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Do contemporary e-learning solutions support the development of intercultural competence? Insights from European projects

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Article Info	Abstract
	The aim of the present paper is to analyse the extent to which contemporary e-learning solu-tions support the development of intercultural competence in the didactics of specialist lan-guages. A special consideration will be given to those solutions which use e-learning modules. A few remarks concerning the terminology of intercultural competence as well as didactic modules have been made at the beginning. Last but not least, on the basis of the theory of didactic module, the process of (glotto) didactic module development and the examples of its realisation in the context of development of intercultural competence have been indicated. As shown in the paper e-learning solutions based on glottodidactic modules contribute to the de-velopment of intercultural competence, which is an essential component equipping interactor with indispensable and critical knowledge and skills. All this is required in modern specialised communication, occurring especially in multilingual and/or multicultural environments.

1. Digital media, e-learning platforms and learning

Over 2 billion people nowadays use the Internet and due to the growth of tablet and smartphone sales, digital media is booming in a rapid pace. These devices provide a fancy me-dium for feeding the information to the users comfortably, however, they also increase the time spent by users online. On the other hand, they also constitute a great opportunity through which learners practise a foreign language and they also use it to facilitate intercultural learn-ing. Nowadays, since we all live in a global village and speak English – the language recog-nised as the lingua franca of the new millennium – we get in contact more often than before with people of various cultural backgrounds. In addition, as culture impacts communication to such a great extent, it seems natural and helpful for teachers to expose their students to les-sons and activities that reveal how particular cultural components influence interaction among different nationalities and ethnic groups.

E-learning platforms serve as excellent and valuable resources for language teachers and students. It needs to be indicated that e-learning constitutes a general term used to refer to a form of learning in which the instructor and student are separated by space or time where the gap between the two is bridged through the use of online technologies (van Haren, 2010). E-learning is used interchangeably in a wide variety of contexts. In distance education, espe-cially at universities, it is defined as planned teaching/learning experience that uses a wide spectrum of technologies, mainly

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the Internet to reach learners at a distance. Only recently in most universities, e-learning is used to define a specific mode to attend a course or programme of study where the students rarely, if ever, attend face-to-face or for on-campus access to ed-ucational facilities, because they study on-line.

1.1. What is intercultural competence?

Intercultural topics, which present people from various cultural backgrounds interacting, took a more prominent role in language teaching in the past two decades. Teachers must sensitise their learners to the fact that linguistic competence is not sufficient and as a consequence, they need to master a set of skills essential for successful intercultural encounters. Moreover, it ap-pears a prerequisite to broaden one's intercultural knowledge so that they participate fully in intercultural exchanges. By having possessed necessary knowledge and proper skills interact-ants develop their intercultural communicative competence, being the ultimate objective of any intercultural training (Spitzberg, 2000).

The phenomenon, which has been the focus of a number of studies since the 1960s, entails the use of language that is proper in a given cultural context, and of actions that meet the expectations and demands of intercultural communicators who act in a culture-specific situation (Gardner, 1962). When communicators interact on an intercultural level, they are co-orienting and coordinating their behaviours (verbal and nonverbal) to accomplish social func-tions, meet personal goals, and conform to the normative dimensions of the situation as only then will they be considered competent. Their knowledge involves awareness or understand-ing of requisite information and actions at the criss-cross of cultures. Knowledgeable commu-nicators possess information about people, communication rules, context, and normative ex-pectations governing interactions with interlocutors from other cultures. Without it, they will invariably make misattributions, choose incorrect communication strategies, violate rules of etiquette, or cause the loss of face (Bennett, 1993; Romanowski, 2017).

In addition, skills refer to the actual performance or the communicative behaviours felt to be effective and appropriate in a communication context. Success in intercultural communi-cation involves knowing what skills are required and then becoming proficient in using them. Samovar, Porter and Stefani (1998) posit that skills are our abilities to engage in the behav-iours necessary to communicate appropriately and effectively. Speakers' understanding of skills that facilitate communication processes among culturally diverse communicators must lead to their enforcement and active use on a regular basis. Skills are also tied to motivational factors in intercultural training. The more skillful a speaker becomes, the more successful s/he will be in an intercultural exchange. The intercultural skills include being mindful, managing anxiety, empathising, adapting one's behaviour, and making predictions about and explaining others' behaviours.

Understanding cultural differences is as important as knowing personal similarities and sharing commonalities with interlocutors in the process of intercultural communication (Gudykunst & Kim, 2002; Samovar, Porter & Stefani, 1998). They facilitate creating relation-ships and connecting with one another, which has a significant impact on communication, directly on its relational level and indirectly on the factual one. By finding personal similari-ties, they are able to validate their students' experiences and ways of knowing and doing. The knowledge of the interlocutor as well as of how to gather information about them reduce the danger of misjudgment, which makes teachers learn the most effective ways of gathering ac-curate cultural and individual information about their students. It will assist them in under-standing the nature of the experiences the students bring to school and in making personal connections to provide support for learning both within and outside the classroom (Hollins, 1996).

3. Intercultural competence in language classrooms

Today's culturally hybrid world and classroom need individuals with increased awareness of the different ways of being and perceiving. Students need to be open and prepared for new experiences, to be trained in self-reflection and to be flexible enough to adapt to and work with others. To answer

the demand teachers should structure the classroom experience in such a way so as to encourage students' exploration and appreciation of multiple perspectives. The interactions between students should be made more meaningful and authentic. Teachers should aim to make their participants share information, ideas, opinions and personal reflec-tions in comfortable, supportive spaces in which students can express themselves following the principle of multiple perspective. The principle consists in promoting a diversity of opinion and interests, which prevents ostracism of differences as well as stereotyping and rejection of interests and hobbies fraught with otherness (Kohonen, 2001).

In classrooms advocating more autonomy and independence for learners, where stu-dents may be involved in training on learning strategies and study skills, it may be important to discuss the need to be open to new experiences and ways of learning. Classroom activities are structured in such a way that they encourage more active behaviours and more responsibil-ity for the learning process on the part of students. A great part of learner's training involves a confrontation with expectations, beliefs and attitudes regarding the learning process, and the development of students' openness towards new experiences. Students who are aided in de-veloping a higher level of adaptability, independence and flexibility will more likely be able to face new situations in the future and by adapting to it work with others (Siek-Piskozub, 2005).

This ability is also of utmost importance in today's foreign language classroom, where activities and tasks require from students not only to share information, but also to use it in order to collaborate on group tasks and projects. In many cases, teachers allow students to perpetuate divisions in the classroom by assuming that their reluctance to work with others is a natural but insurmountable obstacle. Such behaviours and attitudes of rejection, stereotyping and otherness discourage the collaborative classroom, and in the future, a society built on co-operation rather than competition. To create pro-collaborative attitudes of students they should be also taught the language that shows involvement and interest in others and conse-quently facilitates group work and interaction activities.

4. Why is an intercultural approach essential in foreign language learning?

According to Byram et. al (2002) an intercultural approach in foreign language learning involves: development of intercultural communicative competence together with linguistic competence, preparation of students for cooperation with representatives of other cultures, enabling learners to understand and accept representatives of other cultures as individuals of distinct views, values and behaviours and making others aware of the fact that intercultural contacts can be an enriching experience. The crucial aim of the process is being able to critically understand otherness. It is not sufficient to understand our own culture, because the knowledge of it determines our perception, interpretation and behaviour. Thus, cultures cannot be compared only from one perspective. Our aim should be to mediate between cultures and negotiate new meanings. This involves verbalisation of similarities and differences, expressing issues, which remain unclear or uncertain.

The most popular intercultural approach, which can be successfully applied to foreign language teaching is the ethnographic approach (Corbett, 2003). It concentrates on observation and description of behaviours of representatives of other cultures. Communicated meanings are negotiated and constructed for a particular interaction in a context. The role of ethnography was stressed by Damen (1997) who suggested using it in integrated learning of language and culture and the development of mediation competence.

Experiential learning, on the other hand, refers to those educational activities where the elements of formal classroom teaching are interwoven with informal instruction happening outside the school. A learner's direct experience (both intellectual and emotional) and engagement are emphasised (Kohonen, 2001). It is essential for learners to experience an authentic situation by means of cognitive processes (thinking, reading, and listening). At the same time learners are encouraged to share their thoughts and observations with other participants.

Ultimately, in comparative approach learning about a foreign culture involves constant comparisons with our own culture. We tend to understand and compare new phenomena from the point of view of our own culture. In most cases the picture we create is neither reliable or objective. Kramsch (2006) suggests learning how to accept new viewpoints about other cultures as an element of intercultural training. The most valuable aspect of the approach is the opportunity to engage all learner's knowledge and experience. Learners can reflect upon how their own language and culture are perceived by others, which is the main advantage of the approach. Further, they can activate their knowledge and experience. By discussing the topics of tolerance, xenophobia, identity they analyse stereotypes and as a result they are able to develop critical understanding. Frequent comparisons of cultures lead to the development of intercultural awareness and empathy. Stressing the comparative aspect Kramsch (1998) advocates activities aiming at accepting other viewpoints. One of them, known as personal constructs, consists in constructing new meanings by us and other representatives of our culture. Comparing foreign and native cultures allows us to recognise especially unknown aspects of our own culture and thus strengthen our cultural identity (Bandura, 2007). Making comparisons should also be viewed as a source of knowledge because thanks to them we discover the nuances of our own identity and particularly the fact that the national culture is not monolithic.

5. Glottodidactic modules

An essential part of discussion concerning the role of contemporary e-learning solutions in the teaching and learning of foreign languages (including specialist languages) refers to glottodidactic modules. They constitute a type or form of educational activity conducted with the application of electronic media where interactive elements are significant. Such modules consist of extensive courses (because of the used contents and the time frame), i.e. lasting the whole term (very often in the form of lecture or seminar) combining smaller didactic units for whose development various specialists have been engaged (Arnold et al., 2011, p.96). Apart from modules placed on didactic platforms (e.g. Moodle, OLAT, etc.) other modules allowing for a more complex interaction between intelligent didactic systems and the participants of glottodidactic process should be mentioned. (cf. the LISTiG project).

Behaviourism, cognitivism, constructivism as well as subjective learning theory need to be addressed as the most basic paradigms that have laid the foundations for the development of e-learning modules. There were several attempts to use computer in the process of learning in the late 1950s of 20th century. Based on the theory of programmed teaching proposed by Skinner (1954), the process of learning started to be perceived as a result of small sequences of question/answer with a constantly rising degree of difficulty and guaranteed feedback. With such a programmed instruction different variants of software were developed. They were initially labeled as tutorial or drill-and-practice activities. Due to a small degree of flexibility allowing for the realisation of selected teaching aims, i.e. the acquisition of information/knowledge easily memorised, but preventing the consideration of individual and more complex student needs, they became the subject of criticism. However, this type of software survived until the present day in the form of single- or multiple-choice tests used in the teaching of (specialist) vocabulary becoming an essential part of programmes (including didactic platforms).

Another theory which has played an essential role in creating didactic e-learning modules is cognitivism. The perception of learning processes as processing of information drew the cognitive assumptions near the assumptions of the theory of artificial intelligence, which resulted in an attempt of creating intelligent tutorial systems or adaptive learning environments. In spite of several successful software prototypes, they were (and still are) criticised by pedagogues and psychologists of learning, who claim that the aforementioned solutions are ineffective, resulting from the incommensurable amount of work required in comparison with the achieved results of learning (Arnold et al., 2011; Klauer & Leutner, 2007). In case of learning supported by computers, they are reflected, for instance, in creating richer environments and open roads to learning, a better use of

simulation and hypermedia as well as a reflection on a necessity to develop learners' meta-knowledge concerning their own learning path (Blumenstengel, 1998).

The paradigm whose assumptions influenced the concept of didactic e-learning modules significantly is constructionism, according to which the process of learning is perceived as a construction of an active learning individual in a specific social context. In view of the constructivist perspective, in order to create a didactic process, first of all, it is crucial to perceive the so-called rule of authenticity of a student's situation, which includes, for example, referring it to a specific social context, owing to which it is possible to reflect critically on diverse didactic material, references to other fields, experts' participation as well as a wider application of acquired knowledge and skills in different situations. Metacognitive reflection and the creation of one's own strategies for solving problems should foster active and exploratory 'construction of knowledge'. Nevertheless, meeting the aforementioned requirements in case of creating didactic modules or broadly defined models of e-learning education, in spite of their significant potential (Blumenstengel, 1998; Euler, 1999), is not easy, mainly due to the large amount of work and high demands imposed on students, which result from the complexity of a learning situation itself and a necessity to decide on and monitor one's own education. In spite of these uneasy challenges, the above postulates were reflected in some learning situation models. An interesting project, devoted to Anchored Instruction, was developed by Cognition and Technology Group at the Vanderbilt University and based on authenticity and complexity of tasks (Bransford et al., 1990), which has its origins in traditional education of craftsmen and promoting experts' participation in the process of learning the model of Cognitive Apprenticeship (Collins, Brown & Newman, 1989).

Another concept, which because of omitting the issue of what the process of learning is, is difficult to refer to as the theory, however, considering "a pedagogical look at the process of education" can be rather included in deliberation on the curriculum is connectivism. It is a theory of learning in a digital age that emphasises the role of social and cultural context in how and where learning occurs. Learning does not simply happen within an individual, but within and across the networks. Here, learning is understood as a process of constructing networks between nodes (Szerszeń, 2014). The content itself presented in individual nodes is not its essential element, but an ability to recognise connections between various nodes representing various tasks/beliefs/opinions, etc., which is reflected in most didactic materials used in e-learning.

Last but not least, the paradigm which plays a key role in the concept of didactic e-learning modules is the theory of learning, which unlike other theories takes social living conditions of man into consideration to a significantly greater extent (Holzkamp, 1993). It is subjective theory of learning, which takes a process of learning into account as a form of a man's justified actions in order to realise their own life goals. The relation between a student and a teacher (a guardian) has an essential function which a quality and efficiency of applied methods and didactic materials (including didactic e-learning modules) greatly depend on.

6. Practical aspects of creating (glotto)didactic e-learning modules

Moving on to the issue of practical aspects of creating didactic e-learning modules, two mainstreams should be mentioned at the beginning: "Instructional Design" and "E-Learning Patterns" (principles/e-learning rules).

Instructional Design appeared at the end of 1950s and nowadays it includes four significant steps: an analysis (of a problem or an educational demand), planning (the content of teaching), constructing (didactic material) and evaluating (effects of a didactic process). The result of popularity of the discussed mainstreams were hundreds of models of an instructional design differing from one another (Issing 2002; Niegemann et al., 2008) and taking various theoretical concepts into account (e.g. constructivist, behavioural, cognitive, etc.). In spite of their large number, three elemental impacts of models can be distinguished: constructing systems of education, teaching and products (media), especially the last two of which refer to planning educational multimedia programmes.

The second mainstream called "E-Learning Patterns" is a systematic attempt to document and classify verified solutions of recurring problem situations, the aim of which is to adapt known methods, scenarios and techniques to new situations. In the context of e-learning, adaptation of proven solutions or patterns of behaviour can, for instance, refer to applied forms of organisation, forms of interaction, creating the curriculum, scenarios and forms of didactic activities, the use of methods, tools, constructing didactic materials. As can be assumed, numerous sets of patterns, used in broadly defined didactics and typical of the situation of e-learning have been created so far (e.g. www.e-teaching.org, 2009).

It can be concluded from the aforesaid remarks that it is essential to take needs of a specific group of recipients into consideration while creating didactic e-learning modules and construct appropriate educational tasks for them, i.e. a task-based approach, a discursive and task-based approach (Szerszeń, 2014). According to the perspective accepted by the advocates of the so-called task-based didactics, solving the appropriately chosen tasks allows to refer students' present actions to their future professional activity, which will become a contribution to extensive learning. The tasks which are elements of modules should be created on the basis of analysis of professional situations observed both by teachers and students (for instance, during internships) as well as consultations with specialists and scientists (e.g. dealing with the problem of teaching specialist languages professionally).

In other words, while constructing didactic e-learning modules used in teaching specialist languages, the central part should constitute appropriately selected specialist language tasks (the tasks in the organised glottodidactic process, OGP), which are constructed on the basis of the set goals. The latter ones should be understood as the effect of a defined language activity in the glottodidactic process, adequate to a language activity in real specialist communication, i.e. at work (Weissenberg, 2010). Since they are addressed to a specific person/a group of people, they should have the following features: reality of performance, a possibility of development/consolidation of specific specialist language skills, communicative adequacy (acceptability by specialists in a specific field). The OGP are, therefore, distinguished on the basis of direct observation of real language actions in specialist communication, the participants of which are specific specialists and they should refer, for example, to such fields as organisation and a course of professional work, training sessions, applied technologies, vocational education, as well as connect to a scientific reflection on specialist communication processes. The OGP can fulfil varied functions from the development of language skills, for instance, grammatical, terminological or translational, through the development of social, intercultural, media skills to more specific professional skills (practical ones).

Regarding the issues of organisation of modular education, a possibility to apply various scenarios should be mentioned, in which a teacher, a student or communication will play a dominant role, as well as those in which diverse forms of e-learning (such as hybrid learning, learning without a direct presence of a teacher; activeness presupposing synchronism/asynchronism of an activity) will be used to a greater or lesser extent. While creating a scenario of activities, a lot of decisions should be taken concerning the procedure of a modular course (including an order of tasks), a rhythm of work and a selection of materials (a possible beginning and end of classes, timing regarding handing out materials), planning phases of recitation classes and e-learning, social forms of learning (work in groups, pairs, groupwork), organisation how to check a level of acquired knowledge and skills (e.g. on a current basis, evaluating students' knowledge and skills in the form of an exam), etc. At the stage of planning didactic e-learning modules, attention should be given to some differences in the use of electronic media resulting from learners' gender, their age, nationality, material conditions of living, cultural and social background, as well as factors determining specific learning contexts such as motivation, strategies and learning styles, etc. (Kurek, 2008).

The process of planning didactic modules is always multifaceted, and thus also in case of creating concepts of modules applied in didactics of (foreign) specialist languages, at various levels it progresses in a similar manner. As indicated by Thillosen (2011), didactic modules should be created in four main phases assigned with the following names and abbreviations: a concept (C), a didactic

structure (DS), a formal structure (FS) and an operational structure (OS). Th concept can be successfully used in the process of creating glottodidactic modules and it is illustrated in the Figure 1.
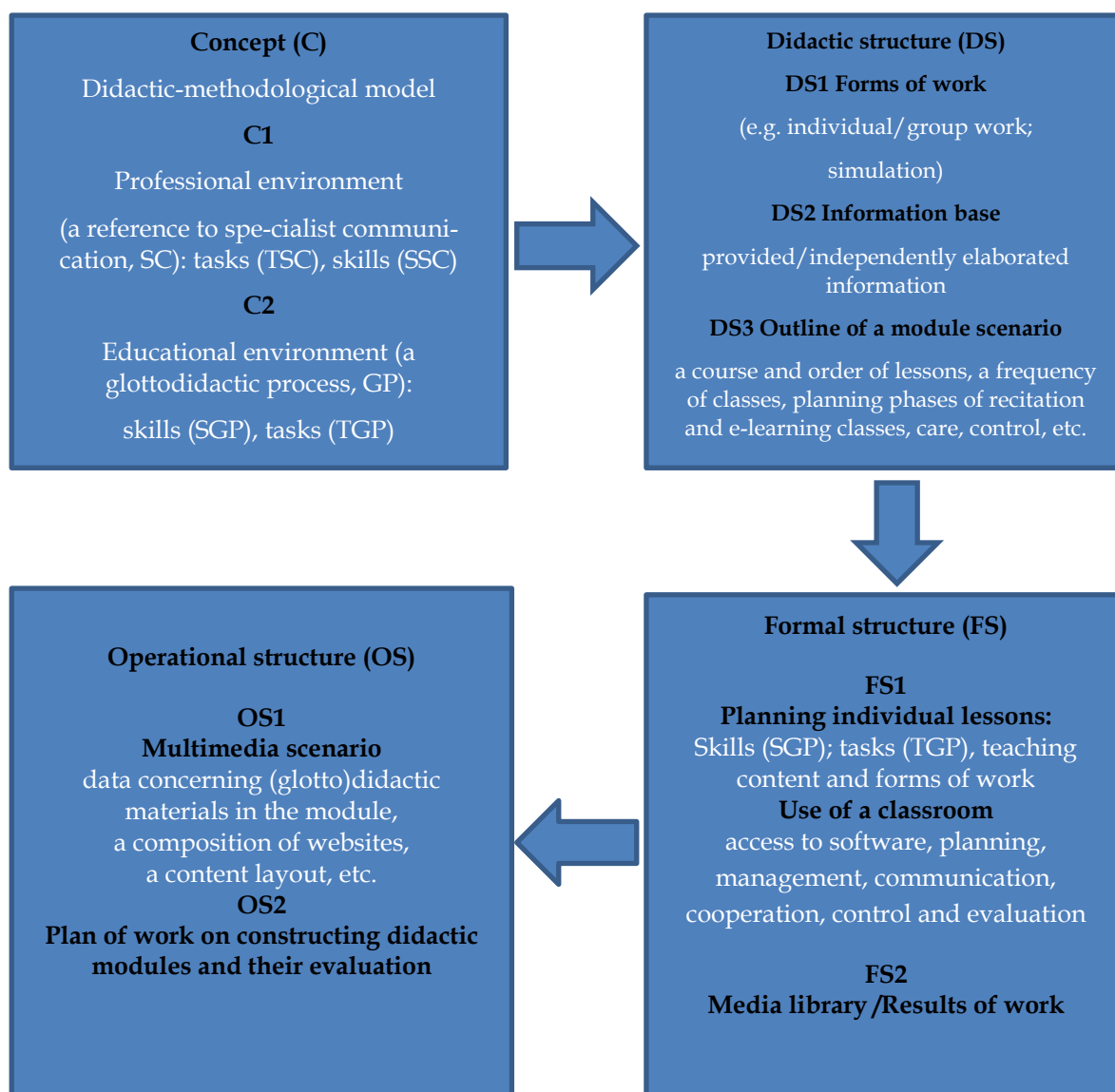

Figure. 1. Stages of creating didactic modules used in (specialist) glottodidactics (Szerszen, 2014)

The issue should be decided on in the first phase (C) what/which tasks (TGP) should be the subject of learning in a particular didactic module so that students could acquire skills necessary to solve tasks in further stages of education and/or professional life/specialist communication (TSC). In connection with the aforementioned, an outline of a didactic-methodological model is created, taking guidelines for the phase (C1) into account on the basis of information on a professional environment, professional roles, possible exemplary TSC and language (specialist) skills needed to solve them. Here, the following parameters are taken into consideration: a minimum (initial) level of (basic language/communication or language/specialist communication) skills of modular participants (learners, students, etc.) and a localisation of a module in the didactic offer (e.g. its individuality, a level of integration with other modules, textbooks, etc.). The next stage (C2) involves specifying the aforementioned skills acquired by students in a given module (SGP) and correlating tasks in the glottodidactic process with them (TGP). In case of the latter ones, it is not about taking

decisions concerning types of tasks such as multiple choice tasks, which are foreseen in the phase of creating a formal structure (FS), but rather about more general decisions regarding the curriculum, i.e. content, semantic information, appropriate examples, etc.

In the second phase (DS), decisions concerning the didactic structure of a module are taken, i.e. forms of work and control of its effects (DS1), for instance, searching information in the Internet, simulation, a lecture in the form of a video, a videoconference, independent work or in groupwork; a scope of information (DS2) made available before solving TGP, a scope of information elaborated independently on by students and/or made available to other students, types of TGP and information (DS3) included in individual lesson structures (taking into consideration an outline of lessons), a choice of optimal organisational plan (a scenario), allowing an appropriate combination of TGP and forms of work.

In the third phase (FS), a detailed structure of lessons (FS1) is created, allowing for individual skills (basic language/communication and/or specialist language/communication) and particular tasks TGP created in each lesson and glottodidactic materials in the form of the multimedia. Moreover, an optimal design of glottodidactic materials is drawn attention to in this phase (FS2), i.e. their transparency, clarity, an appropriate navigational concept, protecting work results, etc.

The last phase (OS) is the realisation of previous decisions in the form of a detailed multimedia scenario (Storyboard, OS1), embracing a description of all (glotto)didactic materials, which should be used in the module, including information regarding their allocation to individual websites, content, etc. Apart from the aforementioned scenario, the plan of the course of work on the construction of didactic modules (OS2) is an essential element containing, for instance, a schedule of work, applied forms of control of work results, a use of a classroom, possibilities of contact in case of question and an application of cooperative forms of work. The evaluation stage takes a crucial place, in which extensive testing, checking efficiency of suggested tasks and used elements should be planned, including forms of work, the electronic media, etc., the result of which should be suggestions for modifications of created modules.

To conclude the discussion, it is necessary to refer to exemplary projects using the aforementioned concepts of glottodidactic modules in the acquisition of foreign specialist languages, selecting those which support the development of intercultural competence.

7. Glottodidactic modules against the development of intercultural competence in selected projects

Despite the fact that most e-learning modules including the ones used in the didactics of foreign (specialised) languages take into consideration various general and specific aims, their creators do not always think of the development of intercultural competence. In some cases the significance of intercultural competence is neglected in everyday communication, i.e. the Texsite project (http://www.texsite.info/de/ueber-das-projekt/fashion-school-i/) where among the many inspiring tasks presented in the form of games presenting there was no indication of cultural aspects. The project focused on the history of clothing, however no information was to be found on the communicative challenges of textile industry employees working in the international environment.

In the abundance of projects however, one can find e-learning initiatives, which do include the need for development of communicative competence, e.g. DIAL4P, LISST or "Ein Tag Deutsch in der Pflege" (cf. Efing/Szerszeń, 2018, forthcoming). Although each of them achieves its aim in a slightly different manner referring to the development of its various components (Byram, 1998), i.e. knowledge of a different culture (*savoir*), attitudes to a different culture (*savoir être*), its understanding (*savoir comprendre*) and not so much on accepting its patterns (*savoir apprendre*) or reflecting on them deeply (*savoir s'engager*), they all notice and aim to face the communication difficulties resulting from cultural differences.

An example of software, using glottodidactic modules is an initiative supported with the resources of the European Union called "IDIAL for Professionals (IDIAL4P): regional – intercultural – providing qualifications – professional". Its aim was to reinforce a position of German in Eastern

Europe, as well as Russian and other less popular Eastern European languages such as Polish, Bulgarian, Slovenian and Hungarian. In line with the accepted assumption, prototype modules to acquire specialised foreign language in the online version were elaborated on. The aforesaid project refers to the development of specialised language, for instance, in computer studies, economics, tourism, politics, journalism, office-management, etc. to name only a few essential fields of specialist communication. According to the authors of the project the modules can be used in company training sessions and professional development, language education in secondary schools, technical secondary schools and vocational schools as well as in higher education institutions, and also, if it is needed, expanded if education is continued. All these educational institutions participate in the Erasmus + Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP). The methodological guidelines needed for the development of further modules in relation to the aforementioned concepts were provided at the end of the project. Ten partner institutions: three German, three Bulgarian and one from Poland, Austria, Slovenia and Hungary participated in the project lasting from 1st January 2010 to 31st December 2011.

Another example of a more specialised offer, addressed to future translators and also persons learning specialised foreign languages, is the project LIT&GS (Linguistic Intelligent Translo- and Glottodidactic Systems). It is an example of a set of glottodidactic modules used in learning specialised languages, taking especially linguistic intelligent practice components into consideration, which were created on the basis of the contrastive analysis of students' translations and at the same time they refer to the selected grammatical and terminological elements which were difficult to translate. The novel character of the mentioned software, in contrast to the first example of the project of the glottodidactic modules is, first of all, based on the use of exercises/test tasks enabling an automatic check/evaluation by the system (a machine). The term of a (glottodidactic) module can be understood in two ways in case of the LIT&GS project, i.e. on the one hand, as a component (an element) of the system of the LIT&GS. On the other hand, it is a form of didactic activities and at the same time a component of the curriculum (for instance, a module about the use of an article, a module about specialised terminology in the area of the category of a text: a contract of employment).

Also, an interesting initiative is the project "Ein Tag Deutsch in der Pflege", which constitutes a free offline educational game that originated in the programme "Integration through Qualification" - https://www.ein-tag-deutsch.de/ The main aim of the programme is the development of professional communicative competence among immigrants, which is to be achieved thanks to the application originally produced for the medical care personnel. The participants are trained as to how they can communicate with their interlocutors in various situations related to everyday healthcare. The game allows for dialogic communication where players are introduced to situations within the frame of medical care and they need to decide which verbal reaction to choose. A glossary and an information box on the world of work in Germany has been offered aside from communicative, grammar, lexical and phonetics exercises. The project founders concentrate on practising verbal professional communication and specialist nursing lexis. With every communicative decision in a particular situation an individual teaching path in the application changes. The participants also obtain declarations meta knowledge thanks to the advice related to specialist communication and the use of language in the professional nursing context as well as in the system of medical care providing the overall contextual knowledge basis. In this context, hints are given as to which mode verbs and speech acts are to be avoided since they create fear as well as which words have a calming reaction, have positive connotations and are correct for questions of personal character. Apart from hints related to communication, there are guidelines as to how to deal with criticism or listen actively, etc. What is also worth noticing is the fact that the exercises do not only refer to the system-structure layer of the language, but they also cover pragmatic aspects of discourse, i.e. it is important to evaluate the effect of response (e.g. Which sentence has a more calming reaction?). The learners are confronted with how discourse works in the area of medical care and interpersonal communication.

8. Conclusion

It can be assumed from the above remarks concerning theoretical and practical aspects of creating glottodidactic e-learning modules that their success in the glottodidactic process is not only reflected by the increasing number of technologically advanced glottodidactic materials but also rather by a precisely reconsidered methodological and didactic concept, taking a lot of factors into account, including especially institutional conditioning as well as a constant care about and control of participants in module projects and cooperation between entities dealing with planning, creating and using e-learning environments.

The conducted analysis of e-learning projects proves that their authors make more or less successful attempts to include the components supporting the development of intercultural competence in the electronic content. Despite the existing differences resulting from the different teaching aims, concepts, the structure itself (the level of module implementation) as well as a distinct form of knowledge representation, they constitute an essential contribution in the development of electronic environments of teaching and training considering to a much larger extent the specificity of communication among the representatives of various professional groups existing in separate cultural circles.

The above remarks on the theoretical and practical aspects of creating e-learning solutions based on glottodidactic modules prove that they contribute to the development of a number of relevant competences, including intercultural competences, which are an important component for people involved in modern specialised communication, especially those occurring in multilingual and/or multicultural environment.

The analysis of selected e-learning projects clearly demonstrates that their authors undertake more or less successful attempts to incorporate the components supporting the development of the aforementioned competence into the electronic teaching content.

In spite of existing differences between particular solutions resulting from different teaching goals, learning concepts, a structure itself (a level of module implementation) and a different form of knowledge representation, they make a significant contribution to the development of electronically-assisted learning and vocational training environments, taking into account ever more the specificity of communication between representatives of various professional groups functioning in separate cultural circles.

Regardless of the results deriving from our observations of the project authors involvement in the development of intercultural competences, it should also be admitted that the success in the glottodidactic process does not rely so much on the constantly increasing number of technologically advanced glottodidactic materials, but rather a carefully thought-out methodological-didactic concept, taking into account a number of factors, especially institutional conditions, as well as constant care and control over participants of modular projects and cooperation between entities involved in planning, creating and using e-learning environments in general.

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