The HERO project: language training for migrants' professional career as caregivers through blended learning

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Abstract. The HERO project aims to develop a training program for caregivers to be working in the elderly care sector. The program is particularly addressed to caregivers from Middle Eastern and African countries as refugees and intends to help them integrate into European society. This paper seeks to offer an overview of the project, including its objectives, underlying principles, and deliverables. The paper particularly portrays the second intellectual output (O2) of the project, namely the 'On the job' training in language and terminology curriculum, which has been developed as the end product of O2. Initially, the methodology adopted to create learning material for language learning in a specific-purpose context is analyzed. Based on this, the paper provides a description of the content development by justifying and showcasing the learning material and laying out the logic behind this, through the trainers' guide. E-learning tools have been integrated in the course material, which also justifies the methodology applied for the purpose of this project.

Keywords: professionalization, migration, languages for specific purposes, blended learning.

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1.   Introduction

With the continuous incoming of refugees from African and Middle Eastern countries which are under non-stop war conflicts, the EU is trying to integrate them in the labor market (European Commission, 2019), particularly in the field of elderly care. However, due to the migrants' lack of language and communication skills along with the fact that their knowledge in the workplace is only experience-based (i.e. in most cases without qualifications), the migrant/refugee integration to the labor market does not seem to be adequate.

The HERO[7] project aims to fill this gap by both providing training in the profession of a caregiver, as well as developing language and communication skills vital to such a professional setting and society in general. The HERO program is an Erasmus+ Key Actions training program, which focuses on elderly care and infectious disease prevention. The project involves four countries: Cyprus, Greece, Italy, and Portugal, and includes English along with the language of the country of residence and training.

The HERO project is being funded for four Intellectual Outputs (IO). This paper reports on the second IO curriculum called 'On the job' training in language and terminology which designed the curriculum for the language courses focusing on Specific Purposes (SP) courses (Connor & Upton, 2012) at A1-A2 level of the CEFR, the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (Council of Europe, 2001).

2.   Insight on content development

2.1.   Context

The context of this research involves the learning material in languages for SP and the trainers' guide, which were created as part of the HERO project. For its development, a task-based needs analysis was employed (Malicka, Gilabert, & Norris, 2019), along with document analysis (Frey, 2018). More specifically, caregiver duties and responsibilities in the protocols of the four partner institutions were systematically examined and compared, with the aim of

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7. HERO is the acronym for the project Training program in elderly care and infectious disease prevention for the integration of refugees from the Middle Eastern and African countries in western society.

establishing the most significant tasks and duties in the elderly care area. Cultural and social differences, various educational and social backgrounds were also considered, as well as different learning styles to embrace the diversity of the target audience (McNamara et al., 2018). The approach for the language courses incorporates a blended methodology conceptualized as a combination of onsite with online experiences to produce effective, efficient, and flexible learning (Stein & Graham, 2014).

2.2. Learning material

The content material was built on language learning at a basic level and the care terminology, more specifically, at the A1-A2 CEFR level. The language course material was created and translated into four languages: English, Greek, Italian, and Portuguese. The material was slightly adapted to meet the linguistic and cultural necessities of the four countries. The curriculum for the language course was designed so that it focuses on SP courses within the elderly care area. The language course material starts with an outline where the topic of each unit is described as well as the scenarios (context of situation), language needed, key terminology, and learning hours. The material includes nine units. The topics of Units 0 to 8 are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1.   HERO learning material: Units 0 to 8

Unit	Content
0	The Alphabet and Numbers 0 to 100
1	A New Client
2	A Day in the Elderly Care Unit
3	Everyday Duties of a Carer: Nursing Interventions
4	Everyday Duties of a Carer: Hygiene duties
5	Everyday Duties of a Carer: Feeding
6	Hospital Infection
7	Reporting an Incident
8	Physical Health: Problems and Aids

Unit 0 was designed as an introductory/optional unit for learners who are not aware of the alphabet or the numbers up to 100 in the target language. This unit consists of three sections and includes activities where the content presented in its sections is put into practice with the use of *Quizlet* (see Figure 1). Quizlet is both an online learning environment, and a mobile application that permits the creation of vocabulary, flashcards, games, and quizzes.

Figure 1.   Example of a *Quizlet* 'Match' activity for the alphabet in ESP
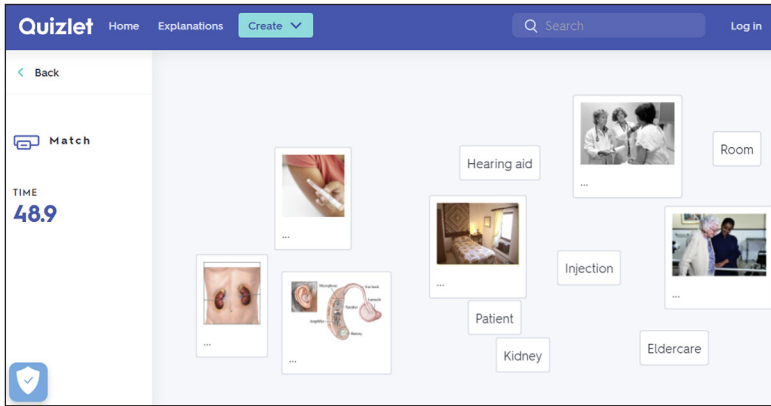

Figure 2.   Example of a matching activity designed for the HERO Moodle course

Units 1 to 8 were designed following a structure of five sections. Section 1 includes texts in the form of dialogues, schedules, instructions, and reports. Section 2 consists of introductory vocabulary related to the topic of each unit. Section 3

provides the learners with useful phrases from the texts as well as other phrases that could be used in similar contexts. Section 4 explains the grammar/function of the language used in the texts by introducing tables, grammar rules, as well as examples of language in use. Section 5, the last one, contains practice activities based on the previous sections. The activities were designed as part of a Moodle course, which includes assignment activities, multiple-choice quizzes, cloze questions, matching questions, drag-and-drop matching, and self-assessment tasks with detailed feedback (see Figure 2 above).

2.3.   Trainers' guide

The guide proposes different steps to help the language instructors implement the language course material. Each unit of the course material is accompanied by suggestions that include: guidelines on how to read the texts (i.e. role-plays, brainstorming), as well as different approaches for the vocabulary section (i.e. pronunciation, use of digital devices in class), the useful phrases section (i.e. explanation of phrases in context), the language spot section (i.e. interaction between the instructor and learners), and the activities section (i.e. individual, peer, and group work, feedback to learners).

The trainers' guide also provides the keys for the activities of the language course material, from Section 1 to 5 of each unit. The guide is also available in all four languages.

3.   Conclusions

The aim of the HERO project is to provide content development for the training of refugee or migrant caregivers who work in elderly care units in European countries. The content was developed following a specific training methodology, considering cultural and social differences, various education and social backgrounds, and different learning styles, to be used as a multicultural training tool for professionals (Brotman, 2003). The content was also translated in four different languages. Apart from developing the necessary language skills, the project also aimed at raising awareness of the proper language use both in the working field and in everyday life. Additionally, considering that language is more effectively learned when using authentic course materials (Guariento & Morley, 2001), the content was designed in such a way as to help target learners to build up their acquired knowledge through role-plays and focus-groups, as they increase student motivation and involvement.

For a more successful delivery of the training sessions, a trainers' guide was also developed. Finally, the evaluation of course material, the trainers' guide, together with the methodology selected for the course implementation will be conducted in the next phases of the project.

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