The European League for Non-Western Studies and E-learning

Alessandra Corda (Leiden), Janus Oomen (Amsterdam) and Helma Pasch (Cologne) 2006

1. Introduction

Leiden's Faculty of Arts invited on May 20th the members of the ELNWS for a workshop on e-learning for Non-Western studies. The aim of the workshop was to take a closer look at the possibilities of e-learning as a means of realizing co-operation between our universities.

During our discussions, and looking back on the past academic years, we attempted to position our own academic community on the Internet, in the sense of 'looking for, finding and putting it on, or giving it a location' in the omnipresent Internet.

In order to investigate the ways in which e-learning can be used as a tool to stimulate European co-operation within the field of Non-Western studies, Leiden's Faculty of Arts rewards one initiative between two or more European universities of the ELNWS with financial support.

Among the Universities that have joined the ELNWS the following were represented:

- Leiden University
- K.U. Leuven
- Heidelberg University
- SOAS, London
- University of Koeln
- Ca' Foscari University in Venice
- University of Muenster
- Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes
- Universität Wien

While Japanese and Chinese studies were represented by a fairly big group of participants, Near East and African linguistics were represented by small groups.

The participants in the discussion group on African languages were:

- Alessandra Corda, Leiden University, who moderated the discussion and provided the minutes
- Jean de Dieu Karangwa, INALCO
- Hannes Hirzel, University of Zürich
- Lutz Marten, SOAS
- Maarten Mous, Leiden University
- Janus Oomen, University of Amsterdam, Medical Anthropology and Sociology Unit
- Helma Pasch, University of Köln. See also Afrikanistik online

2. Minutes

Hannes: Experience with distance learning, development of a CD-ROM for language learning. Also CD-ROM for interdisciplinary subjects: history, linguistics and anthropology. Basel and Zürich are involved; There are meetings every two weeks. Choice for CD-ROMs also influenced by the limited web access in Africa. Now this is changing. Experience with video recording for Swahili. Lesson learned: Use professionals to make video recordings.

Maarten: Departments of African Studies cannot offer more than 2-3 languages. It is impossible to send the students abroad to learn languages in the BA-MA, they do not have the time to travel. CD-ROMS could help providing resources.

Hannes: There should be a combination of e-learning and learning in one location (e.g. Summer schools).

Helma: Development of online materials can be in conflict with publishers interests. Publishers do not like the idea that books in which they have invested and which are used by students are substituted by online materials.

Alessandra: Thinking of language learning materials with interactive exercises, CD-ROMS can be a better solution than web based materials, because students have to pay for the Internet connection. The development of online language courses is time consuming and expensive. However, there is a clear need for language materials for beginners. Other projects are maybe less expensive and time consuming. These projects may address a more general type of cooperation, e.g. writing essays together and giving feedback to each other product.

Helma: Experience with e-learning platform to cooperate with an African university (Brazzaville). Topic: Metaphore. Students in Brazzaville had to collect information about metaphores in their own language and then write an essay. Helma was the supervisor.

Alessandra: Students could cooperate in writing papers.

Helma: If you ask students to read other students' papers they will not do it. You must create a situation in which they have to work together. Students should be given resources by the teachers, e.g. bibliographies.

Janus: What about inequality? One student may be more active than another.

Helma: You can ask the students to use a different text colour, so you can see which student contributed which part of a text.

2.1. Suggestion

We should ask students to give feedback to other students' papers.

The group decides to focus on the production of digital resources for language learning. First question: On which basis should a language be chosen?

Possible criteria:

- It is taught at a couple of universities.
- There is a big community of speakers in Europe.
- Availability of internet resources (e.g. Newspapers).
- Number of students interested (Target group).
- Availability of teachers who are willing to develop materials.
- Availability of technical support.
- Possible languages: Somali, Akan, Hausa, Amharic, Sotho, Bambara.

Other points that were mentioned:

- Combination between e-learning and face-to face contact (Summer courses)
- Instruction language depends on the language to be taught
- Digital portfolio as an assessment instrument
- Full credited course
- Examination
- Online tutoring
- Focus of potential language courses: Grammar and vocabulary

2.2. Homework

Jean and Hannes will prepare a questionnaire to be sent to all colleagues, based on the list of languages taught in Europe prepared by Jean.

Question 1: Which languages are taught at your institution on a permanent basis, and at which level?

Question 2: Which languages - not offered at your institution - would be interesting for your students?

3. LERU

The University of Cologne and SOAS, London inquired for membership in the LERU (League of European Research Universities), which was founded in 2002 as an association of twelve research-intensive universities sharing the values of high-quality teaching within an environment of internationally competitive research.

Present members of LERU are:

- [The University of Cambridge](#)
- [The University of Edinburgh](#)
- [The Université de Genève](#)
- [The Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg](#)
- [The Helsingin yliopisto](#)
- [The Universiteit Leiden](#)
- [The Katholieke Universiteit Leuven](#)
- [The Università degli Studi di Milano](#)
- [The Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München](#)
- [The University of Oxford](#)
- [The Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm](#)
- [The Université Louis Pasteur Strasbourg](#)