

Testing of iPortal across the Partnership

Evaluation Report

As part of Work Package 8, a number of testing workshops were organised by all the project partners across the six countries of the partnership. These testing sessions were conducted in various settings and with different target groups in order to cover the broadest possible range of language learners assessing the suitability of iPortal as a tool for language learning/teaching.

The present data come from the evaluation sheets filled in by the workshop participants at the end of each testing session.

Methodology

The testing sessions were in the format of language classes and each student had his or her own computer terminal. It was therefore interactive and the students were able to try out the different parts of the platform for themselves. They were able to try out the Second Life strand using guest avatars or, when it was not possible to download the Second Life viewer onto the computers, they were able to enjoy a brief demonstration of the iPortal island, the audio files, external links and some interactivity.



Participants

Across the partnership we have targeted a wide range of participants – primary and secondary school pupils, university students, young participants in EU mobility projects and lifelong learning adults.

They were all invited to test the platform as end users during a teacher-led training session. There were 155 male and 134 female participants. The languages covered in the testing were all the 6 partner languages and in addition French, since in the UK it is the dominant foreign language taught at school.

Overall the reaction of the students to the lessons delivered using iPortal was very positive, although slightly diminished by the technical problems due to venue specific IT equipment or slow internet. The students appreciated the innovative approach and liked the rich functions of the three strands – iPortal, Virtual Classroom, Second Life. Some of the students recommended improving the aesthetics of the iPortal environment.

Venues / Partner organisations

Depending on the type of learners the project partners have organised testing sessions in primary and secondary schools, universities, vocational training centres and language teaching centres for adults. These places were equipped with the necessary IT equipment (personal computers or laptops) and offered an appropriate internet connection. Some of the partners have experienced difficulties with IT security settings, especially in schools, since iPortal and Second Life are not popular yet and all non-standard websites tend to be blocked. Once the IT staff provided support, the sessions were mostly problem-free.

Country specificities

One of the strengths of this project is the variety of partner profiles, thus the different testing sessions bear some specific features, which can vary across the partnership. Here are some aspects that are detailed further in the separate country reports.

Partner 1 – Bulgaria

Foundation Future 21st Century is a not an academic organisation, but over the three years has developed an extensive network of academic partners (schools, private training centres, universities and the Bulgarian Ministry of Education). Their testing stems from their cooperation with these partners, however they have used a different methodology to the one used by the other project partners, so the Bulgarian feedback is more verbal and reflected as much as possible by the non-numeric parts of this report.

Partner 2 – Poland

English Unlimited is a private language centre focused on adult language training, so their testing reflects the perception of **adult learners** paying for their training, which is usually a demanding clientele with high expectations.

Partner 3 – Turkey

Aksaray University is a relatively new state university attracting much public investment, skilled professors and highly motivated students. Their testing targeted **university students**, usually familiar with modern technology and aware of alternatives available on the market. The students tested iPortal in the framework of their language classes as the University is implementing iPortal into their teaching tools.

Partner 4 – United Kingdom

EdEUcation Ltd. is an education consultancy company working closely with a dense network of schools and universities in the North East of England. The testing in the UK was done at school level involving **pupils** from different age categories all of them learning French or Spanish. Their testing evaluated how teachers can use iPortal in class and how pupils can use it for **independent learning** at home.

Partner 5 – Spain

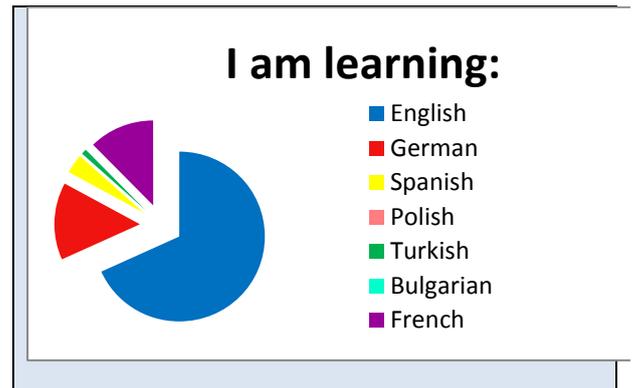
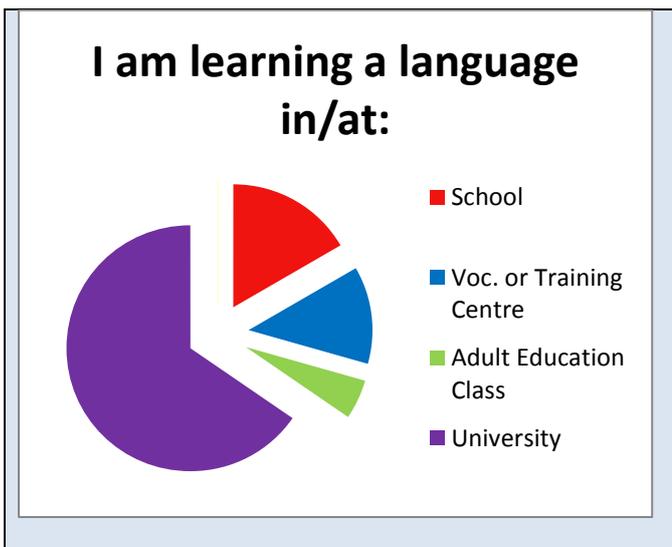
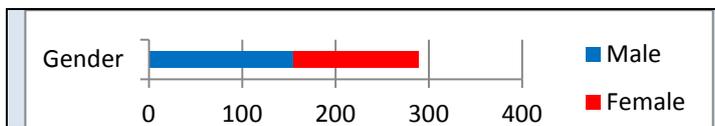
IPF International is an education consultancy company providing support to academic partners and offering Spanish classes for foreigners. The testing in Spain was done in schools and a university

involving **learners from age of five to early twenties**, although the feedback forms were filled only from 16year-old up.

Partner 6 – Germany

Wisamar is a vocational training centre functioning also as a language and mobility centre welcoming young people from abroad, providing them with language courses and cultural experience in Germany. Their testing was focused on **young people on mobility projects**, often in need of language improvement tools. The particular strength of this testing was that there were nationals from other countries not covered by the project partners – Lithuania and Romania.

Participants’ general profile

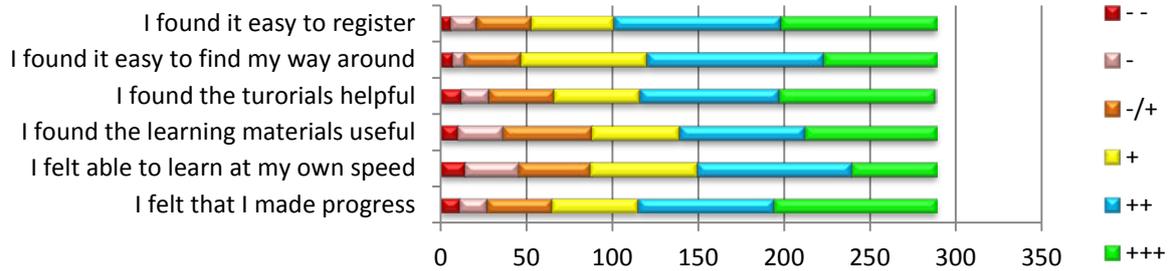


Evaluation of specific iPortal strands:

Key:

- -	very low / very poor
-	low / poor
-/+	average / satisfactory
+	high / good
++	higher / very good
+++	the highest / outstanding

iPortal



Positive feedback

To sum up the testing participants appreciated, liked or enjoyed the following:

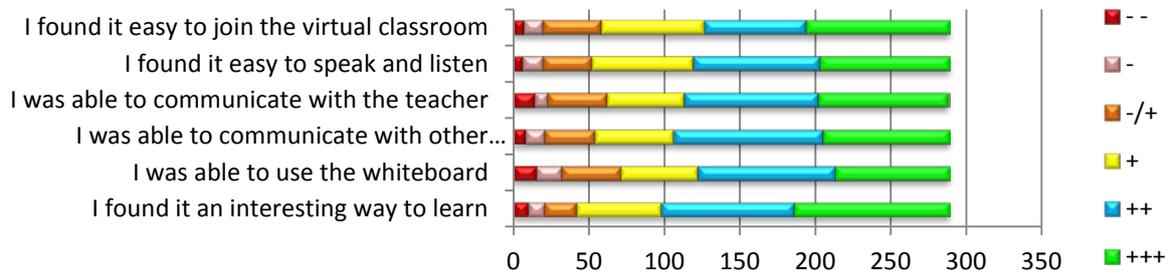
- ✓ the platform is quite innovative and it increases interest in learning a language
- ✓ the platform is very rich in functions, there are various tabs, tools, exercises
- ✓ a large range of courses to be joined
- ✓ iPortal is interactive and allows multiple people to work together
- ✓ it is accessible from anywhere and anytime
- ✓ many learning resources
- ✓ the audio files help improve pronunciation
- ✓ easy to use and it is useful
- ✓ the lessons are well structured
- ✓ it is easy to share exercises
- ✓ the tests are accessible and easy to use

Could be improved

To sum up the testing participants were mainly positive, but felt that the following items needed improving in time:

- the richness of the functionalities makes the platform a bit dense
- when used at school, the technical equipment may slow down the learning process
- the overall aesthetics could be improved
- hope for creating more learning sites and resources in the future

Virtual Classroom



Positive feedback

To sum up the testing participants appreciated, liked or enjoyed the following:

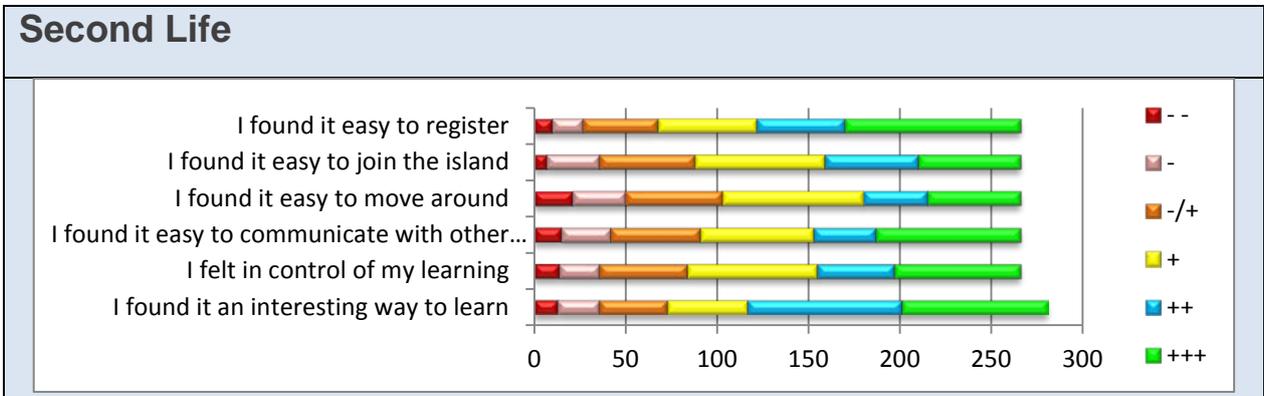
- ✓ super interactive, it's great to collaborate together on the same whiteboard

Could be improved

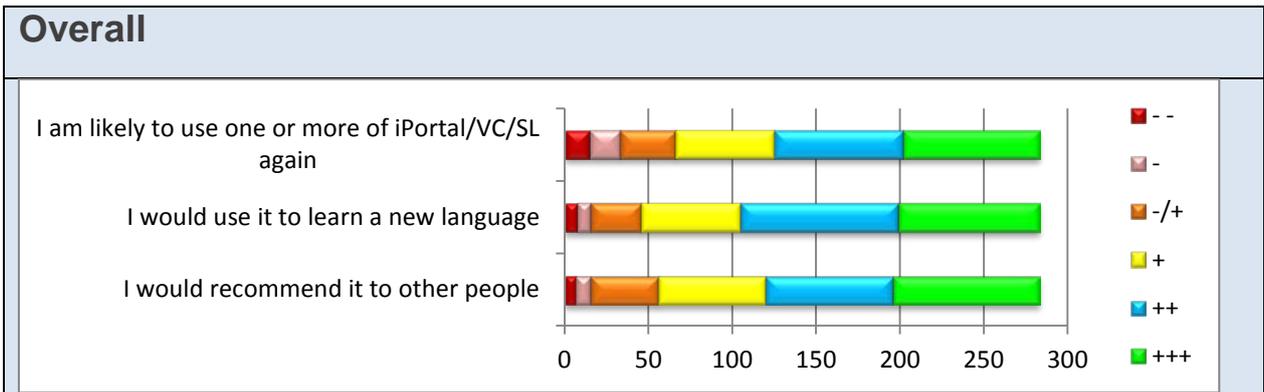
To sum up the testing participants were mainly positive, but felt that the following items needed improving in time:

- low internet speed and many users at

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ can be used for off-class tutoring ✓ interesting, easy and fun to use ✓ the teacher can manage the students' rights in VC ✓ great for private lessons ✓ easy to communicate with each other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ a time may cause slow reactions ➤ the teacher needs to coordinate well who does what
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<p>Positive feedback</p> <p>To sum up the testing participants appreciated, liked or enjoyed the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ an original way of learning ✓ great for talking to people ✓ interactive and fun like in a video game ✓ playing and learning at the same time ✓ Second Life is a new discovery ✓ many useful locations ✓ easy to navigate 	<p>Could be improved</p> <p>To sum up the testing participants were mainly positive, but felt that the following items needed improving in time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ there could be even more locations/towns/islands ➤ it may take a moment to get used to the controls for people who don't play video games ➤ could be slow when internet speed is low
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Conclusion

As the graphs show the most common reaction of the testing participants was very positive and they appreciated the innovative approach and certainly got motivated by this new interactivity in language learning. Some of the less skilled participants took more time to adapt to the full range of functionalities and future users should be aware that such a rich and complex platform may require a moment to get completely familiar with in order to benefit well from its potential.

Annex

Participant's questionnaire

It is important for us to hear your feedback about your learning and use of the iPortal. This information will be processed anonymously and will not be used for any other purpose than to improve and evaluate the quality and the impact of the iPortal.

Name (optional) _____

I am...			
Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>

I am learning a language...	
At School	<input type="checkbox"/>
In a Vocational or Training Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
In an Adult Education Class	<input type="checkbox"/>
At a University	<input type="checkbox"/>
On my own	<input type="checkbox"/>

I am learning ...	
English	<input type="checkbox"/>
German	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spanish	<input type="checkbox"/>
Polish	<input type="checkbox"/>
Turkish	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bulgarian	<input type="checkbox"/>
French	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please put a cross X on the number that suits you. **Remember that 1 is low and 6 is high.**

iPortal	1	2	3	4	5	6	Comments
I found it easy to register	<input type="checkbox"/>						
I found it easy to find my way around	<input type="checkbox"/>						
I found the tutorials helpful	<input type="checkbox"/>						
I found the learning materials useful	<input type="checkbox"/>						
I felt able to learn at my own speed	<input type="checkbox"/>						
I felt that I made progress	<input type="checkbox"/>						

What I liked about the iPortal

What I felt could have been improved
