the general context of foreign language teaching, being determined by the following parameters, listed hereinafter in short (Stoean, 2009: 60): a. the linguistic politics dictated by the labour market, regarding the need for linguistic competences in various specialised areas; b. the concern of the international institutions and bodies with the enforcement of effective politics in the field of foreign language teaching; c. the structural and conceptual changes due to the reformations conducted within the national educational systems; d. studies and placement mobility entailing a high level of linguistic competences; e. the development of new higher education systems (bilingual and multilingual, non-philological and bilingual, scientific and technical studies); f. the generalization of the implementation of *CEFRL* and of the *European portfolio* as assessment tools for the level of competences in foreign languages.

The designing of a curriculum in the field of foreign language teaching entails several phases (Stoean, 2013 : 168-172) : development of a referential competence inventory the required competences in the specialised

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