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Online ESP Learning through H5P© Project Activities

A Digital Opportunity for Organic Enterprises

Abstract

Within an increasing use of ITCs in modern language learning and teaching, technology has proven to be particularly appropriate for English for Specific Purposes courses and adult learners. If the Council of Europe emphasized the importance of learners as social agents, the use of ITCs in language learning puts them at the centre of the learning process, allowing the users not only to consume digital contents, but also to produce an output of it: as “prosumers,” digital learners self-determine their autonomy and embrace a new learning environment, where content is shared and knowledge is co-constructed.

This article will present a project launched in 2020 by the University of Calabria, where the synergy between the University Language Centre and the H5P© software has created an open-access language-learning opportunity that encourages learners’ autonomy, fostering their motivation and promoting the scaffolding of new knowledge and skills useful for employability.

Keywords: *English for Specific Purposes, University Language Centers, autonomous self-study, motivation, H5P©*

1. A “Smart” project

In February 2020, the Department of Culture, Education and Society (DiCES) of the University of Calabria (UNICAL), in Italy, launched a research project named “Smart Languages for Smart Enterprises” (SLfSE),¹ whose aim is to meet the language learning needs of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Southern Italy. In particular, the project aims to encourage a positive attitude towards English language learning among micro-enterprises in

¹ Scientific Coordinator: Carmen Argondizzo. The research project was part of a wider project funded by the Regional Government, Project n. 10.5: “Calabria Alta Formazione—PAC 2014-2020”; Area: *Smart Manufacturing—Smart solutions*. POR Calabria 2014-2020, Fesr-Fse, “il futuro è un lavoro quotidiano.”

the South of Italy involved in organic farming and viticulture.² After having identified the companies to be involved in the project, a needs analysis was carried out in summer 2020. To acquire information on their competences, gaps and needs related to the English language, the companies were invited to answer to an online survey, which also investigated on the respondents' knowledge about Web-learning in general and English language materials available online in particular.

The results of the survey confirmed the relevance—and urgency—of the project's purpose itself, which is to provide high-quality learning resources targeted at key-language competences relevant for employability, economic growth, and effective communication. In fact, although most of the respondents declared that they often have to deal with English because of their business, they also admitted to the total absence of English training courses provided by their companies. From the survey it emerged that advertising, company websites and communication with clients are areas where English is rarely used or could be used better. The study also revealed a weak internationalization of the enterprises interviewed, and probably their scarce interest, or difficulty, in reaching such internationalization. Furthermore, the survey highlighted a lack of uniformity and regulation within the companies regarding international relations figures, with only a 15% of permanent professional figures with specific language skills, plus a scarce awareness of the respondents regarding the great amount of open access language learning resources online, although acquainted with and interested in online learning. Not only did the above-mentioned results of the survey disclose important elements of the attitude of organic micro-enterprises in Southern Italy towards the English language and Web-learning,³ they also provided the basis for outlining the professional needs and interests of the respondents. Such needs and interests (summarized in the table below) were subsequently confirmed during an online meeting organized between the survey respondents and the researchers with the purpose of exchanging views and of creating a relation of trust.

² The general aims and the specific objectives of the project, as well as its methodology and the choice of the business field to be involved in the research, are widely described Argondizzo, Carmen and Alessandra Ficarra. "Smart Languages for Smart Enterprises: Encouraging a Positive Language-Learning Attitude among Calabrian Micro-Enterprises." *Centri Linguistici di Ateneo: strategie d'intervento nei processi di comunicazione interlinguistica e interculturale*. Edited by Michele Bevilacqua, Rosario Pellegrino e Valeria Anna Vaccaro. Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 2021. 105-137.

³ A general attitude of scepticism, mistrust and laziness emerged from their answers, see Argondizzo and Ficarra 2021, 128.

Skills	Areas	Topics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Products Presentation (e.g., for international trade fairs). - Telephone Conversation. - Listening and Oral Interaction. - Writing (email, report, fax). - Oral Presentation about the Company (information about its structure, strategies, mission). - Reading of Specific Material. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marketing and Administration. - Research and Development. - Environment and Sustainability. - Science and Technology. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Food and Drink. - Cooking and Catering. - Animals and Breeding. - Crops and Plants.

Tab. 1: Skills, areas and topics emerged from the SLfSE needs analysis survey (Argondizzo and Ficarra 2021, 129)

In order to fill the gaps that emerged from the needs analysis survey, the SLfSE project, supervised by the scientific coordinator Carmen Argondizzo, aims to combine the learning potential of existing open online language resources with original English for Specific Purposes (ESP) material, focused on the business field of the companies involved. The material will be available in an open-access digital platform, thus offering its beneficiaries the opportunity to grow as autonomous learners while acquiring skills which will be relevant for their employability. This article will present the contents, activities and methodology of the SLfSE platform, starting from an overview of the theoretical background of the use of technology in ESP learning and the topical importance of autonomous learning—especially for professionals—to go further into detail and describe the potentiality of H5P© software in creating interactive English language contents.

2. Theoretical background—the digital choice in ESP

In the last two years, the Covid-19 health emergency has very much accelerated the use of distance learning and virtual learning platform, already encouraged in the last two decades by the increasing use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) (Mishra and Koehler 2006) and by the phenomenon of globalization. Today Learning Technology (LT) represents both a challenge and a great opportunity for teachers and learners. Modern language learning in its digital experience is characterized by inspiring elements, such as a new flexibility in language teaching and an increasing awareness of learners who—especially in self-study paths and courses—contribute to the co-construction of knowledge by self-determining their learning process (Vaccaro 2021). While the next section will address the new role of the learner in the

digital English learning process, in this section the suitability and appropriateness of technology in ESP will be described. Firstly, it is worth mentioning all those digital tools that possibly make language learning one of the most technology-assisted, -improved and -enhanced learning processes compared to others: English language learning websites, Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) programs, presentation software, electronic dictionaries, chatting and email messaging programs, video-clips, MP3 players, video-conference software programs, mobile assisted language learning (MALL), and so on (Nomass 2013). Secondly, the Internet itself, after the conception of the Web 2.0, which emphasizes the importance of user-generated content and the sharing of information, can be considered a big opportunity in assisting and enhancing language learning at all ages and levels of education (Pelet 2014). Warschauer (2002) analysed how the Internet can represent a chance for learners to network in academic communities, from the classroom up to a broader academic reality.

In ESP learning, the Internet plays a decisive role, too, providing learners with a large quantity of authentic and specific material. Moreover, thanks to the current trend in sharing information and resources (Web 2.0), it also provides almost unlimited access to all types of texts and content, giving learners the possibility to read, listen to and practice on material related to their specific discipline (Arnó-Macià 2012). Recent research has in fact confirmed how ESP learning is a necessity mostly shared by adults, who need to acquire language skills in order to deal with workplace or professional situations (Sifakis 2003). ESP found its place as early as in the 1960s, expanding and contracting its definition over time: going back to Hutchinson and Waters, it is worth mentioning the statement which is the most evocative and comprehensive about ESP: “[t]ell me what you need English for and I will tell you the English that you need” (1987, 8). Ten years later, Dudley-Evans gave a more detailed definition of ESP, divided into absolute and variable characteristics—to mention the first and absolute one, ESP is meant to meet the specific needs of the learners (1998). While the definitions of ESP are manifold in their details, the features which are likely to be used to describe it are “needs-based,” “pragmatic,” “efficient,” “cost-effective” and “functional” (Belcher 2006, 134). The strong practicality inherent to these characteristics entails the need for ESP courses to be developed using authentic and up-to-date materials, while its learner-centered approach (Nunan 2013; 1988) seeks to promote cooperative practice and encourage autonomous study. Under this view, technology has proven to be particularly appropriate for ESP courses, affording the learners the possibility to use interactive learning tools, work on authentic material, interact and collaborate with peers and native speakers, and foster their autonomy in the managing of time and resources during the learning process. Considering open-access and authentic resources, it is interesting to mention a study

by Graddol, indicating that 80% of information available on the Internet is in English (2000). This trend is confirmed by a statistic published in 2021 by W3Techs and *Ethnologue*, via the Hootsuite platform, stating that English is used by 60.4%, or about six million of the top 10 million websites.⁴ However, the same studies also reveal that there are, nowadays, more non-native users of the language than native ones. This leads to new challenges: on the one hand, learners who use the Web to immerse themselves in the language must be aware that they are likely to encounter multiple shades of the English language: from ELF (English as Lingua Franca) to international English, to the idiomatic, simplified, or even inaccurate ones. Teachers and material developers, on the other hand, will have to deal with a wide variety of learners and users in terms of age, nationality, cultural, social and educational background, and so on. Consequently, it becomes urgent for ESP to increasingly take into account the needs and potential of non-native speakers. Nickerson, for instance—in relation to multilingual international business contexts—draws attention to the need to shift focus from competence to strategic communication: i.e., to aim at strategies that are communicatively effective “regardless of whether the speaker/writer is native or non-native” (2005, 369).

This extension in role from learner to user concretized the vision of futurist Alvin Toffler, who in the 1980s had already anticipated the possibility of a fusion of roles between producer and consumer: the prosumer (1987). The transformed digital learning process, in fact, allows learners not only to consume digital content, but also to produce an output from it (Bündgens-Kosten and Schildhauer 2020; Giurgiu and Bârsan 2008). As prosumers, learners are increasingly at the centre of the learning process, where they “are positioned to think and design collaboratively and creatively within a community of practice” (Mills 2010, 2).

Going back to the “needs-based” distinctiveness of ESP, it has been noticed how often the roles of ESP researchers and teachers, or curriculum designers and material developers are blurred: it happens because of the necessity, on ESP courses, to identify learners’ needs before implementing a course or curriculum (Belcher 2006). Likewise, given both the specificity of the contents it deals with and the learners it addresses, the SLfSE platform required a needs assessment first and foremost—as we have seen in the introduction—prior to the choice of content and materials and the design of a study path. This inversion of priorities has led to the consideration of ESP as a materials-driven subject rather than a method-driven one (Master 1997).

⁴ W3Techs (Web Technology Surveys) and the *Ethnologue*, Languages of the World, available at: www.visualcapitalist.com/the-most-used-languages-on-the-internet. All websites last visited on 20/09/2022.

In section number 4 we will see in depth how the ESP language contents and activities chosen for the SLfSE platform vary: from drag and drop activities, aimed at acquiring new vocabulary, to content-based and reproduction of reality tasks,⁵ typical of the communicative approach, aimed at encouraging the active and creative role of learners, promoting their production and construction of new knowledge.

3. Autonomy rhymes with technology: the role of University Language Centres in promoting autonomous self-study

As mentioned above, the more ITCs are used in the teaching and learning process, the less teacher-centred and the more learner-centred the process will be (Parks et al. 2003). Technology is thus creating a fertile ground not only for new possibilities of learners' agency, but also for promoting their autonomy. In its well-known Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), the Council of Europe emphasized the importance of learners as social agents, calling for "a real paradigm shift in both course planning and teaching by promoting learner engagement and autonomy" (2020, 22). The CEFR draws on the concept of autonomous language learning theory, which emerged in the 1970s following the spread of the communicative approach in language teaching. The intuition was to recognise that helping learners to become more autonomous and independent in their studies would lead to an increase in their sense of responsibility and achievement, both in their learning process and in their social life in general (Benson 2001; Little 1991; Holec 1981; Knowles 1975).

Digital language learning offers various opportunities and tools to encourage learners' autonomy: from the self-management of time and contents to the possibilities of practicing the language even outside the formal learning path thanks to emails, blogging, sites surfing, socializing networks, and so on, following one's own pace. Hence digital literacy—reading and writing online—offers a new field of action to foster the autonomy of learners (Barton and Lee 2013) who can take responsibility for their own learning, as "good language learners" (Rubin 1975). Furthermore, the distinctive features of digital and online learning—such as the absence and the expansion of time and space—confer to the learning process a new flexibility and fluidity, which have led some scholars to define it "mobile and nomadic learning" (Cordina, Rambert and Oddou 2017, 10). Not only is this fluid and flexible learning opportunity perfectly suitable for the logistical needs of adults, especially professional ones, but gives learners the

⁵ The "reproduction of reality" tasks recreate situations that native speakers of a language would face in everyday life, such as phoning for information, or answering emails.

possibility to practice language without the anxiety of making mistakes, it would also lower the affective filter that could, as is well known, interfere between the learners and their capability to acquire and internalise new knowledge (Krashen 1981).

Over the past decades, European University Language Centres, too, have been called upon to take up the challenge of digital learning, and today they can boast a complex internal organisation and a wide range of educational solutions, both face-to-face, online and blended. Most importantly, their role as promoters of autonomous learning has been perfectly implemented in their self-study paths and programs, which provide university students with the opportunity to achieve specific linguistic objectives and increase their critical capacity in the self-assessment process. These self-study paths are, moreover, free and accessible to anyone, thus embodying the Universities' role as promulgators of knowledge par excellence.

The University of Calabria Language Centre (CLA UNICAL), for example, offers a comprehensive self-study path. In the dedicated section of the CLA website, learners are welcomed by a presentation of self-study as a “learning philosophy”; the self-study platform, which is user-friendly and easy to navigate, offers an introductory video presentation, while the drop-down menu on the left redirects to a wide range of online material divided by language (English, Italian, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Polish, Arabic) and by CEFR levels and types of activity.⁶

UNICAL, moreover, has also designed and implemented other digital multilingual projects, such as the CMC_E project (Communicating in Multilingual Contexts meets the Enterprises), born as an evolution of the initial CMC (Communicating in Multilingual Contexts), an open access multimedia learning environment developed by a partnership of six European university institutions and offering didactic material in six different languages, with the aim of developing key professional language skills (Argondizzo and Jimenez 2015).⁷ An equally successful project is the platform MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) UNICAL. The project was a product of the integration of three Universities (University of Palermo, University of Calabria, and the

⁶ University of Calabria Language Centre, Self-Study section: www.cla.unical.it/servizi-linguistici/studio-in-autonomia.

⁷ The CMC_E Project (2012, www.cmceproject.it.) was funded by the European Commission LLP, Lingua 2 Action. The University of Calabria (Italy) led as management partner, coordinated by Carmen Argondizzo, while the whole partnership included: University of Calabria Language Centre (Italy), Universidad de Santiago de Compostela (Spain), Instituto Politécnico de Castelo Branco (Portugal), Technicka Univerzita Kosiciach (Slovakia), the London School of Economics and Political Science (UK), Wyzska Szkoła Informatyki Zarzadzania I Administracji (Poland).

University of Naples “L’Orientale”)⁸ and addresses both university students and those who intend to improve their skills in modern languages—specifically, Academic English (B2 level), French (B2 level) and German (A1-A2 levels)—both for professional reasons and for personal education. The objective of the MOOCs UNICAL project is twofold: on the one hand, it aims at developing innovative digital and methodological competences among teachers and instructors; on the other hand, it aims at implementing the learners’ knowledge of modern languages to reach the language level foreseen.⁹

Offering open access self-study materials and programs, both the CMC_E and the MOOCs UNICAL projects fulfil the mission of “lifelong learning,” which is one of the tasks of Italian universities. Operating this way, University Language Centres act as key-facilitators ensuring that students acquire the modern languages knowledge, intercultural skills and aptitude at addressing international audiences required in the world of work (Lehtonen and Sinikka 2009). “Employability,” in fact, has become a priority and key-concept in European universities, and ESP is now more important than ever, since the knowledge of modern languages—and in particular of English—plays a decisive role in a competitive business environment (European Commission 2008).

4. The SLfSE platform—an example of autonomous ESP learning process

4.1 Contents and structure

In a competitive business world, where English confirms itself as the Lingua Franca in multilingual workplaces (Harris and Bargiela-Chiappini 2003), the SLfSE UNICAL project chose to encourage a positive attitude towards English language learning among micro-enterprises of the South of Italy. Specifically, the enterprises selected are involved in organic farming and viticulture. These are two growing sectors often led by young and creative entrepreneurs. Their work is fascinating and challenging at the same time: they use ancient and long-established traditions while advocating for a more ethical and sustainable future (Argondizzo and Ficarra 2021).¹⁰

⁸ The MOOCs UNICAL project was coordinated by Sabine Hoffman (University of Palermo), Carmen Argondizzo (University of Calabria), and Federico Corradi (University of Naples “L’Orientale”).

⁹ www.moocs.unical.it.

¹⁰ In choosing to promote language awareness and employability through free online didactic tools accessible anytime to small and local enterprises devoted to the promotion and appreciation of sustainable farming, the SLfSE project unpretentiously aligns with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular with the following goals: N° 2 (promoting sustainable agriculture), N° 4 (promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all) and N° 12

The SLfSE open-access platform has been created as an integration of the MOOCs UNICAL project. It consists of three units divided into five sub-unites (or sections) each. Each section, in turn, can contain from three to eight interactive activities, two or three suggested websites to visit, a final document in pdf summarizing the useful expressions and vocabulary of the section, and an assignment to be submitted in order to receive feedback from the UNICAL University Language Centre (see fig. 1).

COMMUNICATION WITH CUSTOMERS AND SUPPLIERS

1.3 Placing an order by e-mail

- H5P **PLACING AN ODER BY E-MAIL - Gap filling activity**
- H5P **PLACING AN ORDER BY E-MAIL - Some vocabulary**
- H5P **PLACING AN ORDER BY E-MAIL - Reading activity**
- 🔗 **WHERE TO SURF! - Useful expressions to write an e-mail**
- 🔗 **WHERE TO SURF! - Asking questions about products**
- 📄 **Placing an order by e-mail - Resources**

Restricted Not available unless:

- The activity **PLACING AN ODER BY E-MAIL - Gap filling activity** is marked complete
- The activity **PLACING AN ORDER BY E-MAIL - Some vocabulary** is marked complete
- The activity **PLACING AN ORDER BY E-MAIL - Reading activity** is marked complete

📄 **Assignment - Writing an order e-mail**

Fig. 1: Structure of sub-unit 1.3 of the SLfSE platform

The contents of the units meet the skill needs and interests of the organic micro-enterprises owners who answered the needs analysis survey (see introduction), and were designed for A2-

(ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns). UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 21 October 2015, A/RES/70/1.

B1 learners, as emerged from the respondents' self-assessment in the survey (only 30% of the respondents considered themselves as English independent users).

Unit 1 Communication with customers and suppliers	Unit 2 Products and company presentation	Unit 3 Organic farming and viticulture
1.1 Giving information on the phone.	2.1 The company—its structure and people.	3.1 A biological approach to farming.
1.2 Managing a telephone booking.	2.2 Talking about my company.	3.2 Growing the grapes.
1.3 Placing an order by e-mail.	2.3 The words of marketing.	3.3 From the soil, to the seeds, to the plants.
1.4 Writing and understanding short messages and texts.	2.4 Presenting a product.	3.4 Making the wine.
1.5 Writing a post to advertise an event.	2.5 Participating in an international trade fair.	3.5 Processed organic food.

Tab. 2: Units and sub-units of the SLfSE platform

As soon as users access the SLfSE platform, a welcoming message invites them to download and read a pdf orientation guide, and to start their learning process by consulting the CEFR self-assessment grid uploaded. During the piloting phase, presented to a group of potential users for a period of two months, a final feedback questionnaire must be filled and submitted in order to have access to the next unit.

The pdf documents at the end of each sub-unit—representing valuable printable resources, since they summarize useful expressions, language patterns, and specific vocabulary—will be accessible only after having completed all the activities of the section, with a pass grade of 6/10, and after having opened the suggested websites. Assignments, by contrast, are not compulsory, yet strongly recommended. The pass grade of 6/10 and the restricted-access pdf resources are strategies adopted to address the need for motivation arisen from the needs-analysis survey: each activity, in fact, can be attempted a limitless number of times, encouraged by feedback messages and the possibility to consult pop-up hints and suggestions:



Fig. 2: Example of encouraging feedback

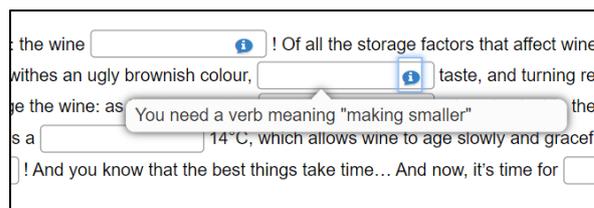


Fig. 3: Detail of a pop-up hint

In particular, the limited access to the pdf was conceived as motivational for the learners. In fact, by performing well in the activity, they are rewarded not only with positive feedback, but also with the conquest of a printable, physical product that can be consulted within the company when needed (Wilson 2006; Deci, Koestner and Ryan 2001). The pdf documents, in fact, follow a progressive order and constitute, at the end of the course, a real handbook.



Fig. 4: Example of positive feedback

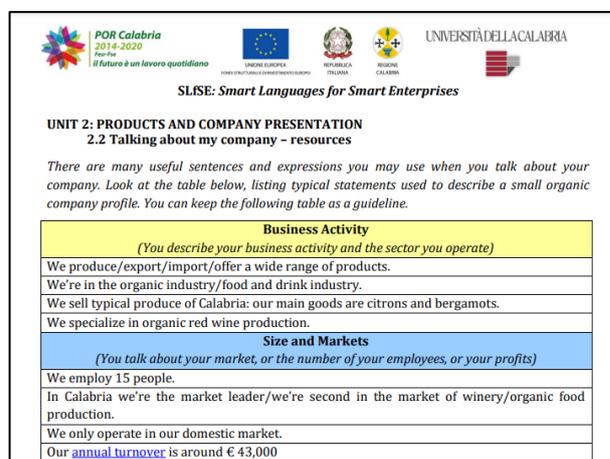


Fig. 5: Example of SLfSE downloadable pdf

All the three units have been developed in a Moodle platform (Moodle is the acronym for Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment, i.e., a digital environment for course management), choosing, among the available tools, the following: H5P© interactive activities, hyperlinks to pdf documents, hyperlinks to webpages and videos, and feedback systems. The next paragraph will address the potentiality of H5P© activities, also in relation to language learning methods and approaches.

4.2 Creating, sharing, scaffolding—the potentiality of H5P© in language learning

Before presenting some examples of H5P©¹¹ activities designed for the SLfSE platform, it appears necessary to describe what H5P© is. One shared definition is the following: “the H5P

¹¹ Available at: www.H5P.org.

activity module enables you to create interactive content such as interactive videos, question sets, drag and drop questions, multi-choice questions, presentations and much more.”¹² With a wide choice of activities to be created, and its easy and intuitive use also for beginner creators, H5P© is one of the most widespread software in schools and universities. Born in Norway as a community-driven project in 2014 by a group of software engineers, it is today supported by Joubel, a software provider, and is a completely free and open technology (“About the Project”). Regarding language teaching methods, H5P© can help create content which is both communication-oriented (such as task-based activities) and structural-oriented (such as pattern-drills exercises) (Büdgens-Kosten and Schildhauer 2020).

For the SLfSE platform, all the activities have been designed and developed aiming at acquiring new specific vocabulary related to the field of business and organic farming and viticulture, and enhancing the four skills of reading, listening, writing and speaking. Specifically, while reading and listening skills can be practiced during all the activities of the three units, writing and speaking skills are encouraged by the assignments proposed, including the writing of order e-mails and appointment reminder messages, the description of one’s own company and of a product, and the performing of a dialogue to be video recorded.

As for choosing the type of H5P© activities to use in the platform, in addition to the objectives set by the project,¹³ the following criteria were followed: clarity of presentation and execution in terms of layout (assuming that the professional users would access the platform from different devices); possibility of including authentic material and as much new vocabulary as possible; enjoyability and fun in carrying out the activities. Hence, the preference for: drag and drop (between images and words or communicative functions and expressions); listening combined with true-false questions or dictation; reading combined with multiple-choice questions; gap fill; open-cloze; matching.

The following is a selection of H5P© activities developed for the SLfSE platform, with the intent of highlighting their potentiality for using authentic and semi-authentic material in a creative way (Ellis et al. 2020; Pinner 2012; Gilmore 2007; Arnold 1991; Breen 1985) and facilitating scaffolding (Smagorinsky 2018; Bliss, Askew, and Macrae 1996; Wood, Bruner, and Ross 1976).

¹² H5P in Moodle, available at: www.sites.google.com/port.ac.uk/elearning-tools/elearning-tools/h5p.

¹³ In detail, SLfSE aims to: a) promote language awareness to increase positive attitude towards English language learning in SMEs in Southern Italy; b) satisfy users’ needs in SMEs to acquire key-language competences which will be relevant for employability, economic growth, effective communication and social cohesion, international mobility; c) enhance outcomes of the research project to capitalise experiences of cooperation amongst SMEs involved as subjects in the project (Argondizzo and Ficarra 2021).

Activity 1.2.4, “Managing a telephone booking—useful expressions” consists of a listening followed by a sequence of steps to be ordered choosing from drop-down options. The options listed in the drop-down menu refer to the communicative steps that are typically followed during a telephone reservation by the receiver, and their places in the sequence must be identified by listening to the audio track:

MANAGING A TELEPHONE BOOKING - Useful expressions



When managing a telephone reservation, you might find it useful to follow a sequence of steps. Listen to the dialogue again, and then complete the diagram below.

▶ 🔊 ● ————— -2:44

Choose the correct option from the drop down menu to order the telephone reservation's steps:

Step 1: Say the name of the restaurant; say own name; greet the customer ▼

Step 2: Listen to the customer's needs ▼

Step 3: Check the availability ▼

Step 4: Take the reservation details (time, number of guests) ▼

Step 5: Ask for the customer's telephone number
Listen to the customer's needs

Step 6: Say the name of the restaurant; say own name; greet the customer
Take the reservation details (time, number of guests) ▼

Step 7: Take customer's name

Fig. 6: Activity 1.2.4, “Managing a telephone booking—useful expressions”

The audio track was performed by the UNICAL CLA staff. The dialogue, created *ad hoc*, reproduces a telephone booking between the Italian owner of a farmhouse and a Canadian tourist. In order to get as close as possible to the authenticity of the content, the speakers were both bilingual (Italian-English)—including one, in fact, Canadian—and the conversation refers to traditional details of the Sila (a mountainous plateau in Calabria). To appreciate the potential of activity 1.2.4, “Managing a telephone booking—useful expressions,” it is important to mention that the same audio track is used both in 1.2.1 (combined with a fill in the blanks activity) and in 1.2.3 (combined with a dictation activity); moreover, in 1.2.2, a drag and drop practice recalls some specific words mentioned in the same dialogue that are to be matched with their corresponding images:



Fig. 7: Set of activities of sub-unit 1.2, “Managing a telephone booking”

The reiteration of the same audio track was conceived to make the users not only listen to the dialogue several times (which they could do in any case, by clicking on the play button of the track), but also internalise it, grasping specific vocabulary (thanks to activities 1.2.1—fill in the blank—and 1.2.2, —drag and drop), checking the correct spelling of words (thanks to activity 1.2.3—dictation), and finally (last but probably most important step, in terms of the communicative objectives of the project) capturing its communicative functions, with 1.2.4. In activity 1.2.4, in fact, the users are asked to recognise the communicative functions of the various steps of the conversation (fig. 6).

The set of activities described above is designed to give to the users rich input: purposeful and semi-authentic communicative material is offered through audio; new vocabulary is acquired thanks to its visual representation and accuracy is stimulated by a writing task. Since all learners go through a “silent” period, when the language is first listened to and produced only later, the sequence of the activities in 1.2 encourages this gradual development of knowledge, giving users the opportunity to gradually consolidate their listening comprehension (Erben et al. 2013). Furthermore, the same activities were designed to promote opportunities for scaffolding, i.e., tapping into prior knowledge, pre-presentation of new vocabulary, and visual

aids.

Activity 2.4.1, “Presenting a product—strategies you can use” consists of authentic visual and written material, from which users are asked to recognise the strategies used to advertise a product of a real company (in this case, organic chocolate):

PRESENTING A PRODUCT - Strategies you can use

1) Montezuma's Dark Side Milk Chocolate 90g

Montezuma's £2.29



2) This unique milk chocolate boasts a massive 51% cocoa. Sitting comfortably somewhere on the dark side of any milk chocolate planet, it will satisfy the most demanding chocolate lover. But be careful, if you try this, you will surely go to the dark side: you'll be eating *Absolute Black* next!

Here on the left and below you can read a description of one of the products of the ORGANIC DELIVERY COMPANY, a large organic company in the UK which collaborates with farmers and suppliers from the whole country and across Europe.

Read carefully the Montezuma Chocolate presentation: what are the **information** and **strategies** chosen by ORGANIC DELIVERY COMPANY to describe the chocolate? Match the headings with the corresponding paragraphs.

<p>3) The Grower</p> <p>Montezuma's “We started Montezuma's, our little chocolate business, in 2000 with only a very small machine, huge enthusiasm and most importantly, a broad ideal to bring chocolate innovation to a boring British chocolate market! We were lawyers, and we didn't expect that this small business would become one of the Britain's most innovative chocolate brands!...”</p> 	<p>4) Nutrition</p> <p>Typical composition per 100g</p> <p>.....energy kJ..... 2461 kJenergy kCal..... 588 kCalprotein..... 8.00gcarbohydrates..... 43.00gof which sugars..... 40.00gfat..... 42.00gof which saturates..... 5.00gfibre..... 4.00gsodium..... 0.012gsalt..... 0.03g</p>	<p>5) Ingredients</p> <p>Cane sugar*, cocoa mass*, cocoa butter*, dried milk*, vanilla paste* *organic</p> <p>For allergens, see ingredients highlighted in bold in the ingredients list. Possible cross contamination The following potential allergens may have come in contact with this product in transport, packing or production: Peanuts, Soya, Nuts</p>
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Fig. 8: Activity 2.4.1, “Presenting a product—strategies you can use”

When using authentic material, the original source is always mentioned: this choice is made not only to respect intellectual property, but also to contribute to the learner's scaffolding and the construction of new knowledge. When the original source is available online, indeed, a hyperlink makes it possible to visit the website from which the material has been taken:

Read carefully the *Montezuma Chocolate* presentation above, and then match the information/strategies listed below with the corresponding paragraphs.

*Text adapted from: <https://www.organicdeliverycompany.co.uk/>

Paragraph 1:

Paragraph 2:

Paragraph 3:

Paragraph 4:

Paragraph 5:

Paragraph 6:

Fig. 9: Detail of activity 2.4.1, “Presenting a product—strategies you can use”

Once again, with the aim of promoting scaffolding opportunities, the second unit ends with an

assignment called “Describing a product,” in which users are asked to present and describe one of their own products, so that they could use, in a written practice, all the contents offered in sub-units 2.3 and 2.4: sustainable packaging, advertising strategies, specific adjectives to describe organic food and sensory words to describe wines. The completed (and revised)¹⁴ tasks, at the end, can be posted on the SLfSE platform to be shared, demonstrating how H5P© makes it easy to fulfil two main principles of digital learning: the possibility of “remote” feedback that lowers the affective filter, and the possibility of sharing contents, with no limits of space or time (Hirsch et al. 2017).

Assignment - Describing a product

Welcome to your fourth assignment!

Choose **one of your products to describe, and to be posted on this page!** Take inspiration from the products' presentations, the adjectives and sensory words of this Unit to describe your product. Remember also that presenting a product is not just describing it: a good product presentation (also called “**FAB**” technique) gives customers important information about the **features** of a product, its **attributes**, and it also presents all the **benefits** of the product itself: from an **affordable price**, to a **sustainable packaging** – go back to section 2.3 to help yourself with the vocabulary related to eco-packaging and special promotions.

Click on the red button "add submission" and choose between 2 options: you can submit your text online or attach a doc file. You will get a feedback soon!



Fig. 10: Final assignment of sub-unit 2.4: “Describing a product”

The assignments, designed as reproductions of reality tasks (describing a real product; writing a supply-order e-mail; performing a dialogue imagining to be in an international trade fair, etc.), comply with the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) theory, according to which language acquisition is more successful when it is learned through tasks based on authentic content and situations (Skehan 1993; Candlin 1987; Prabhu 1987). Furthermore, the possibility of posting and sharing their original texts and videos on the platform stimulates and fosters the learners' motivation, developing their capacity for imitation and their “self-efficacy” (Bandura 1994), and encourages their role as prosumers, contributing to the co-construction of content to be shared. Finally, thanks to the assignments the users can practice their writing, too.

The websites suggested at the end of each sub-unit have been chosen to give the users the opportunity to consolidate the contents of the activities by: a) looking at their authentic use in the Web; b) giving different input on their usage; or c) strengthening specific language structures—as in the case of one of the websites suggested at the end of sub-unit 2.4, about the use of passive voice:

¹⁴ As mentioned above, after submitting the assignment, the users receive feedback from the CLA UNICAL.

WHERE TO SURF! - Using passive voice



Did you notice? In the organic food presentations, the **passive voice** was almost always used: “made by hand”, “can be eaten”, “made from organic milk”... If you need to revise its use, you can easily practice here: <https://agendaweb.org/verbs/passive-voice-exercises.html>

Fig. 11: One of the websites suggested at the end of sub-unit 2.4

Activity 3.2.1, “Growing the grapes—parts of the grapevine” consists of an authentic drawing taken from a famous guide on organic viticulture and enriched with hypertext references and hyperlinks: by clicking on the indicated parts, users have access to extra pictures and images, definitions of specific terms, and videos:

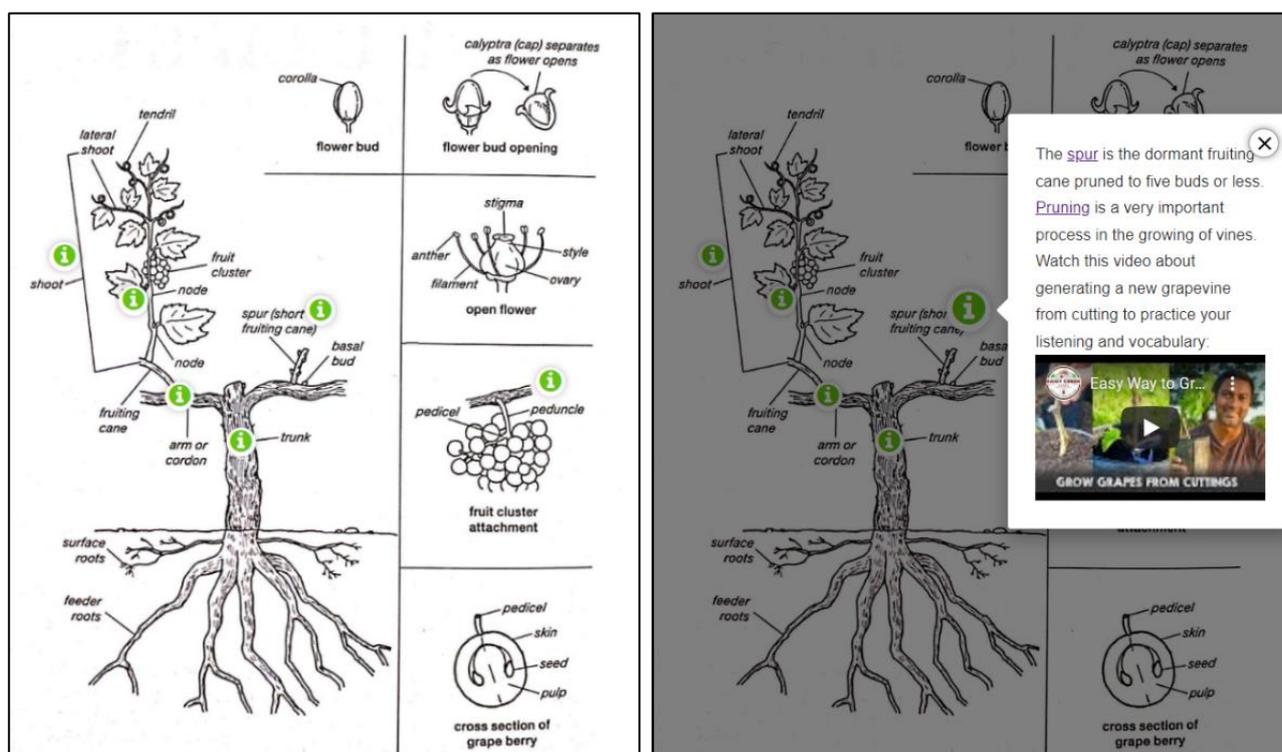


Fig. 12 and Fig. 13: When clicking on the indicated parts of the image, users have access to extra material

H5P© makes it also possible to promote language scaffolding through hyperlinks. As shown in the image below, the introduction of activity 3.2.1—likewise all the introductions throughout the units—contains pink words: these words, probably not very familiar to users, incorporate a hyperlink, which will open an online dictionary with their definitions (the online dictionaries referred to are: *Wordreference*, *Cambridge Dictionary*, and *Linguee*, as they offer the audio with

the words' pronunciation and their use within contexts). When specific vocabulary is introduced, short audio tracks make it possible to listen to the pronunciation of single words:

GROWING THE GRAPES - Parts of the grapevine

The first step in making good organic wine is to take care of the [grapevines](#)... What are the English words to talk about this fascinating and tasty world? Let's start by discovering the parts of the grapevine together!

You can also practice your pronunciation! Listen to the audios and repeat:

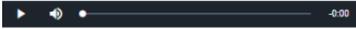
bud:



peduncle:



trunk:



*Texts adapted and images taken from: Cox, Jeff, *From Vines to Wines: The Complete Guide to Growing Grapes and Making Your Own Wine*, Storey Publishing, LLC, 5th edition, 2015.

Fig. 14: Detail of an activity's introduction with words marked in pink (with hyperlink); audio tracks to practice single words' pronunciation and reference to the material's original source

The activities described above are only some of those available on the platform, which is currently in the piloting phase. The following section, in addition to summing up the potential of the SLfSE platform for ESP digital learning, will also highlight another important feature of the SLfSE project, i.e., the co-construction of the final version of the platform by considering the users' feedback.

4.3 Pedagogical reflections—autonomy, authentic material and co-construction of knowledge in the SLfSE platform

The examples presented in the previous paragraphs show the suitability of H5P© in designing and developing ESP creative, user-friendly, and enjoyable contents. SLfSE platform activities vary significantly in their methods: from drill and structural activities of matching and dictation, aiming at acquiring new vocabulary and improving the accuracy and correctness of language, to content-based tasks, designed to encourage the active and creative role of the users: as Luella Bussey Cook said, “correctness, of course, is needed; but just as surely there is needed a larger vocabulary, greater flexibility in use of sentences, originality in style, creative power [...]” (1920).

The contents of the SLfSE platform, conceived for professionals in organic farming and viticulture business environments, tap into their prior knowledge in order to build new language skills that will be useful in their workplace. This scaffolding technique will allow users to approach the English language with self-confidence and high motivation, since using purposeful and contextualized digital materials facilitates the drawing on their strong knowledge of their own sectors and apply it in the learning process (Erben et al. 2013).

At the same time, since the learning material provided by the platform is fairly specific, ranging from green manure to eco-packaging, or from trellises management to tripwire selling strategies, users might not be familiar with all the topics, thus allowing them to experience a Content and Language Integrated Language approach (CLIL), where a new language is learned through and with the learning of a new knowledge or subject. In particular, the assignments of the platform are aiming at involving the users deeply in practice in the language, so that English also becomes the language to *use*, and not only to *learn* (Coyle, Hood and Marsh 2010).

The software also made it possible to offer new methodologies of home-learning while promoting a more conscious and appropriate use of the Internet. Thanks to the reference to selected English learning websites, online dictionaries, and companies' webpages, the SLfSE platform totally embraced the conception of digital learning in a Web 2.0 environment. In such a way, content is shared, and knowledge is constructed in a never-ending process of researching and learning.

Lastly, as already mentioned, the piloting phase offered a meaningful opportunity, since the SLfSE platform was presented to a group of potential users for a period of two months in order to collect their feedback. During this piloting phase, a final, anonymous feedback questionnaire had to be filled at the end of each unit. The objective of the in-depth questionnaire was to measure the degree of effectiveness of the platform, questioning the feasibility of the activities and their level of difficulty, the usefulness of the contents, and the relevance of the authentic material existing on the Internet and referred to by the platform. The results of the feedback questionnaire have contributed to the design of the final version of the SLfSE platform, thus emphasizing the important role of the learners in the sharing and co-construction of knowledge. Besides stimulating cognitive and metacognitive reflection in the learner, the in-depth feedback questionnaire represented a way for learners and teachers or content developers to interact—although remotely and asynchronously. This interaction is to be considered as a virtual dialogue: teachers, content developers and users never know in advance the exact direction of the learning path. Conversely, they participate in the learning process by experiencing practice, associating interpretations and drawing on prior knowledge, looking for the most suitable

direction to follow—and the path will only be revealed after an exchange of meaning and knowledge co-construction (Karlsson, Kjisik and Nordlund 2007).

5. Conclusions and future perspectives

The SLfSE platform exemplifies the suitability and appropriateness of technology in ESP: the users have the possibility to access user-friendly, interactive, and enjoyable contents; they can consult authentic and semi-authentic material; they can foster their autonomy in the managing of time and resources during the learning process; they can recognize the importance of their role of co-constructors of knowledge. In a reality such as the South of Italy, where English still represents a challenge for adults, the possibility to access a free, online ESP learning path can be a great opportunity to acquire or enhance new language skills, especially if needed in the workplace and in business environments. The CLA UNICAL, as a lifelong-learning promoter, is ready to contribute to the linguistic growth of the small organic sectors, so unique in their traditions and ancient experience, that they deserve to be heard, and in more than one language. Without English, they risk losing precious opportunities—not only economic ones, but also and above all the opportunity to be known and recognized internationally.

In its final version, the SLfSE open-access platform will allow the users to acquire key-language competences useful in professional contexts through original, and *ad hoc* high-quality learning resources. At the same time, referring to selected material already existing on the Internet, the platform promotes a more conscious use of the Internet in terms of digital learning, making authentic material easily accessible and available for the users, thus contrasting the difficulty of orientating oneself in the Web. The language-friendly environment created in the SLfSE platform will represent a place free from limitations of space, time, and anxiety. It will increase motivation in language learning and foster professionals' positive attitude towards international people and situations. The pdf printable documents, collected at the end of the course, will represent a valuable resource to support the professional mobility of the users and their lifelong learning process.

The scaffolding methodology adopted throughout the platform aims at the building of the users' new language skills, new self-assessment skills but also new levels of critical thinking, which can lead the learners to a fully aware use not only of the Internet, but also of the existing language learning resources in general. As further aim, the results of the piloting phase of the project are expected to generate an analysis of the content and material provided by the platform, to favour not only the final version of the learning path, but also and specially to encourage and reward the prior and in-progress competence of the users themselves.

Furthermore, the SLfSE platform in particular—as well as the SLfSE project in general—will increase the “self-efficiency” of its learners, as users as well as prosumers, extending their language learning achievements in their business and social environment. Hopefully, the platform will encourage professionals to take up this learning challenge, and to share them with their colleagues. Following their own pace and their own interests and priorities, completely independent in their language learning process, they will decide how to practice the content provided by the platform: they can use the assignment-feedback system, to interact with the UNICAL CLA, or they can just print out the pdf guidelines and study them on their own, in the evening, after the vegetables of their farm have been collected or the wine of their cellar poured. Finally, whatever path they decide to follow, hopefully the workers of these amazing organic sectors will gain more confidence towards the English language and will be encouraged to “act locally” by “thinking globally.” Hopefully, they will also recognise the enormous potential of their job as promoter of a sustainable and respectful farming and viticulture, and the importance and echo that this mission could have at international level. Indeed, in this contemporary, interconnected, and globalised world, University Language Centres can play a relevant role for language learners in acquiring a new awareness as international protagonists.

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