



JISC Regional Distributed e-learning SE Region Pilot Project:

Executive Summary

Aims

- To share and disseminate good practice in the development of e-learning pedagogies and processes
- To share and re-use electronic learning resources across institutions and across sectors
- To move towards a culture of sharing and re-use of electronic resources within a regionally-based, cross-sector community of practice

Objectives

- To collect language skills tasks devised by colleagues in HE, FE, Adult Education and other sectors;
- To repurpose these tasks into Reusable Learning Objects (RLOs) using templates, guidelines and checklists devised and tested by the eLanguages Project, package using RELOAD (TELCERT) and store in the eLanguages Learning Object Repository (CLARe) prior to storage in JORUM.
- To assign appropriate contextual metadata to these tasks so that they correspond to the language and skills assessed at all levels using an appropriate framework that is recognised across sectors (e.g. the National Languages Ladder being developed by the DfES as part of the national Languages Strategy), and meets technical standards of interoperability for Learning Objects (LOM).
- To engage learners in activities to develop them as both more aware and more independent learners which are key attributes for making progress in a subject area that relies on independent learning and practice.
- To develop tasks that are aimed at supporting learners outside the classroom and at all stages of their language learning, both informal and formal.
- To compare and contrast the cascade model of hubs and satellites with one that uses existing regional networks to develop a regionally-based community of practice which would move towards a share culture of use, reuse and re-purposing of online resources, and sustain itself beyond the life of the project.

Overall approach

L₂O collected learner-centred tasks from consortium partners and applied development processes based on those used to create e-learning language modules for the UK eUniversities.

Customised templates and style guides were used to create re-usable learning objects (RLOs) which were tagged with contextual metadata agreed by the project team, and stored in a shared electronic repository (CLARe). All partners contributed learning materials and the RLOs were processed according to standards that were agreed by the consortium. This collaboration and sharing of materials and expertise is resulting in the provision of access to quality assured learning materials.

Findings

A fledgling community of practice which has a wide regional base but also has members from throughout the UK, has developed organically as a result of the dissemination activities of the project. The core community of 4 HE institutions has successfully negotiated collective outcomes which have influenced the design of the description templates (both in terms of re-usable learning objects and pedagogic assets) and the 'process model of re-use and re-purposing'. Members of the wider L₂O research community that has come about through the project have met through workshops and our flagship event, the eLearning Conference at the University of Southampton (1-2 Feb, 2007) to hear project dissemination and to share ideas and experiences of best practice in sharing and re-using learning objects in digital repositories. Their feedback has informed the development of CLARe and

has influenced the direction of future and continuing research projects. They remain actively engaged in all of the projects which L₂O has given rise to.

Achievements

- A prototype repository (CLARe – Contextualised Learning Activity Repository) of quality assured re-usable learning objects (RLOs) and pedagogic assets which are tagged with contextual metadata, as well as catalogued with general RLLOMAP metadata, for ease of retrieval by language teachers and learners, which has been evaluated within our community of practice
- A pedagogically-led 'process model' for the re-purposing and re-use of existing teaching and learning resources
- A regionally-based but UK-wide, cross-sector community of practice which focuses on moving towards a shared culture of use, re-use and re-purposing of online resources. This community is expanded and sustained via the L₂O research community website: www.elanguages.ac.uk/researchcommunity
- Creation of a bespoke application profile to incorporate contextual metadata in the educational fields of LOM metadata and create IMS compliant content packages using EU and JISC-funded tools – TELCERT, RELOAD and Schemaprof
- Sustainability via projects which have directly arisen from the L₂O Project – Eduserv-funded MURLLO (Management, Use and Re-purposing of Language Learning Objects), JISC-funded CLAReT (CLARe Tools) and JISC/HE Academy DeL2-funded DeTCOLM (Designing Tools for the Creation of Online Learning Materials) and JISC-funded FAROES (Repositories for Sharing Resources in Distributed Social Spaces).

Conclusions

The project has identified a clear desire within the community to share, re-use and re-purpose existing materials through access to a digital repository. This desire has taken shape in the newly-arisen L₂O research community which can claim nearly 100 members UK-wide. It is evident that a community of practice is more successful when it arises organically using existing networks, rather than in a more structured, prescribed way.

Project outcomes have highlighted that the critical success factor for re-use and re-purposing is the need for the materials to be 'attractive' to the end-user (teacher and/or learner) in terms of:

- Their context (the need to add context-rich metadata)
- The presentation of metadata so that it assists in resource discovery and material selection
- Their ease of re-use or ability to be re-purposed

The project has also highlighted various technical issues which affect success in re-use and re-purposing:

- There is a need for user-friendly, quick-to-use tools to use in the editing, selection and creation of content packages and the attaching of metadata
- There is a need for pro-active support mechanisms to assist practitioners in the creation of RLOs, in order to ensure quality and accessibility
- The sharing of materials through JORUM is currently problematic due to the additional contextual metadata fields in L₂O content packages. This needs to be resolved as online materials proliferate
- Intellectual Property Rights are currently a significant barrier to sharing materials. This is expressed on an individual level in the unwitting use of copyright material by practitioners, but most seriously at institutional level, where copyright can be owned by an institution unwilling to share with potential competitors