

Instructions for working with the SLEST 2.0 E-learning materials

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1 General information

The authors would like to emphasize that SLEST 2.0 is not intended as a language course, rather it is a set of language learning materials and additional exercises intended for self-study which have been especially designed for professionals working in the field of travel and tourism and in particular for waiters, tour guides, receptionists and travel agents. The exercises are generally accompanied by a language teacher or tutor or can be embedded within a blended-learning course, where the learning content is adapted completely to meet the specific needs of the learners.

The main objective of the project was to put existing as well as additional language learning materials onto an on-line learning platform so that it is available to anyone in the field of tourism who is interested in developing their language skills, which allows for autonomous self-study independent of place and time: the learning speed is self-determined.

This free e-learning program has, therefore, been especially created for fully autonomous practice and / or to reinforce content, situations etc which are already generally known in one of the following foreign languages: English, Spanish, German and Italian². Those users who would like to take up such an offer should contact the respective SLEST partner in their country or for the language of their choice, who will give them information on a variety of different courses, from personally tailored to classic frontal teaching or blended e-learning courses.

SLEST 2.0 is aimed at levels A2 and B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEF), but real communication processes, as demonstrated in our material, follow no classification levels; the materials contain both simple and complex grammatical structures, basic vocabulary as well as specific vocabulary; uncomplicated as well as relatively complex sentence structures. For these

² It is planned for the future to include also French.

reasons it was not deemed necessary to confine each individual exercise within the framework classification levels of the CEF³ or *Profile Deutsch*⁴. Instead, the exercises have been allocated either “Basic User” (A) or “Independent User” (B) where “A” is approximately the same as A2 and “ B” is equivalent to B1/B2.

Reminder: The SLEST-Level A2 includes those language skills which are needed in order to communicate in routine situations of professional life. In addition it includes the direct exchange of information on familiar situations which occur in the work place. B1, on the other hand, means that the language learner has the ability to use the foreign language in situations which occur in professional life independently.⁵

³ Trim, J. et al.: Common European Framework of Reference. München/ Berlin (Langenscheidt) 2001

⁴ Glaboniat, M. et al. München/ Berlin (Langenscheidt) 2005

⁵ See also the meticulous explanations and tables under “documents“ on the website of the project

2 The idea behind SLEST 2.0

The project has an important contribution to make to:

1. providing additional qualifications in foreign languages, in order to increase job opportunities for those people who would like to work in the travel and tourism industry
2. employees already working in the field of travel and who would like to gain further language qualifications and thus open up opportunities for career advancement.

In the selection of learning materials particular attention has been paid to the practical application,

i.e. the contents reflect the daily work in these fields as accurately as possible and will contribute in particular to the FLOW – i.e. the direct, concrete communication with customers or business partners.

It goes without saying that the learning pace of each user is determined individually (to a limited extent in a blended-learning course), and also depends crucially on the prior knowledge and the motivation of the individual. Based on years of experience in the field of foreign language teaching, the project partners would like to point out that all learners who do not have strong motivation and learning discipline, should be advised to seek the support of professionally qualified tutors (specifically: participation in blended learning course or support from a tutor / teacher). The possibility of direct contact (if only on temporary basis) with trained foreign language teachers considerably increases the learning effect and also leads to greater satisfaction and a feeling of security with the learner.

3 Internet access and technical requirements

In the development of the Internet platform the following aspects were an absolute priority for us:

- easy accessibility
- user-friendly
- Target group orientation
- Focus on action-oriented learning
- Focus on concrete job-related learning content

- Promotion of key competences

Important advice when working with the eXeLearning exercises: always type the text exactly as it should appear; avoid double spacing and also include commas where necessary, otherwise the program will mark it as a mistake.

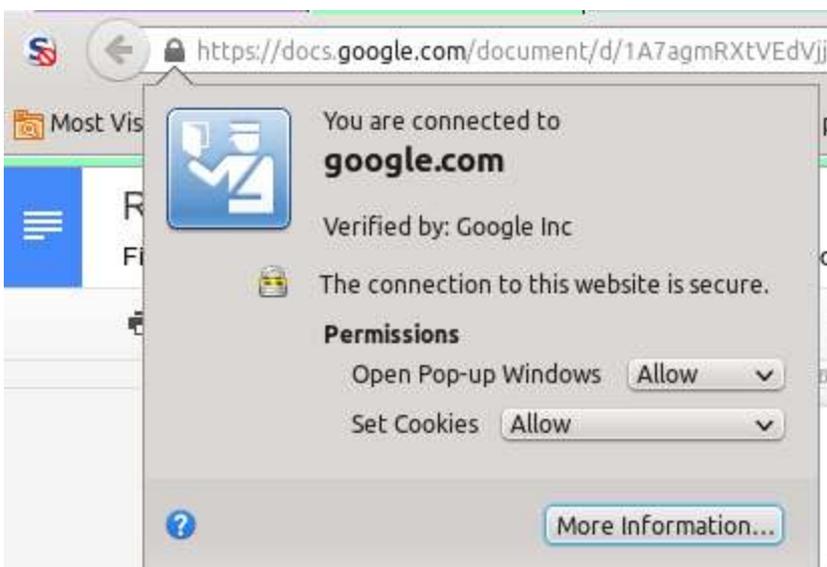
System requirements for using the SLEST 2.0 Learning materials.

An up to date browser, such as Firefox, Chrome, is required where Java and cookies are activated.

The videos will and can be accessed via YouTube and the sound files with IVOOX (both are placed outside of the SLEST server).

As the SLEST 2.0 Learning Material has been created with eXeLearning and exported in html compliant code (HTML and SCORM) there shouldn't be any major issues to use it. The only requirement is that you use a multimedia capable computer with an up to date browser of your choice (Firefox, Chrome, etc.) with Javascripts enabled.

If you are using the material when connected to a secure network (<https://www.site.com>), some browsers won't allow to you connect directly to an unsecured site (<http://www.site2.com>) unless you give it permission to. If the embedded videos and sound players don't load, just make sure to enable permissions on your browser. For Firefox for example click on the icon at the beginning of the URL field:



On Windows Explorer the activeX security permissions have to be enabled in order to allow the access to the embedded multimedia content (videos and dialogs).

4 The construction of individual exercise modules

For SLEST 2.0, between 9 and 10 learning units were prepared for each professional group, each consisting of 8 to 10 exercises. At the centre of each unit is either a video or a longer dialogue (called "the story"), to which three or four "A" and three or four "B" exercises of different types were each assigned (grammar, vocabulary, communication; these exercises are not directly connected with each other, however). In addition, the sequence of units is generally subject to a substantive progression, which, however, differs significantly from the individual professional groups (in the case of "Hotel" most clearly, the "waiter" only to some extent).

So it is wise to work through the units chronologically, otherwise certain thematic links are lost for the learner, and the relationship between the units will remain unclear.

Each of the four occupational groups (waiters, tour guides, hotel and travel agency employees)

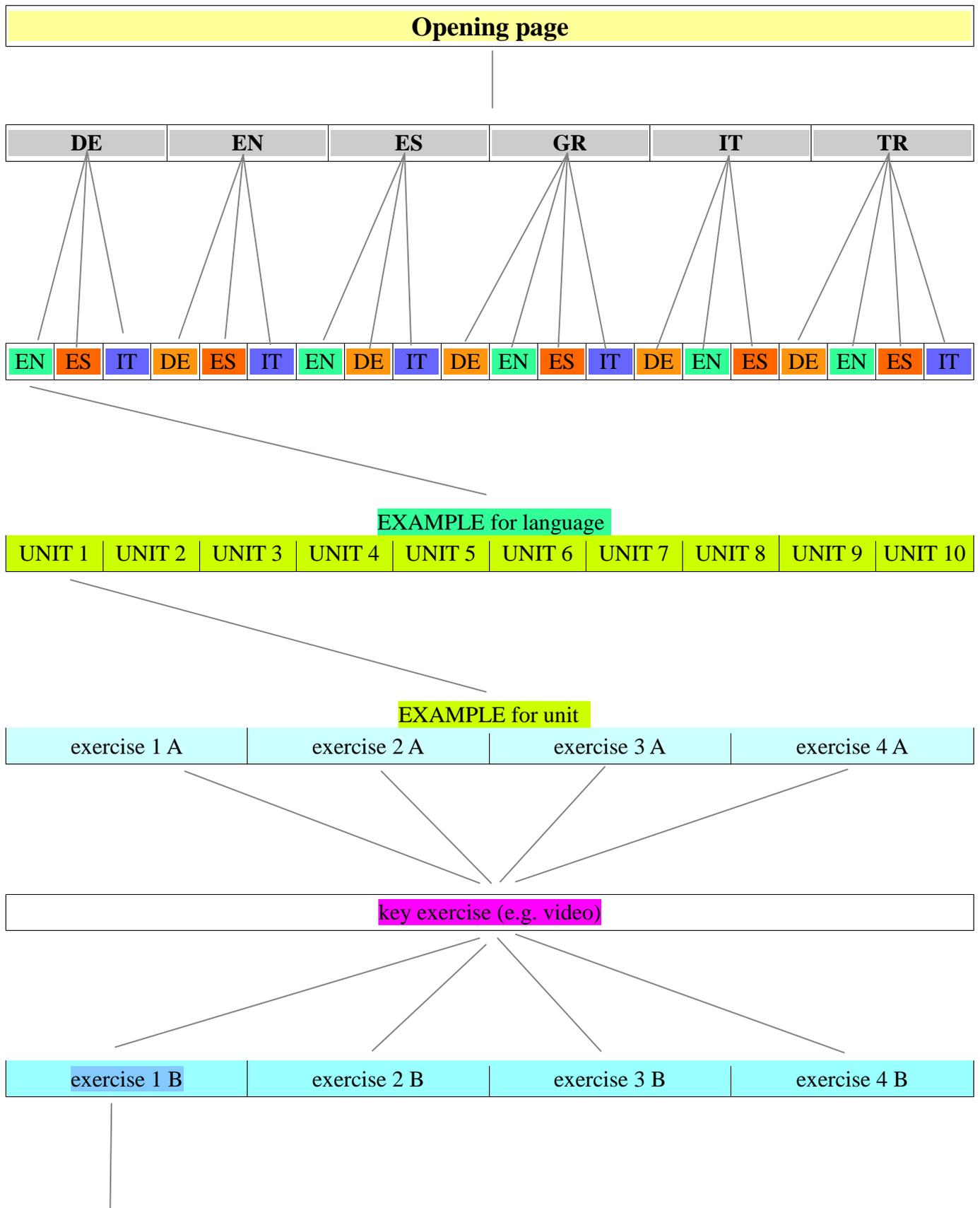
thus forms a separate module and includes a "story" (i.e., a sequence of directly connected units) as well as the above mentioned large number of exercises (including the solutions and learning tips). The various activities are:

- video sequences
- listening (dialogue)
- reading comprehension (included in all exercises)
- vocabulary work (voc)
- grammar training (gr)
- communication exercises (com)

With all video clips and selected listening comprehension exercises, it is also possible to read the respective transcription of what is said.

Although the learner will find a variety of different exercises, we decided to limit the types of exercises to a certain number, in order to increase the recognition effect for the user, thus ensuring the usability of the material. The same applies for the structural design of all modules.

Structure of e-learning part on website



Exercises can be: vocabulary, grammar, dialogues, listening or reading comprehension

5 About the respective SLEST 2.0 exercise forms

With approximately 800 interactive exercises, a comprehensive, vocationally specific exercise program is available to the learner. A dictionary assist to make learning easier.

There are 8 VIDEO SEQUENCES (2 for each occupational group) to train listening and visual skills.⁶ Since these exercises are specifically intended to re-create the working environment and authentic situations, the video sequences have not been allocated a level (see also the introductory remarks). However, it was ensured that by the nature of the assigned exercises every learner is given the opportunity to be able to derive maximum benefit from the video recordings (e.g. by reviewing global rather than detailed understanding, i.e. more or less selective understanding, etc.).

With various AUDIO RECORDINGS of selected dialogues, listening comprehension, in particular, is practised; with these exercises there is also a distinction between global detailed understanding.⁷

In most cases, the type of exercise-form for the audio-recordings is gap-filling, but there are also reading comprehensions about the text as well as some other activities.

GRAMMAR: General grammatical explanations are not given in SLEST 2.0. For those learners who are interested in deepening their knowledge of grammar, there is extensive information available either in book form or on the internet. In the appendix of this manual there is a collection of links to referenced websites, where grammatical explanations (possibly including exercises) can be found.

When selecting the exercises very great emphasis was placed on the strengthening and expansion

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Pitifully, it was impossible for the project group to produce more video clips because of economic reasons. Still we

do hope to be able to increment this offer in the future.

⁷ Generally we start from the assumption that the allocation of a dialogue to a certain level normally has little to do with its contents (linguistically simplified, that is manipulated texts wouldn't be authentic any more!); the crucial point is the complexity of the exercise which accompanies the text (therefore „B“ or „F“).

of vocabulary. The project group worked on the basis that in the working life of the target professions the primary aim is to communicate successfully (in other words, to understand and to make himself/herself understood). Therefore it is vital to build up an extensive range of vocabulary and this should lie at the centre of all learning efforts; any errors which may occur in the construction of a sentence, e.g. a false declination form etc., provided they do not impair successful communication, are not important compared with the inability to speak because the necessary vocabulary is lacking.

Learning with SLEST 2.0 can be carried out on your own PC, tablet or smart phone with the L2 learning material free of charge. One of the main objectives in the preparation of these exercises was the opportunity for the learner to obtain immediate and automatic feedback during the autonomous learning of the foreign language. For this reason, the chosen forms of exercise can be mainly classified into the following categories:

- Cloze text
- Gap-filling exercises
- multiple choice
- multiple selection
- right / wrong

6 2.0 SLEST and beyond

In addition to pure self-study, the learner can also choose to follow a blended learning course or to use the support of a tutor / teacher during the language learning process. In this case he/she would need to make contact with the allocated SLEST partner for his country and enquire about the conditions of participation since a fee is charge for this service. The fee is staggered depending on the scope of the service (for those who are participating directly in the project, this service is free).

The advantages of a blended-learning course are obvious: it is temporally and spatially extremely flexible, allowing individualized learning and can be offered at very cost effective prices.

For exercises that require feedback from a teacher or tutor (such as the production of written documents), the learner must apply directly to one of SLEST partners who will give suggestions for an individual learning programme (these services are, however, subject to charges; for more information, please contact the respective SLEST-country partners).

Tutor-assisted, semi-autonomous learning (for a fee) includes:

- a placement test to determine your personal language level (for free)
- interactive lessons with a tutor (e.g. via Skype as a chat, etc.); individually or as a group
- Participation in a blended-learning course (combination of controlled individual learning with face to face teaching)
- Further learning activities with the respective SLEST partner

This method allows a maximum of (temporal) flexibility, combined with a large measure of varied, individual learning, which is probably the most effective way to learn today. In addition, this method meets the needs of those learners who are in full-time work enabling them to apply what they have learned immediately to their daily work. For ease of learning a detailed glossary in various languages (English, German, Greek, Italian, Spanish, Turkish) is available to the user.

By choosing the blended learning method, continuous assessment and progress of each participant can be monitored.

7 General information on tutor-led foreign language learning

According to most experts in this field, learning autonomously exclusively with online material is not very efficient or useful; much better, however, is a mixture of self-learning materials, virtual activities and real-life events (= blended learning) which can be assessed: feedback is crucial (one learns from making mistakes); with indirect feedback, for example, writing on the screen is often ineffective because it may not be read correctly and there are no opportunities to ask questions!

Learning with the help of a learning platform consists of asynchronous (e.g. replying to an email) and synchronic work (e.g. doing an exercise); this can be at home, on the road, alone or with others; it may be supplemented in the classroom with group activities, where the primary concern should always be to actively apply language skills - virtual or non-virtual. All of these aspects should be considered both as a self-study programme as well as in connection with a course.

The following is a (incomplete) list of possible activities / forms of learning that can be applied through tutor-led learning. The applied forms of learning which follow are collaborative, product-oriented, individual- and competence-oriented:

- make your own short videos
- create wikis (write online texts together)
- be active in chat rooms and forums
- write emails and mutually correct them
- combine online tasks with face to face course

- virtual shopping (for example, supermarket)
- design manageable asynchronous and synchronous tasks and then carry them out (material for the design should be provided)
- Create role-play cards (the other partner doesn't know the details his/her partner card)
- Learners obtain information about their country or the target language and creates puzzles online
- My favourite picture (by describing the learners are emotionally involved and therefore often work better: not just describing any dog, but their own!)
- Contents transferred to other contexts (Mashup)
- WebQuest (presentation of a situation in which the learner then proposes a solution; either independently or in small groups)

Although blended learning courses have so far not shown any significant differences compared with face to face courses in terms of the results, they are usually rated by the learner as being a positive experience (keyword: motivation). Important factors for blended learning courses are:

- Develop input and output tests
- Create precise learning objectives and define learning path
- Networking of learners with each other
- Create a good bridge between classroom and online phases
- Ensure that there are opportunities to practice speaking and writing skills

8 Link List

General materials (dictionaries etc.):

www.pons.de (online dictionary various languages)

www.thefreedictionary.com (online dictionary English-English)

Specific language learning materials:

Language Learning Courses

<http://www.cilt.org.uk/home.aspx>

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation/centres>

Free online Language Learning exercises

<http://www.esolcourses.com/content/exercises/grammar/english-grammar.html>

<http://www.englishmaven.org/>

<http://www.englishpage.com/>

<http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/>

<http://www.agendaweb.org/>

<http://www.learn4good.com/languages/english.htm>

<http://www.ego4u.com/>

