LANCELOT Certificate in Live Online Language Teaching Quality Assurance Report, September 2007

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1 Summary

The subject and purpose of the following report is a thorough evaluation of the LANCELOT Certificate in Live Online Teaching. It is based on desk research which was constituted by systematically working through the various modules of the teacher training programme and assessing recorded data that documented group sessions which were carried out in earlier and by now concluded LANCELOT courses. To arrive at an adequate evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of the programme and its constituting learning units and activities, the main aims of the programme as formulated in the course handbook are used as the primary assessment guidelines. The evaluation also addresses the trainee assessment approach and its two main tools, the Development Portfolio and the Observed Live Online Teaching Practice.

After presenting some basic information on the LANCELOT background and objectives, this evaluation report first gives a descriptive account of the LANCELOT teacher training programme and its specific activities. This section not only delves into the structure and objectives of the different tasks, but furthermore differentiates them in terms of autonomy and group interaction. The evaluation section then focuses on five main dimensions: the learning management system InLearn, the fulfilment of the propagated aims and objectives, the balance between theory and practice, compliance with principles of good practice and overall efficiency. The report concludes with an evaluation of the trainee assessment approach.

The evaluation results are decidedly favourable to the LANCELOT teacher training programme. Each and every task is clearly designed to serve the proclaimed objectives of the course. The learning units are user-friendly in their transparency of purpose and demands and uniformly cover all significant aspects of expanding the trainees' horizon by supplying them with increasingly demanding input on live online teaching methodology, intercultural communicative competence and the necessary tools to become a live online teacher. Significantly, the programme also serves as a model example of a didactic blend of self-directed and collaborative learning, with the two different modes in fact in omnipresent interaction.

Finally, the trainee assessment approach must be praised since it takes into consideration both the entire learning process of the trainee (documented in the development portfolio), as well as a sample demonstration of all acquired skills in interaction (in the form of observed live online teaching practice).

2 Recommendation

The recommendation is that the LANCELOT Certificate in Live Online Language Teaching be awarded the ICC Certificate of Quality and Best Practice.

3 Background and Objectives

The LANCELOT teacher training programme for live online language teachers has been developed as part of the Leonardo da Vinci project LANCELOT: LANguage Learning by CErtified Live Online Trainers (2005-2007), in which 23 partners from 6 countries have joined together to professionalise live online language learning (http://lancelot.univie.ac.at/).

The project must be seen in the light of a changed political and societal (European) world in the wake of the 21st century. In view of the expansion of the European Union and in an age of globalisation, the individual is required to keep up with linguistic and cultural demands and changes. Consequently, the Union explicitly encourages its citizens to become engaged in and/or to further pursue a process of lifelong (language) learning. Against this backdrop, the LANCELOT project identifies a demand for live online language learning in virtual classrooms via Internet, and thus a need for the training of live online language teachers.

By acquiring the LANCELOT certificate, teachers familiarise themselves with the potential of live online language teaching and the pedagogical, intercultural and technological competencies involved. More specifically, “the LANCELOT Certificate in Live Online Language Teaching aims to train experienced, qualified face-to-face language teachers for synchronous online language instruction. It seeks to build upon language teachers’ existing professional knowledge and experience, and to develop their practice in the live online classroom.” (Course Handbook, p 5)

According to the Course Handbook, on completion of the LANCELOT training programme, trainees should be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the role of the online language teacher, and situate themselves within that role;
- Manage a range of technologies afforded by internet-based synchronous learning environments or tools, and show how these support effective language teaching and learning;
- Demonstrate a critical understanding on issues relating to intercultural communicative competence, and how this informs effective language teaching;
- Reflect on ways in which their beginning practice as online language teachers may be developed;
- Plan, prepare for, and conduct appropriate synchronous online language lessons in a variety of scenarios, with a variety of language learners, for a variety of purposes.

This report will continuously draw back on these formulated objectives as a crucial point of orientation in the process of gauging the actual validity of the LANCELOT teacher training programme.

4 Description of the LANCELOT Training Programme

4.1 Overall structure

The LANCELOT training programme consists of 12 learning blocks, characterised by certain leitmotifs and main content areas. The trainees are always initially given an introduction to the specific block (or module), in which the general objectives of the block are specified; furthermore, a brief outline of the demands and tasks is given. The rest of the block is separated into three or four main areas, which in turn are divided into several constituting pages.

Typically, the trainees are asked to observe a sample live online learning session, is then given information on aspects of intercultural communicative competence and/or teaching methodology and finally introduced to relevant live online teaching technologies. These pillars of a module are never portrayed as isolated. To the contrary, it is another pivotal feature of the overall programme contents to demonstrate the interconnectivity of these seemingly separate aspects by expostulating on the significance of intercultural competence for language teaching and how this might be supported by technologies. These main sections require the trainees to engage in a variety of exercises, such as reading and taking notes, engaging in synchronous collaborative activities or contributing to discussion forums.

The three main content and activity types can hence be categorised as follows:

a) dealing with didactics/teaching methodology

b) raising and discussing intercultural issues

c) explaining and inducing the trainees to practise new technologies in general as well as for teaching purposes in particular

As the trainees are asked to go through the programme according to the numerical order of the learning blocks, the first block is naturally the least demanding, whilst the tenth and last of the regular blocks constitutes the most demanding and intricate learning unit. Blocks 11 and 12 are in fact reserved for sample lessons to be given by the trainees for assessment purposes (for more information, please see sections 5 and 6). The type of information and the tasks the trainees are confronted with consequently progresses on a scale of complexity and profundity. As the following depiction of the learning tasks and activities will show, the programme ensures continuity between the individual units by permanently reminding the trainees of the need to reflect on their earlier acquired knowledge when completing new activities, as well as formulating tasks in a way that necessitates the utilisation of recently acquired competencies. The particular content of a block can thus be presented as one particular fragment of a specific aspect of language teaching that can only unfold its full potential for the trainees as long as they study it in the context of the whole programme.

Naturally, the activities differ in the degree of self-initiative that they supply the trainees with when carrying them out. The following, more specific analysis of the activities will thus take the extent of this characteristic into consideration.

4.2 Directed and non-directed self-study

As was mentioned earlier on, “Lesson Observation” is a recurring activity throughout the programme. The trainees are required to observe and take notes on instances of live online sessions, in which the tools and procedures employed become gradually more complex, multilayered and various in concordance with the increasing number of blocks the trainees have worked through. (In learning block 2, for example, the lesson consists of playing a directions game in a live online environment, in which the trainees are asked to use the cursor to draw direction lines. This scenario also introduces the trainees to the virtual classroom. Learning block 6 on the other hand confronts them with the potential but also the intricacies of text chat). The trainees are given guidance for gathering impressions and jotting them down by being supplied with a list of assessment criteria. The numerous aspects are listed under two headings, namely “methodology” and “learning methodology and environment”. The trainees are thus required to gain some insight into the subject through self-study, although guided by the aforementioned document.

As was also drawn attention to, every learning block includes a section on intercultural communicative competence (ICC), both in the context of language learning and teaching as well as in general. The trainees are always initially supplied with a decent amount of written input and are asked to read it carefully. The information usually comes in the forms of little paragraphs on particular aspects of ICC (like the significance of stereotypes, taking over a multicultural perspective and reflecting on the role of personal attitude), taken from scientific texts. Further reading activities are required when dealing with units dedicated to teaching methodology and with the technology section. Often, the trainees have to work on extracts from texts and the texts are always made available to the trainee in their full from in a “references” section. The trainees are thus given the option to delve into the treated aspects further under their own direction, i.e. in non-directed self-study.

To recapitulate, reading activities constitute a great amount of directed self-study activities that the programme requires the trainees to engage in (they are labelled “RO”, meaning “Read only” on the first page of a learning block). However, it must be borne in mind that these tasks are hardly ever intended to be carried out for the individual’s sake alone. Each block features constant reminders that the trainees will at a later stage be required to use their recently acquired knowledge for contributing to the group session, the performance in which ultimately plays an important role in determining the trainees’ assessment.

Other types of self-study activity are multiple choice (e.g. in block 1, the trainees must select the correct components of ICC which they have just read about) and writing exercises, usually for the purpose of isolating and reproducing the key elements of a recently tackled written text or for self-reflection in terms of personal methodology decisions (e.g. learning block 4).

Furthermore, as the course progresses, the trainees are given tasks that engage them in meticulously planning and preparing learning units which they will have to present in a whole-group synchronous session. Learning block 5, for instance, gives a very general instruction, namely, to set up a listening practice activity that should not take up more than 10 minutes. It then supplies the trainees with a checklist they must pay attention to when designing the unit. This “to-do” list forces the trainees to reflect very precisely on the suitability of their activities in view of the intended addressees, the rationale behind their particular methodological

choices, the pedagogic reason for choosing the specific technologies etc. In short, the trainees are required to demonstrate that they have internalised and can apply what they have dealt with under their own direction.

4.3 Synchronous group sessions

Synchronous (whole-)group sessions are a part of every learning block and are intended to give the trainees an opportunity to reflect on and discuss the contents they have come across in the specific learning unit. These sessions thus function as a means for trainees to receive as well as to give to their fellow trainees some feedback and to deepen their understanding through collaborative efforts. As was mentioned in the previous subsection, the activities that the trainees have to initially work on their own (such as observing lessons and learning about teaching methodology, ICC and various teaching technologies) will be picked up on in this setting and critically discussed.

The whole-group sessions are naturally conducted in virtual classrooms and inevitably involve the utilisation of a great variety of live online tools and options like text chatting, screen sharing, audio-conferencing whiteboarding etc. They provide the ideal “playground” for the trainees to access and use their thus far theoretical knowledge about live online teaching. It is in this setting that trainees give their “mock” sessions or rather, self-prepared little teaching units. The same goes for work that was produced in peer-to-peer activities.

4.4 Asynchronous online discussion forum

The course forum is a place where all participants of a block can ask questions of any kind - both of an administrative as well as content-related nature - or instigate a discussion on a subject of their choice. At the beginning of every learning block, the trainees’ attention is drawn to the existence as well as the functions of this institution. The trainees are moreover reminded to constantly check up on the forum, as the block’s tutor also chooses this medium to keep his/her students updated. The asynchronous discussion forum therefore serves as a convenient and time-saving device to maintain effective planning and cooperation between trainees and tutors.

4.5 Synchronous peer-to-peer collaboration

Peer-to-peer activities are a further omnipresent feature of every learning block. For reasons of clarity, the definition of this kind of activity as given in learning block 2 will follow: “Peer-to-peer activities are activities, during which you meet your fellow trainees or peers in the group in a more private online setting. Sometimes you will meet in pairs, sometimes as triads”. As the same paragraph subsequently points out, the significance of synchronous activities in general is not least founded on the fact that some of the most important and basic live online teaching and learning tools are of a synchronous nature and can only be tried out with a partner.

Peer-to-peer activities begin early on in the course, learning block 1 requiring the trainees to utilise this option for system check and getting to know one another informally. Instant

messaging is already introduced in the first block in the obligatory “Tools” (i.e. technologies) section, to cut the path for ongoing activities and interaction of this type.

Learning blocks 2 and 3 already induce the trainees to delve into the yet unknown live online environment, by requiring them to use instant messaging in combination with whiteboarding to rehearse a classroom activity for subsequent presentation in class. Other peer-to-peer activities include preparing demanding classroom exercises, trying out and using only recently introduced technologies like wikis, audio recordings etc. The trainees are constantly reminded to discuss the rationale behind their jointly made classroom-procedural decisions. Peer-to-peer sessions therefore also require the trainees to constantly reflect on and discuss all methodological and other choices they are making. Learning block 7, for instance, engages the trainees in creating and acting in a role-play in which they must also draw on aspects of ICC they have come across in the course, therefore using this type of activity to cover intercultural issues in close cooperation as well.

5 Evaluation of the LANCELOT Training Programme

This evaluation section focuses on five main dimensions: the learning management system InLearn, the fulfilment of the propagated aims and objectives, the balance between theory and practice, compliance with principles of good practice and overall efficiency.

5.1 The learning management system InLearn

The design of the LANCELOT learning management system (LMS) InLearn is decidedly user-friendly as it is refreshingly plain, task-oriented and transparent in terms of its foci. The page-specific content is without exception laid out in the spacious centre of the page. Above the main text in the centre, users find a bar with links to the rest of the pages belonging to the content unit that the trainees are currently working on. In the right corner, the trainees find hyperlinks by the use of which they can proceed with the learning block or go back to the previous page. To supply users with further orientation, a table of contents of the learning block with the headings of the different units is situated to the left of the centre.

Learning block 8, for instance, consists of an overall of 33 web pages. These are subdivided into eight units, such as “Introduction to Learning Block 8”, “Course Forum”, “Lesson Observation” etc., all listed on the left of each page of the block. As pointed out earlier, each unit is subdivided into several pages, e.g. “Lesson Observation” consisting of “Orientation” and “Scenario”. While these titles are situated above the centre and effectively present the users with all constituent parts of the unit, taking a look at the table of contents will inform them about the part of the particular unit in the block. The trainees are thus also given the chance to move to a different unit of the block whenever they feel like it, by simply clicking on the headings in the headings table.

The structure and arrangement of the platform is therefore of unquestionable pedagogic value for the user. They can constantly situate the particular page they are working on in the overarching structure of the block and can easily navigate between pages and units. What is more, by refraining from overloading the pages with unnecessary and potentially confusing

additional links, and by, instead, sticking to the inclusion of all titles and links which are directly relevant to the block, transparency and comprehensibility of purpose are guaranteed.

5.2 Fulfilment of the training objectives

The different learning blocks share a strong orientation towards all the aforementioned objectives of the LANCELOT training programme (see section 3).

Every block is partially dedicated to systematically exploring the role of the live online language teachers, including their responsibilities, potential difficulties and the necessity of continuous personal progress. The earlier described “lesson observation” activities assist the trainees in gaining insight into live online sessions at work and require them to exchange their impressions and conclusions with fellow trainees in the form of forum contributions and writing exercises. It is thus reasonable to assume that the programme will induce the participants to acquire a growing awareness of the aspects and demands of their future role.

Besides satisfying this more theoretical aim, the LANCELOT programme gradually introduces the trainees to various technologies that will play an indispensable part in their new position. The technologies introduced become increasingly complex, starting with an introduction to the handling of and the potential of operating instant messaging in learning block 1 and subsequently familiarising the trainees with more demanding devices, like screen sharing and white boarding. Apart from supplying the trainees with picture-supported step-by-step instructions of how to acquire and use the tool in question, they are constantly required to reflect and comment on the pedagogical value and potential of their use in online learning sessions. This fact is of great significance, since it underlines the programme’s aim to not only convey the technical know-how of how to operate the technologies in isolation, but to let the teacher understand their potential in the light of pedagogical and didactical considerations.

The third explicitly formulated aim of the programme being to facilitate a trainee’s realisation of the significance of intercultural communicative competence and its relevance for purposeful language teaching, all blocks contain textual input and subsequent activities on this subject. Apart from requiring the trainees to engage in multiple self-reflective activities on ICC, the inclusion of permanent discussions of all received input with fellow trainees in peer-to-peer interaction as well as group sessions is bound to have the desired effect, namely, to supply the trainees with a heightened understanding of the components, facets, issues and importance for language teaching of ICC.

At the beginning of every lesson observation task, the trainees are reminded to always consider and re-consider their recently formed opinions and ideas about live online teaching in the view of new examples. Indeed, throughout the whole programme, whether working on teaching methodologies or intercultural issues, the trainees are explicitly informed that some of their attitudes might be subject to change. This is naturally aimed at helping the trainees to become and remain open-minded to new teaching and learning insights and new experiences.

In line with a world of constantly changing political realities, the didactic aim in the field of language learning is therefore to assist the trainees to develop an awareness of all areas of their competencies that contain space for improvement. Besides informing the users of the

inevitably transient character of their knowledge and skills in this blatant fashion, the structure of the programme alone should guarantee the trainees' constant reflection on and re-organisation as well as an ever-increasing refinement and enlargement of their qualifications.

Since each block provides the trainees with more information on all important strands of live online teaching, i.e. methodology, ICC and technologies, the trainees cannot but rebuild and enlarge their repertoire of experiences and skills and try to wove earlier acquired knowledge and more recent knowledge together. This is clearly in line with one of the quoted aims, i.e. to enable trainees to develop an analytical and reflective attitude towards their development as live online language teachers.

To discuss the last aim, the programme is ultimately intented to enable trainees to put what they have come across in the learning course into practice in the form of conducting synchronous online language sessions. At this stage, it is probably not necessary to recapitulate the advantages and opportunities the course offers the trainees in their quest for becoming live online teachers in addition to their already acquired professional qualifications. Suffice it to say that the depiction of the LANCELOT programme as given so far should make it clear that the programme is indeed the appropriate vehicle by which to achieve this objective insofar as it offers the trainees:

- numerous opportunities for observation of and reflection on live online teaching in different settings;
- pedagogically suitable scientific theoretical input on all essential constituent elements of live online teaching;
- ample opportunity for practising everything new alone as well as in conjunction with fellow trainees;
- the chance to gradually take over more responsibility for their teaching choices in terms of fixing objectives, contents and media.

5.3 Balance between theory and practice

As mentioned earlier on, every learning block requires the trainees to think about, write about, apply and discuss the block subjects on their own and/or with their fellow trainees. The more specific description of the exercises as given above in itself underlines that LANCELOT does not treat the trainees as a passive recipient of input, but rather expects them to evidence their involvement in the programme by becoming an active part of it. The planning and conducting of lesson activities to be presented to the group demand the trainees to transpose what they have learned about the aspects of live online teaching theoretically to a practical level. The trainees are thus forced to draw on recent methodological impulses, to consider their steps in the light of ICC, and to make choices on and integrate the use of tools that they deem likely to further their didactical aims.

Blocks 11 and 12 are in fact entirely dedicated to letting the trainees conduct a live online session in order to give their tutors and fellow trainees insight into their personal competence level. "Assessed Teaching Practice", as these last two blocks are titled, is thus the most obvious evidence of a doubtless adequate proportion of theory and practice as realised in the

LANCELOT training programme. These last blocks thus mark the final stage of the programme which gradually and gently guides the trainees towards a level of competence which eventually allows them to choose from a great repertoire of skills and devices and identifies them as factually qualified live online language teachers.

Concluding this section, it should furthermore be pointed out, that the structure of the learning units characteristically entails both the learning about a particular knowledge item (theory) as well as learning how to apply it (practice).

Block 5, for instance, contains a unit named “Awareness (ICC)”. It consists of the following pages: “[Orientation] [Reflection] [Task] [Overview] [How to] [Explanation] [Glossary] [References] [Resources]”. Whilst some pages require the trainees to engage in activities about the subject (in this case, rating different types of behaviour on a scale of ordinariness, noting down common stereotypes about one’s culture and playing a web-based cultural-awareness game), the others give the trainees theoretical input on the subject, like discussing its scientific background. Glossary and References are self-explanatory. The page titled “How to”, is more practical in nature, since it actually tackles the issue of how one can change one’s cultural awareness. Although this is still not equivalent to the “practicing” of it, this description demonstrates that in addition to the already discussed activities, even the more theoretical parts of the units have an element of practice in them.

5.4 Principles of good practice

Autonomous learning

In terms of autonomous learning, LANCELOT is exemplary in many aspects. For one thing, trainees can choose their individual pace when going through the course. Each block is designed to be completed within one week, the overall time estimate ranging between 10 and 15 hours per block. This leaves the trainees with a marked degree of freedom in deciding when and how fast to work.

The trainees are also asked to search for and work on such articles and contributions on block subjects that appear interesting and relevant to them. Instead of spoon-feeding the trainees with pre-selected materials, the latter themselves are empowered to make their own decisions about their training material and according to their own predilections. Also, the trainees are thus made aware of the relevance of their personal opinions, a fact which can stimulate their motivation to continue the work process.

Every learning unit which confronts the trainees with input on a subject dealing either with teaching methodology, intercultural communicative competence or technologies, contains a page with the addresses of all articles and materials discussed and presented in the unit. By adding the various texts in block-specific resources data banks, the trainees are given the option to further deepen their knowledge in their free time (while some reading is of course compulsory this is not so in the case of all available resources).

Furthermore, the trainees themselves decide when and how to carry out the peer-to-peer activities, the only restraints on this type of liberty being the awareness of the overall objectives to be achieved in the course of the activities and fixed times for presentation in the group session. The same more or less applies to forum contributions. Besides there being

deadlines about when to contribute, the trainees can time their post in correspondence with their impression of their own competence in the specific field.

Importantly, the particular activity to be carried out in a group session is usually not dictated by the tutor. It is often up to the trainees to decide on the content, addressees, form and tools to make up their activity or indeed whole session (blocks 11 and 12). The trainees are thus induced to research, plan and conduct in accordance with their own preferences and interests, as long as their decisions are based on a solid methodological ground.

Authentication

The activities the trainees engage in are authentic insofar, as they are highly relevant to them in both their role as teachers in particular and responsible and open-minded individuals in general. The learning units incorporate scientifically based up-to-date texts and expertise on various aspects of modern (live online) teaching methodology and thus address the trainees in their professional function as teachers. The perusal and discussion of these unmodified authentic texts, which convey further insight into the basis and facets of their profession, directly contributes to their process of life-long learning, a process it is their duty to pursue.

Besides contributions to pedagogy and didactics, LANCELOT provides the trainees with texts on ICC and technology which are just as authentic and relevant in their nature. By addressing contemporary issues of paramount importance such as the development of intercultural competence and an increasing proficiency in using tools designed to break down the impact geographical barriers, LANCELOT gives its users the chance to work with meaningful material in meaningful activities.

Getting to know and eventually learning to use the virtual classroom and its constituent devices to establish contact with individuals all over the world and then to cooperatively pursue lifelong (intercultural) learning appears to be as authentic as possible in the century of the global village.

Collaborative learning

Peer-to-peer activities, the course forum and group sessions are an integral part of every learning block. Collaborative learning in these different forms is stimulated, practiced, and reflected on throughout every block and indeed appears to be the intended gist of the approach. LANCELOT thus clearly pays tribute to the recognised demand for cooperation among trainees by repeatedly giving them the opportunity to exchange information, try out technologies and prepare teaching activities together. While the more specific insight gained by the trainees might be that live online teaching cannot be performed by an individual alone and must rest on multiple pairs of shoulders, the overall aim of LANCELOT seems to be of a more general didactic type, namely to make the users realise that any individual's lifelong learning process is facilitated by collaborating with his/her environment.

5.5 Efficiency

The course handbook informs the user that the course takes place over 12 weeks, from which it follows that each block is meant to be completed within one week. Under the

heading “planning your study time”, an estimate of the required time demands is given: each block is intended to take up 10 hours of the trainee’s time, with an allowance for a further 30 hours (spread over the course) for assessment activities expected to be made by the trainee. As a consequence, an overall 150 hours over twelve is calculated with. Some further information as to the exact distribution of hours to different types of activities is given in block 2 (whilst introducing peer-to-peer activities):

Throughout the LANCELOT course, the weekly activities are grouped in the following three main activities:

- 2 hrs synchronous group sessions
- 2 hrs synchronous peer-to-peer activities
- 6 hrs asynchronous reading and reflective writing exercises

As far as the latter type of activities is concerned, the estimate appears to be somewhat accurate. However, estimates of this type are inevitably of a rough nature only, as the pace of reading, writing, and reflecting are bound to vary greatly between individuals. The degree of conscientiousness trainees are willing to employ when carrying out the exercises is a further factor to influence the equation. Likewise, free web-based research may turn out to take more or less time than is expected, depending on the availability of relevant materials and/or the capability of the individual to intuitively tell a good text from a bad.

As regards the other two estimates, it can probably be assumed that the tutor’s pedagogic, didactic and administrative expertise will swiftly establish the accurate pace and level of group or peer-to-peer interactions to secure the meetings of the given 2-hour estimate.

Peer-to-peer activities possibly underlie the same variables that apply to individual work processes, but there might be a greater likelihood of finishing work within the given interval, since trainees will have to make compromises, must learn to cooperate, i.e. will be affected by positive peer pressure to work effectively.

6 The LANCELOT Trainee Assessment

The evaluation of The LANCELOT trainee assessment focuses on the two key assessment tools involved:

- Development Portfolio (40%)
- Observed Live Online Teaching Practice (60%)

6.1 Description of the LANCELOT trainee assessment

Development Portfolio

The Development Portfolio is 40% of the overall final mark. It is essentially a collection of work a trainee has undertaken, with two additional pieces of reflective writing to be submitted at the end of learning block 5, and again at the end of learning block 10. The trainee must complete at least 80% of the work in order to fulfil the minimum submission requirement.

The results that are evidenced in the Development Portfolio belong to tasks that were designed and implemented to help the trainee attain the formulated learning outcomes. A great number of the exercises whose results are documented in the Development Portfolio are peer-to-peer activities, but there are also activities that must be carried out individually. Beginning in block 2 with the setting up of an ice-breaker activity based on explicated methodological principles, other tasks of the programme include developing material for and giving an outline of a short language teaching unit, producing short pieces of reflective writing on general topics like aspects of synchronous online teaching, noting down a table of writing activities suited to the live online teaching environment, preparing a role-play, creating an audio recording of a dialogue and writing notes on the cultural roles to initiate the conversations between strangers.

In view of the earlier discussed LANCELOT training objectives, the tasks documented in the portfolio thus doubtless are relevant. Reflecting on ICC, creating units to be tried out in the group session, trying out new technologies all clearly serve the acquisition of the focal competencies. The role-play in block 7, for instance, gives out the directive to take into account intercultural issues. It thus covers all relevant emphases of the programme, namely the utilisation of typical live online tools for creating a methodologically sound collaborative piece of work, which chooses as its content an aspect of ICC.

The criteria for evaluation are adequate, as they are clearly modelled on the different types of skills the trainee ought to have acquired in the course of going through the programme. There are four areas of assessment, namely “Pedagogy and Methodology”, “Analytical and Reflective Skills”, Intercultural Communicative Competence” and “Technology”. The criteria formulated for acquiring a “Good Pass” (the other two options being “Pass” and “Fail”), all in all constitute a fleshed out version of the formulated learning aims of the course and therefore are appropriate.

The formulation does leave no doubt as to one of the main objectives of the programme, namely inducing the trainees to develop an awareness of the fact that all tackled competencies must be seen as interwoven and can only fulfil their potential as long as they realised their relevance for one another. The trainees are expected to not only reproduce whatever they have been taught in isolation, but to demonstrate a differentiated and reflective understanding of all strands of live online teaching and their interconnectivity. This expectation does not seem unreasonable at all in view of the fact that the programme not only very carefully and gradually familiarised the trainees with all its foci, but also permanently required them to and reflect on their learning process – on their own as well as in cooperation with others.

Observed Live Online Teaching Practice

The Observed Live Online Teaching Practice is 60% of the overall final mark. In order to receive a favourable assessment of their live online teaching practice, the trainees must prove their worth on a number of levels. They must demonstrate that they are in possession of social skills (“Professional Values and Practice”); are competent as a foreign language teachers (“Language Subject Knowledge and Understanding”); understand the significance of ICC in a classroom context as well as in general (“ICC Subject Knowledge and Understanding”); are competent in handling live online teaching tools (“Technology Subject

Knowledge and Understanding"); possess adequate lesson planning skills ("Lesson Planning and Target Setting"); know how to choose and use appropriate learning materials ("Teaching and Learning Materials"); and are capable of teaching circumspectly and effectively, i.e. drawing on different methods, creating an adequate learning environment, involving all learners etc. ("Teaching"). On first sight, this checklist might appear slightly disproportionate to what one individual can demonstrate within one short training unit and thus potentially overwhelming.

However, a closer look informs the observer that this requirement scheme is meticulously modelled on all ground covered in the course of the programme. Good and respectful (virtual classroom) behaviour is not only touched upon on a frequent basis in the theoretical bits on ICC, but is also practiced in endless hours of collaborative efforts in groups of two, three or including all participants. Whereas a certain level of foreign language and foreign language teaching proficiency can be taken for granted irrespective of the programme, the next requirement on the list, being a sufficiently profound understanding of ICC and its importance is clearly reasonable in light of the distinguished status it is assigned throughout the programme. The expectation of technological know-how is justified on the same grounds, as the course has provided the trainees with information about significant teaching technologies, has informed them about their didactic potential and given them opportunities to practice their use. The three remaining aspects appear inseparable, as the conceptualisation of a lesson, the selection of suitable teaching materials and the realisation of these preparatory activities and skills go hand in hand. Again, therefore, the trainees' final performance is nothing but the logical culmination of the intricate and multilayered learning process the programme initiated.

Even more than the Development Portfolio, the training session expects the trainees to blend and connect the different types of knowledge and competencies they have acquired in one teaching scenario. It therefore demands more than a lifeless rehearsal of everything the trainees have been taught so far, but necessitates the application of knowledge in a scenario that is modelled on life, in that all elements of a learner-oriented and thus pedagogically successful live online teaching session have to support and complement each other. The criteria as formulated in the course book and given to the trainees therefore serve the function of the programme and adequately reflect its aims.

6.2 Evaluation of the LANCELOT trainee assessment

Feedback objectives and approach

The feedback in reference to both the Development Portfolio as well as to the Observed Online Teaching Practice is apparently motivated by two aims. On the one hand, the trainees are informed about their areas of strength in view of the fixed assessment criteria. Rather than just ticking off the points the trainees have successfully integrated, the assessor applies the formulated criterion to a particular piece of work the trainees have performed. The trainees are thus shown which of their actions and choices are to be seen as successful transformations of theoretical principles into practice. The second feedback objective appears to be to respectfully inform the trainees of those fields of their learning process and stock of knowledge that leave some space for improvement. While one trainee is, for

instance, informed in the Development Portfolio assessment that his overall performance was transparent and successful in its aims and theoretical basis, the Teaching Practice assessment points out that the integration of a particular exercise was not sufficiently explained so as to convey its intended purpose.

Both Development Portfolio and Teaching Practice assessment feedback are clearly aimed at covering all pivotal aspects of the programme. Whereas Development Portfolio feedback is given in the form of two written texts which is produced by two tutors so as to ensure the inclusion and discussion of all relevant aims, Teaching Practice feedback is given rather in the form of a tick off list, with accompanying statements further specifying the foundation of the tutor's view and judgement.

The terminology and structure used in the comments clearly represents the tutor's working off and application of all chosen assessment criteria. By mentioning all pros and cons of a trainee's performance and by referring the trainee's practical choices back to the objectives and learning outcomes as formulated in advance, the tutors unambiguously base their verdict on a reflected analysis of the criteria and the possible shape of their realisation.

Diagnostic value of the feedback

Raising an awareness in the trainees of their strengths as well as weaknesses appears the only way to stimulate (the maintenance of) a process of lifelong learning for live online language teaching in particular, or in fact, for any type of learning. Praise – where adequate – will retrospectively assure the trainees of the usefulness of having completed the course and will give them some hard facts to evidence their successful learning process. This is hoped to balance out potentially occurring emotions of disappointment when being informed about current shortcomings and will give the trainees the incentive to work on their less refined skills. By choosing a detailed written account as the medium, the trainees are given a specific account, which they can always refer back to as a point of orientation when endeavouring to isolate and work on weaknesses.

The given feedback does not only inform the trainees of shortcomings in terms of a choice's lack of didactic transparency, but discusses more technical issues as well. In one instance of feedback given for teaching practice, the trainee's understanding and implementation of teaching tools is made the subject of discussion. Discussing the assessment criterion "Technology Subject Knowledge and Understanding", the trainee is criticised for choosing an activity whose underlying aim remained unclear. Besides, the tutor notes that it took the chosen medium a long time to upload, resulting in the procrastination of actual activities. On a more positive note, the trainee is told that the integration of the particular activity was a solid idea and that she displayed a convincing degree of technological know-how. Nevertheless, she is also reminded to pay more attention to didactic clarity and a consideration of technical issues in the future.

This example serves as a good and representative portrayal of the chosen feedback form and its diagnostic potential. The trainee is (once again) made aware of the need to reflect on any activity and teaching choice thoroughly in advance in terms of its purpose and issues of realisation. Also, the trainee is now aware that her handling of live online tools is more than decent according to generally recognised standards and will assist her when conducting lessons. The feedback she received can consequently serve as encouragement to utilise her

technological competence more effectively in future online teaching scenarios, by attempting to further refine her understanding and analysis of didactical decisions and their realisation. She is thus stimulated to make use of one of her recognised strengths to work on areas that so far require some further investment, as she is aware of.

Finally, it should be noted for completeness sake that the tone of the given feedback is always encouraging and constructive. Points of criticism are without exception presented in such a fashion as to ensure the trainees that a particular weak area is only one aspect of many in becoming and being a live online teacher and should thus not be blown out of proportion in its significance. This should contribute to raising the odds of a successful continuation of the lifelong learning process.