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**MANAGEMENTAL LINGUISTIC EDUCATION
ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES
LAVOSLAV RUŽIČKA IN VUKOVAR, CROATIA**

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Abstract

Aimed at a collaborative, interactive, and reflective in-class learning while cementing an instructor – student conversation and partnership, the UAS-based CEC Business English course regularly uses “educational landscapes” to simulate and animate a tutored instructor – student and student – student dialog and subsequent written assignments, and a special attention is thereby devoted to an error-free pronounciational fluency and proper discourse selection, as well as to the elimination of negative influences transferred from an attendee’s mother tongue.

The paper thus elucidates a technology-enhanced science-to-business (S2B) language education exemplified by the CEC’s Business English course.

Keywords: adult education, educational landscapes, lifelong learning, S2B, technology-enhanced language education

Topic Groups: Language in Organizations, Management Education, Training, and Development, Organizational Information and Communication Systems

INTRODUCTION

Consistent with its mission, the University of Applied Sciences Lavoslav Ružička in Vukovar (henceforth: UAS) is dedicated to the education and qualification of highly expert vocational staff (or individuals) in the fields of Biomedicine, Healthcare, and Social Sciences who acquire (or obtain) their essential knowledge and skills based upon an integrated system of theoretical

and applied cognitive and scientific epistemologies while utterly responding to the economic needs and labor market and social community necessities wherein they operate by their professional capacities and practical abilities.

To realize its mission, the UAS stimulates personal and professional development of its professors, teaching assistants (TAs), and students through the implementation of vocational and scientific, research-oriented, and applied activities, as well as by multiple forms of networked science-to-business (S2B) transfer. Collaborating with the relevant institutions and practical experts, the UAS actively contributes to an improvement its students' professional competencies while methodologically creating, engineering, innovating, and adjusting its curricula and advocating and applying a lifelong learning concept.

Visionarily, the UAS is one of the leading and recognizable higher educational institutions in the Croatian Danubian Region area, featuring intellectual excellence in the implementation and integration of educative, exploratory, and applied scientific activities; contemporary curricula commensurate to the societal developmental objectives and labor market necessities; an inspiring environment for knowledge, proficiencies, and professional competency acquisition and interchange, indispensable in a permanently mutating local and international circumstances; and decidedly established quality standards concerning an overall educational process. As such, the UAS represents a desirable partner on an international and national level that continuously develops and implements the operations contributing to the realization of community-oriented economic and societal goals by its activities. Therefore, the UAS' motto is "A University to the pride of Vukovar."

Theory

By virtue of its mission, business philosophy, and approach, the UAS' Continued Education Center (henceforth: CEC) endeavors to follow good practice examples and guidelines recommended to its members by the International Association for Continuing Education and Training (IACET) from Washington, DC,¹ as well as the so-called framework Lifelong Learning Program (LLP), especially the Grundtvig Subprogram,² dedicated to adult education and mobility of stakeholders involved in the process within the European Union (EU) and Accession Countries.

In that way, the CEC, as an authorized provider of adult education services pursuant to a verification of the Ministry of Science, Education, and Sports of the Republic of Croatia (MSES)³ and a collaborator of the Croatian Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (AVET),⁴ invests constants efforts as to satisfy the strict criteria, market

¹ Cf. <http://www.iacet.org/iacet-standard/standard-references>.

² Further information on the LLP is obtainable on its official website: <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/>. For the Grundtvig Subprogram, see http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/structure/grundtvig_en.html.

³ For information on *licentia docendi*, see <http://public.mzos.hr/Default.aspx?sec=2428>.

⁴ On the Agency, cf. <http://www.asoo.hr/default.aspx?id=93>.

demands, and objectives of such an educational aspect, in addition to a responsible and highly qualified processual management.

In this respect, the CEC is oriented toward the following in its Business English course conduct:

- provision of services of informal, computer-assisted linguistic education and development of communicational dexterity pursuant to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)⁵;
- procurement of spatial and material conditions for the conduct of such short-term (multimodal) multimedia curricula, e.g., in the fields of foreign languages and business negotiation skills while applying the new technological solutions;
- promotion of lifelong learning system pursuant to the modern labor market demands;
- emphasis on self-employment skills and an increased employability.

Methods

As *modi operandi* within the CEC, we promote mutual attendees and lecturers' confidence and an investment in the knowledge of their own as the most profitable decision and a significant successfulness factor, whereby an individual attendee acquires skills and expertise for advancement in his or her own career, or an advantage in recruitment procedures. Thus, while promoting the slogan "I choose knowledge for I select by knowledge," we constantly ensure the following in our work:

- a high quality and modernity of an institutionalized and certified educational process in all its components;
- matriculation of newly acquired qualifications in attendees' labor documentation pursuant to an approval by the MSES;
- possibility of attendees' education at a acceptable price, whereby we demonstrate our social susceptibility while retaining the quality of a provided educational content;
- adjustment of instructional schedule and course material modalities to a spare time of the most of employed adult attendees, with a possibility of constant free consultations and business consulting or orientation during an overall educational process, pursuant to the needs and interests;
- incalculation of all costs into an overall course price, whereby a certified literature becomes a permanent attendees' property.

Our primary product is knowledge, but the one provided in a multiple, accessible way, different from conventional lectures.

Findings

Pursuant to the *Regulations on the Register in Adult Education* (OG 129/08),⁶ especially their Art. 3 – 8, the CEC and the UAS' Financial, Information, and Students' Services keep separate

⁵ The CEFR criteria are explained in detail at http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre_en.asp.

⁶ *Narodne novine* is the *Official Gazette* (OG) of the Republic of Croatia.

Records of Adult Education Programs, Attendees' Records, and Lecturers' Records while regularly providing all necessary data concerning program implementation to the AVET.

With regard to the excellence promotion, quality assurance (QA), and tuition standardization, the CEC operates within the UAS and possesses computer equipment and software support for an Internet-based data interchange with the AVET and *e-Matica*, i.e., a MSES system for the management of standardized data groups.

In addition, the CEC has entirely harmonized its curricular conduct with the *Regulations on the Content, Form, and Andragogical Documentation Filing and Archiving Modality* (OG 129/08). As an institution, the CEC fulfills all technical, hygienic, spatial, faculty and material preconditions for a standard adult education program execution pursuant to the *Regulations on Standards and Norms and Modality and Procedure to Establish Condition Fulfillment in Adult Education Institutions* (OG 129/08).

Subsequent to the education completion pursuant to the programs enrolled, the CEC and the UAS matriculate new qualifications in attendees' labor documentation and issue certificates pursuant to the *Regulations on Public Documents in Adult Education* (OG 129/08).

Discussion

In conformity with the *Europass* portfolio,⁷ the CEC differentiates education (i.e., an institutionalized learning form, usually connected to a juvenile age), aspires to diminish a “return to classroom” discomfort, and promotes a lifelong learning habit among the citizens in the region (i.e., a spontaneous, informal knowledge acquisition irrespective of age) pursuant to the Croatian *Adult Learning Strategy*.

Accordingly, in terms of curricular correspondence, the CEC's operation is entirely harmonized with the social community needs, for the European A1 and A2 CEFR levels⁸ distinguish the following:

understanding (e.g., listening, reading), speech (e.g., interactivity and production), writing

European A1 level: simple sentences, asking and responding to questions on the known topics, form fill-outs, discernible conversation;

European A2 level: evincing personal interests, information enunciation, simple communication, short essays, textual scanning and skimming, brief notice records

Foreign Language Program: Structuralization

The Program objective is to introduce the attendees to the American and British business terminology while enabling them for a basic vocational receptive-productive and an

⁷ Cf. <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/home>.

⁸ An in-depth self-assessment grid is available at <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/LanguageSelfAssesmentGrid/hr>.

argumentative structural competence in the English business communication, both written and the oral one (having a duration of 280 instructional hours).

Having a device “Speak up like a businessperson,” it is dedicated to 30 adult attendees per term, without an age limit, and a *Written Preliminary Examination* classifies them in two groups, pursuant to their prescience degree, e.g., the beginners and the advanced learners.

With regard to the implementational modality and content organization, it pertains to a nine-month bimodular tuition, whereby each module has a 140-hour lecture workload following the guidelines and deploying the audiovisual multimedia provided by the Croatian chapter of *Pearson ELT*.⁹

The expected realizable advantages thereof pertain to intensification in personal communicability and attendees’ mobility, whereby his/her success is being comparatively evaluated pursuant to a congenial curricular comparison principle. Such a structuralization also facilitates course efficacy and organizational articulation because the attendees’ curricular workload is lesser, thus providing for their increased individualization.

Certification is alleviated by the fact that the course descriptors and objectives comply with a user-friendly, accessible, compelling, and interesting global and entrepreneurial terminology, e.g., a business sectorial diversification, corporate organization, Human Resource Management, multimedia campaigns, and Public Relations, business correspondence, etc. Thus, the attendees learn an Anglo-American company- and enterprise-related vocabulary, with a lexicon pertaining to the categories and historical development in the United States of America and the United Kingdom and a comparison with the Croatian small- and medium-sized enterprise lexis. A special attention is hereby devoted to a conventional and modern electronic communication (i.e., a business letter, facsimile, telephone conversation, and live conversation vs. e-mail, etc.).

Bearing in mind the fact that the Business English course attendees regularly arrive from various segments of a successfully innovative academic and economic cooperation, our lecturers deploy various network platforms and information databases as to expedite an in-classroom and home-based human – computer interaction and enable knowledge management while frequently surmounting attendees’ unequal acquisition and prescience of some fundamental economic wordlists and dictionary entries. In the CEC, a technology-assisted dynamic glottodidactic education uses digital ink, digital videodiscs, desktop and laptop computers, an overhead projector and a SMART Board interactive whiteboard to promote learning outcomes, and grammatical contents, i.e., the rules of English business language with regard to morphology, semantics, and syntax are lectured by an optimized role model and simulation software up to a grade permitting a correct, individualized business-like communication.

Eventually, during a biennial of its successful duration, the course has thus qualified its attendees, be it the municipal public administration representatives from the City of Vukovar and Vukovar-Sirmium County, local entrepreneurs (e.g., the Port of Vukovar), General Hospital

⁹ Cf. <http://www.longmanhomeusa.com/>. The course instruction is organized in 70 hrs. of lectures and 70 hrs. of language practicum, what approximately corresponds to 15 points of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), as specified at http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc48_en.htm.

physicians,¹⁰ and the like, for the so-called “language activation,” i.e., for a refreshment of an already acquired linguistic competence while combining it with the newly absorbed and accumulated expert and vocational vocabulary.¹¹ A combined multimedia instruction, which interchangeably fosters both an individualized and group principle, is flexibly scheduled two times a week, with consulting opportunities meanwhile: digitized high-end audiovisual teaching aids deploy Internet-connected computers for presentations created in Microsoft’s *Office* packet, and attendees are challenged to use Adobe’s portable document files (PDFs), *PowerPoint*, and interactive multiple choice answer sheets as a quotidian routine.

This circumstantiates the fact the CEC activities are completely synchronized with the 2007 – 2013 *Vukovar-Sirmium County Developmental Strategy*, notably with its Objective 2 (Human Resource Development through Lifelong Learning), Priority 4 (Harmonization of the Existent with a New Educational System and County’s Market Needs), Measure 22 (Support to the Higher Educational Institutions’ Development), as well as with Objective 4 (Vukovar-Sirmium County’s Proactive Role in Integrative Processes and Creation of Partnerships in the Environment), Priority 8 (Enforcement of International and Intercounty Cooperation), Measure 36 (Enforcement of Cooperation between Local Self-Governmental Units and an Active Role of Relevant Institutions in Regional Development).¹²

The attendees’ course textbook, containing all the units and additional linguistic materials, expands, in addition to the numerous authentic materials posted only online, their ultimate realization of the specificities and regularities of American and British business speech, while the modular written and oral examinations, as well as the final one (*viva voce*), facilitate them to gradually monitor their progress. While so doing, this andragogical curriculum of mastering basic Business English provides for an intriguing opportunity of a formally verified instructional coordination with an overall lifelong learning promotion at the UAS; moreover, it contributes to an entire educational offer while emphasizing qualificational acquisition and/or expansion, expert and vocational knowledge acquirement, and attendees’ employability.

Hereby, one of the long-term UAS strategic priorities is also to exert its gradual influence on the preferment of an entrepreneurial culture, especially while encouraging the companies to invest in the training of their existent and prospective employees through lifelong learning and inspiring the citizens of Vukovar, and the inhabitants of the Danubian area participating in the CEC programs to update and upgrade their knowledge and skills.

¹⁰ The CEC Business English course tuition is organized pursuant to *Collaboration Agreements* signed with the UAS in 2009 (Vukovar-Sirmium County and the City of Vukovar administrative organs and public enterprises’ employees) and 2011 (Vukovar General Hospital and the Vukovar Port), respectively.

¹¹ Cf. <http://www.vevu.hr/?g=12&i=160>.

¹² At the time of their implementation, the correspondent CEC curricula have also supported the *City of Vukovar Economic Development Program*, adopted on Jul. 21, 2006, as well as the Mar. 2009 *Program of Incentives for Entrepreneurship Development*, especially when it comes to the UAS participation in the *e-Vukovar* project.

Conclusions

To ease a long-term or permanent retention of acquired knowledge, information retrieval, and the so-called “adaptive data distillation” to its attendees, especially regarding a robust vocabulary corpus learned in the business-oriented lessons, in its computer-assisted instruction the CEC’s Business English course applies various contemporary linguistic techniques whose main objective is to guarantee dynamics, excitement, flexibility and ubiquitous *Windows*-based platform usability. This is particularly valid for otherwise static or tedious language practice, i.e., narrative, phonological, or syntactic exercises.

Aimed at a collaborative, interactive, and reflective in-class learning while cementing an instructor – student conversation and partnership, prerecorded video clips featuring interdisciplinary native speakers acting in authentic business sequences and virtual business environments or “educational landscapes” (e.g., an office, business conference, store, airport, etc.) are regularly used to simulate and animate a tutored instructor – student and student – student dialog and subsequent written assignments, and a special attention is thereby devoted to an error-free pronounciational fluency and proper discourse selection, as well as to the elimination of negative influences transferred from an attendee’s mother tongue. The attendees are also instructed and encouraged to individually use sophisticated search engines, e.g., *Bing* or *Google*, as an information management infrastructure to rapidly find and filter specific, lexically constrained English business content and allocate this adroitness to their everyday practice.

Personal computers (PCs) in a Wi-Fi “language laboratory,” in an Internet-enabled UAS videoconference room, are also utilized to simulate a real-time virtual bureau and/or workplace, e.g., to create an online curriculum vitae, send an e-mail via Microsoft’s *Office Outlook*, review a corporate *Facebook* advertisement or profile, to participate in a multicultural blog or chatroom, or to install unobtrusive assessment software and communicate the progress to the attendees, but rather in the form of an innovative multiparty or individualized problem-solving notice than a conventional learning outcome or desiderata report.

Finally, the hyperlinked toolkits posted to our website as a copyrighted downloadable content (DLC) available to our registered subscribers (e.g., customized case studies, adapted or accurate magazine articles, tailored business-oriented webisodes, etc.)¹³ successfully imitate simplified versions of natural language processing (NLP) algorithms¹⁴ and familiarize the attendees to an intercultural behavioral and linguistic diversity while fostering comprehension, audible interlingual grammatical combinations, plastic metadata visualization, and a personalized information aggregation and summarization in an incessantly altering and multitasking world of global economy.

The authors would therefore like to conclusively acknowledge and express their profound gratitude to the Zagreb, Croatia-based *Pearson ELT* staff (cf. <http://www.pearson.hr>).

¹³ Cf. <http://www.videovocab.tv>.

¹⁴ A webisode-embedded NLP is feasible in different ways, e.g., in this case in a form of a foreign-language reading aid, i.e., a pronounciational computer software assisting a nonnative English speaker to utter a business term with a proper intonation.

Implications

Expected results are connected to the following:

- professional development through nonformal learning but in a motivating academic environment, with a high permeability and attendees' satisfaction;
- utilization of the state-of-the-art teaching aids and an opportunity to acquire adjusted curricular contents during attendees' spare time, outside of a conventional classroom;
- possibility to more significantly involve the highly qualified practical externs in a CEC-based instructional process and an improved attendee – lecturer interaction.

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