LEARNING THROUGH SHARING :
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A blended practice-enterprise course for language learning in an international business community

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My contribution will present experiences and results from the EU-project PELLIC (Practice Enterprise for Language Learning and Intercultural Communication - LifeLongLearning Programme, Key Activity 2: Languages, 2009-2011).

The aim of the project was to make full use of the extraordinary learning potential of practice enterprise methodology for communicative language learning, by organizing and supporting international (virtual) business interaction, and treating practice enterprise courses as blended learning situations. Practice enterprise – "playing company" – is a practically oriented teaching method with a strong focus on authenticity, the concept of which is closely related to task-based learning approaches. The method is recommended by the European Union for vocational education and training. The target language of the course – and the working language of the multinational practice enterprises within the pilot course – was English, the lingua franca of international business.

During the piloting phase of the project (Oct.-Dec. 2010), students in four European countries have been made "virtual entrepreneurs", and have been interacting and trading with each other. Their interactions were scaffolded and supported by a customized virtual learning environment (http://www.pellic.com). This VLE is based on the open-source learning management system Moodle, with its core functions for pedagogic management and monitoring, content management and delivery and communication and interaction. It has been enhanced and adapted to suit the pedagogic needs of the PELLIC scenario by integrating external tools, such as the Google Applications suite for efficient online collaboration, as well as the conferencing environment Skype, among others. Along with a range of openly accessible e-learning contents, focus activities and resources, more general e-learning patterns were developed in the project. These patterns should serve as "blueprints" to guide interested educators in adapting, re-purposing and extending the material and methodology for their own teaching in different contexts.

In my paper and talk, I would like to discuss the use of CMC as a pivotal point in this particular scenario, the role of the teacher as a facilitator for the learners' project work, and the function of re-usable and shareable e-learning contents and activity formats for authentic autonomous and collaborative language learning.

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