

Summary Workshop B – Learning settings/formats in using digital media for literacy

Speakers: **Nadine Engel** (VHS [Adult Education Centre] Oldenburg), BELUGA learning software

Dr Tina Gruber-Mücke and Wolfgang Rauter (Danube University Krems – University for Continuing Education: Department for Interactive Media and Educational Technology, Austria), 'Using the internet to reach the target group for basic education / Instructional technologies in primary education'

Moderation: **Hans Georg Rosenstein** (National Agency 'Education for Europe'/ National Coordination Point of the European Agenda for Adult Learning)

Ms Nadine Engel (VHS [Adult Education Centre] Oldenburg), presents the *BELUGA learning software*:

Beluga is a career-based learning software, which has been in development as part of the Regional Basic Education Centre (RGZ) at the VHS Oldenburg since 2012 (improvement suggestions from users are continually being incorporated). The software was originally aimed at a target group of people with German as a native language, but BELUGA is now also being used for learning German as a second language. The learning software offers exercises in the basic competences reading, writing and calculating, as well as introductions to text editing and using the internet. BELUGA is designed as an independent learning programme, but is also used to complement the courses – those of other providers as well, not just adult education centres. The programme is free to download. The learning software focuses on training vocabulary and can thus be used in a self-directed way (in learning cafés, self-study centres, for voluntary work with refugees or in law enforcement).

BELUGA is divided into six different vocabulary categories, each with seven different levels of difficulty. The vocabulary categories are oriented on professional fields, as well as a general category, which primary school children can work with. The different difficulty levels are sub-divided into linguistic criteria such as sound, number of syllables, consonant connections and spelling exceptions. There is always the same menu, with the same games etc., within every vocabulary category. The learner is free to choose which game they would like to work with and which level of difficulty.

No registration is necessary, which also means that results cannot be saved. Learners witness their own progress when things become faster and feel easier.

Didactic advantages: Increase in motivation thanks to diverse, playful learning; repetitive, with the option of feedback/correction; self-determined learning

Important creative criteria: clear (as self-explanatory as possible) layouts using simple language and always in the same design

Using touchscreens becomes easier for the learner and large fields make clicking easier when working with the mouse (the size of the fields decreases accordingly with increasing level of difficulty).

Comments / Discussion:

- Praise and thanks to teachers who already work with BELUGA,
- A BELUGA app is being developed,
- Installation is not self-explanatory – persons with basic education needs would need help with this.

Dr Tina Gruber-Mücke and Wolfgang Rauter (Danube University Krems – University for Continuing Education: Department for Interactive Media and Educational Technology, Austria), 'Using the internet to reach the target group for basic education / Instructional technologies in basic education'

The speakers dealt with the question of how to reach the target group for basic education over the internet: How should digital material be designed so that basic education can also be accessed?

Here learners with basic education needs are considered users in the sense of 'end users' (customer experience). Digital inclusion proves to be a challenge in everyday activities: People who lack particular competences cannot use certain services, or can only do so with the help of other users (for example, technology-based food services in fast-food restaurants).

The target group is people with special needs in basic competences (autonomous learning, reading, writing and using communication technology). The parties concerned are often pointed to the support of surrounding people who are privy to this. Usability takes on another importance in this context: users should be able to reach their goal with as little effort as possible – the website therefore needs to be efficient, effective and satisfactory.

Usability can be determined with eye-tracking and inquiries.

Multimedia services can help to overcome inhibition thresholds in basic education. A combination of different didactic models ensures flexibility.

The following design criteria have proved successful, without the need to raise costs:

- same design of items with the same function
- same design of layouts
- simple language
- use of pictograms
- alternative control and display functions (video/audio)
- language-based use

It can be assumed that these criteria also involve synergy effects for other users.