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The utility of a blended learning module in EILCs

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Abstract

In the last two decades, EU mobility programs, such as Leonardo da Vinci and Erasmus, have placed great importance on students' mobility. Around 31 European institutions take part in Erasmus programme and about 150 000 students per year participate since it started in 1987. Erasmus programme functions include support for students studying abroad and their linguistic preparation, and support for universities / higher education institutions intensive programs, such as Erasmus Intensive Language Courses (EILCs), for minority second languages. These EILCs, whether funded or not funded by the National Agencies of the Lifelong Learning EU programme, are offered by language centres of higher education institutions across Europe.

This paper is based on the assumption that a tripartite modular structure is an appropriate pedagogical approach to respond to the diverse needs and motivations of students enrolled in an intermediate level EILC of Portuguese as a Foreign Language. The first module should be for interactive learning, focused on the group and on the grammatic contents; the second one should be a blended learning module, focused on each student and on the materials specifically provided, and the third one should be a language and local culture immersion module, focused on the local culture and on multiple authentic communicative situations. We suggest the blended learning module should be complementary to the interactive one and it may be distributed by a learning management system, lessons for the group together and others for individual students.

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In this paper we also present some results of a study case on the evaluation, through a questionnaire, of EILC classroom opinion about issues of the blended learning module, like their linguistic progresses, the utility of the module, the complexity, number and usefulness of the proposed activities, and also the students' motivation to work and other aspects.

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