iPortal Training Workshops across the Partnership

Evaluation Report

As part of Work Package 7, a number of training workshops were organised by all the project partners across the six countries of the partnership. These training sessions were conducted with language teachers from different institutions – schools, vocational and training centres, universities, adult education centres or freelancers – to assess the suitability of iPortal as a tool for language teaching.

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

Methodology

The training sessions were in the format of workshops following the structure of 3 training modules:

Module 1: An Introduction to iPortal

Module 2: The Virtual Classroom

Module 3: Using Second Life for Language Learning

The framework of the training as well as the materials for the training (presentations, task sheets and quizzes) were developed in advance and available for the partners to be used during the trainings and if necessary to be translated.

Each participant had his or her own computer terminal. It was therefore interactive and the participants were able to learn about the different functions and possibilities and 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 in total 166 teachers (46 male and 120 female) teaching at schools, universities, vocational and training centres, adult education facilities or as freelancers. They got introduced to the platform and its different functions including the Virtual Classroom and the iPortal island in Second Life following the training framework of 3 modules.

The majority of teachers were language teachers covering the 6 partner languages as well as French, Swedish and Russian. The Bulgarian partner also included IT teachers in the training.

In general the feedback from the participants on the workshop was very positive. In some cases the participants criticized the technical problems or slow internet. Since many participants were not familiar with online teaching or had only limited experience, they appreciated the innovative approach and the various possibilities iPortal offers combining the platform with the Virtual Classsroom and Second Life.

Venues / Partner organisations

The project partners organized their training workshops at different locations. 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, 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 training 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 has started its training immediately after the Alpha version of the iPortal platform went online in February 2014 in order to test the functionality and make improvements. They organized offline trainings as well as online trainings consisting of 4 modules: Management of own site on the platform; Adoption/ creation of e-learning materials; Effective classes in the Virtual class room; Effective teaching on the iPortal island in Second Life.

This evaluation report includes only the evaluations of the offline trainings, since they are comparable with the training workshops in the other partner countries. For the offline training Future 21st Century worked with teachers from the Vocational High School of Architecture, Building, Geodesy – Plovdiv, the Union of Science-Technical Union - branch Plovdiv and the 91st German Language school Sofia. The evaluations of the online trainings can be found in the Bulgarian country report.

Partner 2 – Poland

English Unlimited organized training workshops at Gdańsk University - Institute of Applied Linguistics of the Polish Philology Department and the English Unlimited Teacher Development Centre with a total of 36 participants. The participants were professors of Applied Linguistics, teachers and trainers from English Unlimited, teachers from state schools and freelancers.

Partner 3 – Turkey

Aksaray University organized a training workshop for 25 teachers at the School of Foreign Languages of Aksaray University. The participants came from the university or public schools or are working as freelancers.

Partner 4 – United Kingdom

EdEUcation ltd. organized training workshops at Durham University – School of Education and Carmel Teaching School with participants following the PGCE (Post-Graduate Certificate of Education) course training to become language teachers in schools and Teesdale School with established teachers of languages or other subjects with variable teaching experience. In total EdEUcation ltd. trained 27 teachers.

Partner 5 – Spain

IPF International organized training workshops at the University of Málaga, the University of Granada and a Public High School. The participants were language teachers, tourism teachers and directors of vocational centres in the region of Andalucía. In addition IPF International did a training with teachers at a vocational centre in Latvia. In total 34 people took part in the trainings.

Partner 6 – Germany

Wisamar organized training workshops at their own premises for language teachers mainly working at vocational or training centres or as freelancers and teaching adults. Wisamar trained 16 people on the iPortal platform.
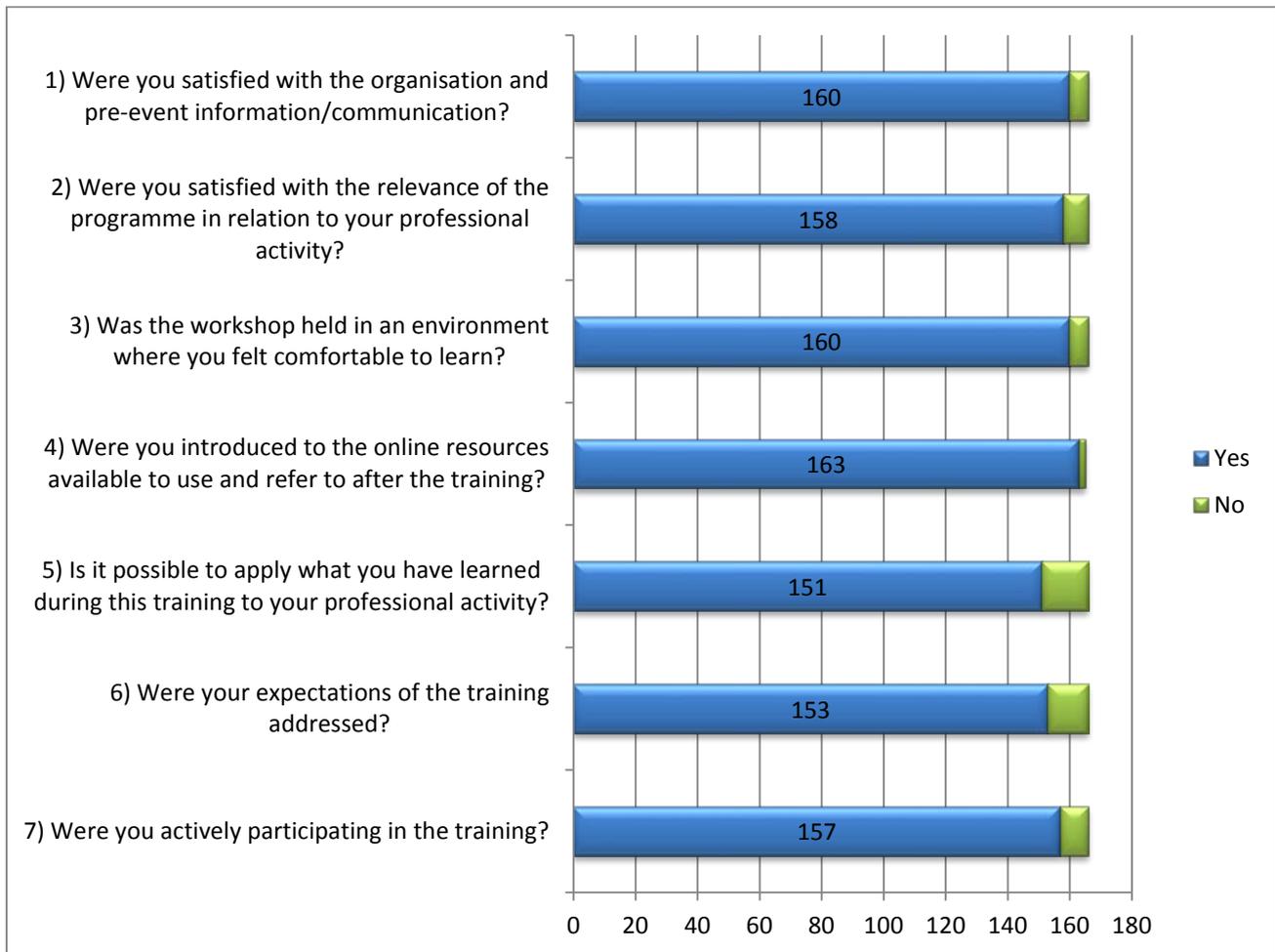
Participants' general profile

Most participants were women teaching at a school, vocational or training centre or as freelancers. The majority of the participants teaches English, German or Spanish language.
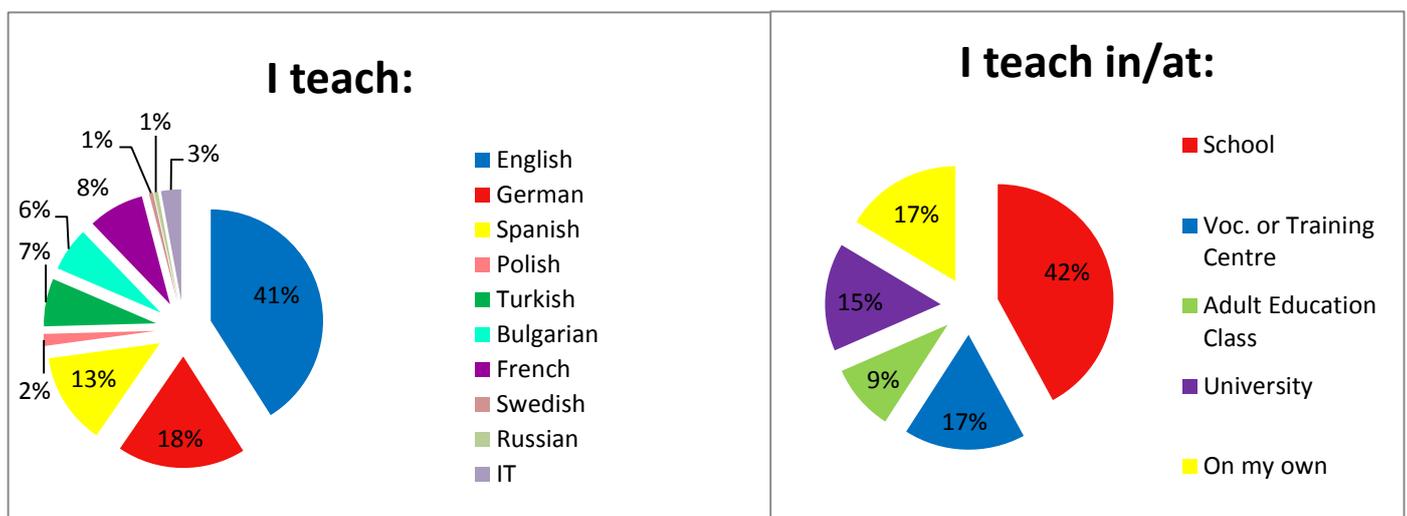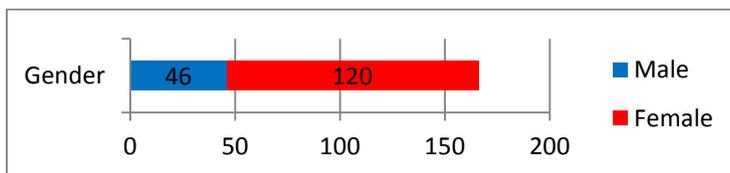
Overall satisfaction

More than 90% of the participants were satisfied with the organization of the training and the workshop environment. There were just very few comments that computers were to slow or the room to small. A big majority of participants felt that the training met their expectations or even surpassed them and found it very useful for their professional activity. Some participants commented, that it was very interesting for them to see where new developments in language teaching are going and expressed the need to update their knowledge in the field of e-learning. It was also mentioned that the iPortal platform is very complex.

Chart showing survey responses (Yes/No):

Question	Yes
1) Were you satisfied with the organisation and pre-event information/communication?	160
2) Were you satisfied with the relevance of the programme in relation to your professional activity?	158
3) Was the workshop held in an environment where you felt comfortable to learn?	160
4) Were you introduced to the online resources available to use and refer to after the training?	163
5) Is it possible to apply what you have learned during this training to your professional activity?	151
6) Were your expectations of the training addressed?	153
7) Were you actively participating in the training?	157

Evaluation of specific iPortal strands:

Key:

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

Training Module 1 – An Introduction to iPortal

It can be seen from the graphs, that the participants were able to improve their knowledge about the platform a lot during the training. Since the platform is very complex, many participants said, that they would need more time to explore the various functionalities and for some participants it was difficult to find their way around the platform.

8) How would you rate your knowledge/ability in the following areas:

I am aware of the iPortal functionalities and its potential in supporting language teaching and learning

I can register on iPortal and I will explore more in-depth the platform after this training

I am able to find, download and upload learning resources

I can create a worksite and activate its basic functions

I can navigate through the iPortal and find what I need

Legend: ☐ - - ☐ - ☐ -/+ ☐ + ☐ ++ ☐ +++
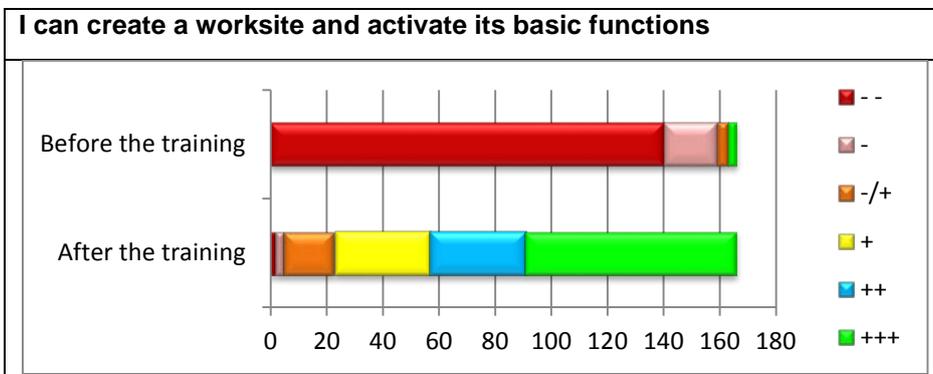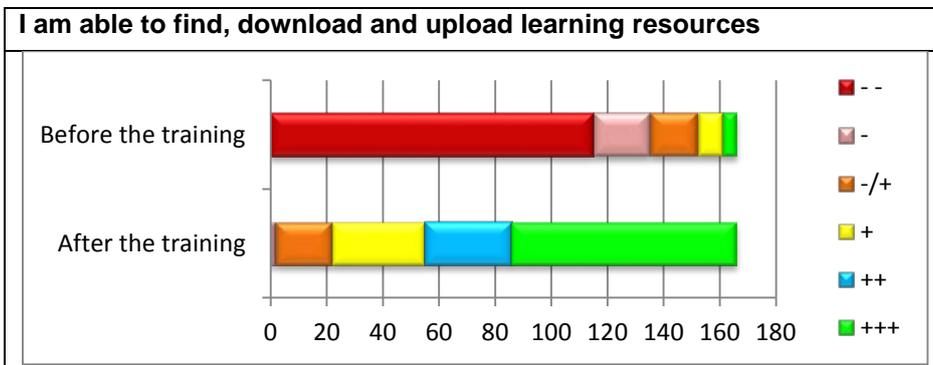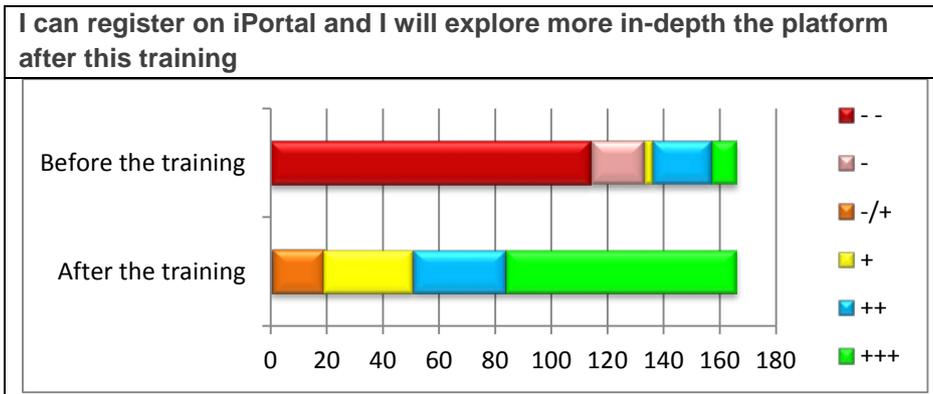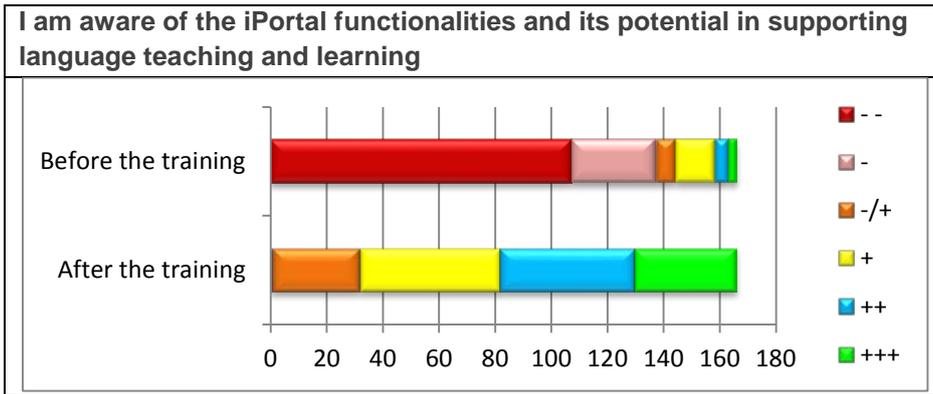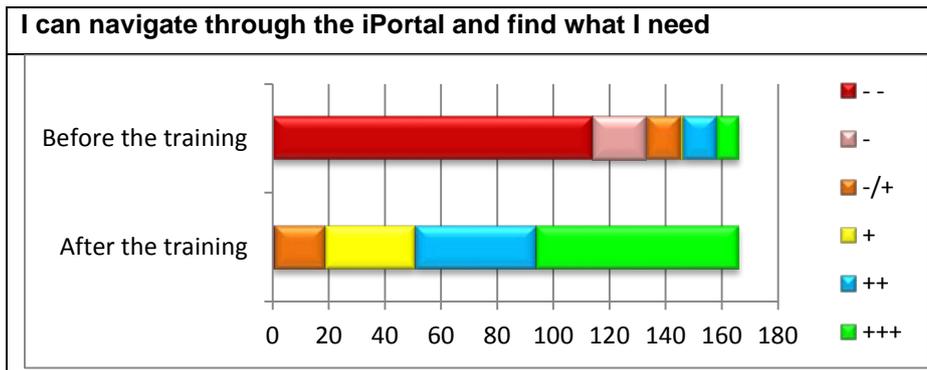
Training Module 2 – The Virtual Classroom

Although for most participants the concept of the virtual classroom and its potential in online teaching is clear, they expressed their need of more practice and time to explore in order to realise lessons within the virtual classroom.

9) How would you rate your knowledge/ability in the following areas:

I understand the concept of the virtual classroom
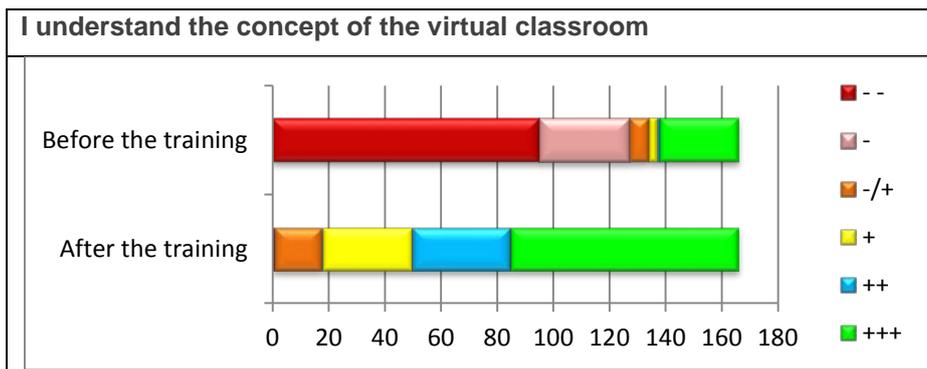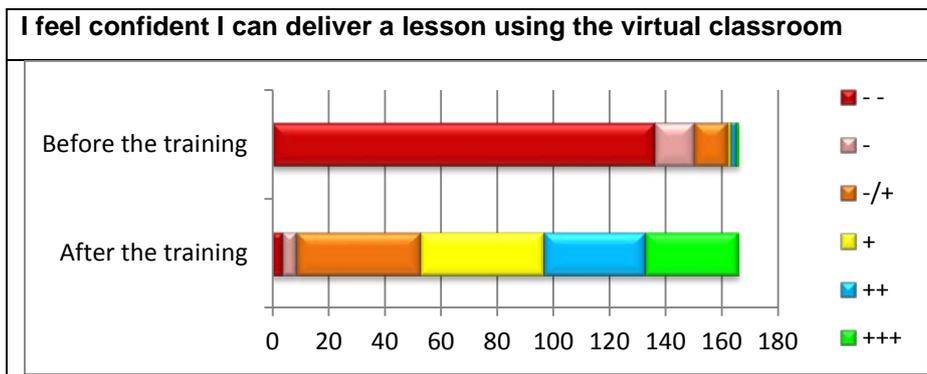

Legend: ☐ - - ☐ - ☐ -/+ ☐ + ☐ ++ ☐ +++

I am familiar with the structure of the virtual classroom

Legend: ☐ - - ☐ - ☐ -/+ ☐ + ☐ ++ ☐ +++

I know how to prepare a lesson in the virtual classroom

Before the training

After the training

0 20 40 60 80 100 120 140 160 180

■ - -
■ -
■ -/+
□ +
■ ++
■ +++

I feel confident I can deliver a lesson using the virtual classroom

Before the training

After the training

0 20 40 60 80 100 120 140 160 180

■ - -
■ -
■ -/+
□ +
■ ++
■ +++

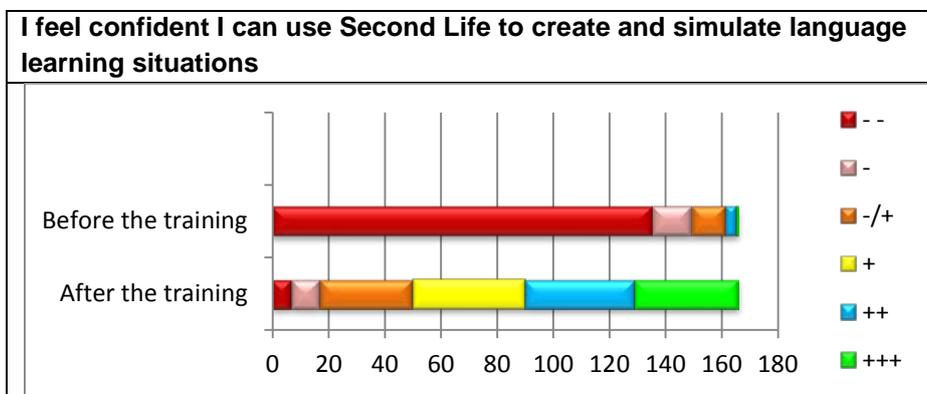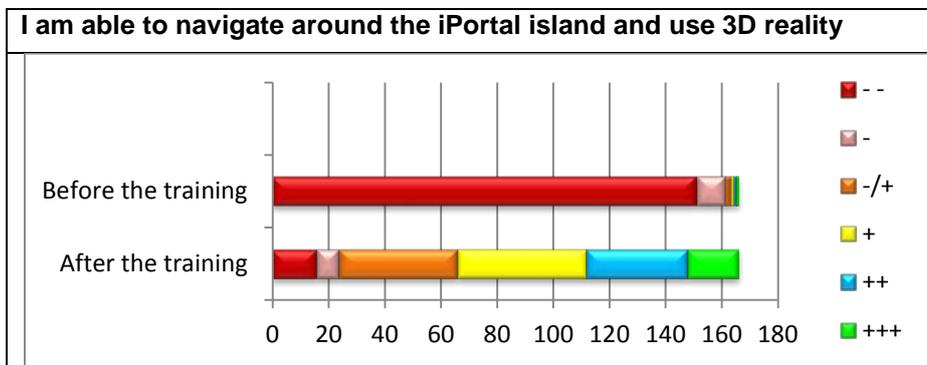**I am aware of the potential of the virtual classroom in online teaching**

Before the training

After the training

0 20 40 60 80 100 120 140

■ - -
■ -
■ -/+
□ +
■ ++
■ +++

This question has not been answered by the Bulgarian participants and therefore they are not included in this table.

Training Module 3 – Using Second Life for language learning

Sometimes it had not been possible to access Second Life during the trainings or it was only possible to do a demonstration of the iPortal island on one computer. Some participants also experienced week internet connections. Nevertheless the majority of the participants understood the concept of using Second Life for language teaching and found the iPortal island suitable for it. Some participants found it hard to navigate through the island. But many participants also feel confident to use the iPortal island with their students.

10) How would you rate your knowledge/ability in the following areas:

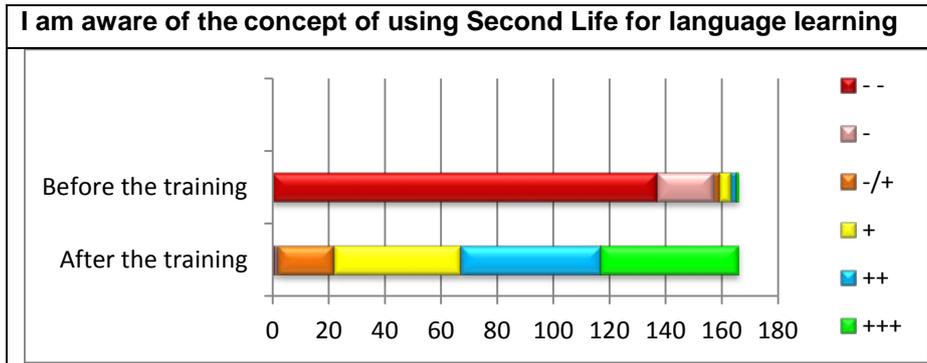**I am aware of the concept of using Second Life for language learning**

	Legend
	- -
	-
	-/+
Before the training	+
After the training	++
	+++

0 20 40 60 80 100 120 140 160 180

I understand the examples of language learning in Second Life

	Legend
	- -
	-
Before the training	-/+
	+
After the training	++
	+++

0 20 40 60 80 100 120 140 160 180

I am able to navigate around the iPortal island and use 3D reality

	Legend
	- -
	-
	-/+
Before the training	+
After the training	++
	+++

0 20 40 60 80 100 120 140 160 180

I feel confident I can use Second Life to create and simulate language learning situations

	Legend
	- -
	-
	-/+
Before the training	+
After the training	++
	+++

0 20 40 60 80 100 120 140 160 180

I find the iPortal island in Second Life well suitable for online language learning

Legend: - - , - , -/+ , + , ++ , +++
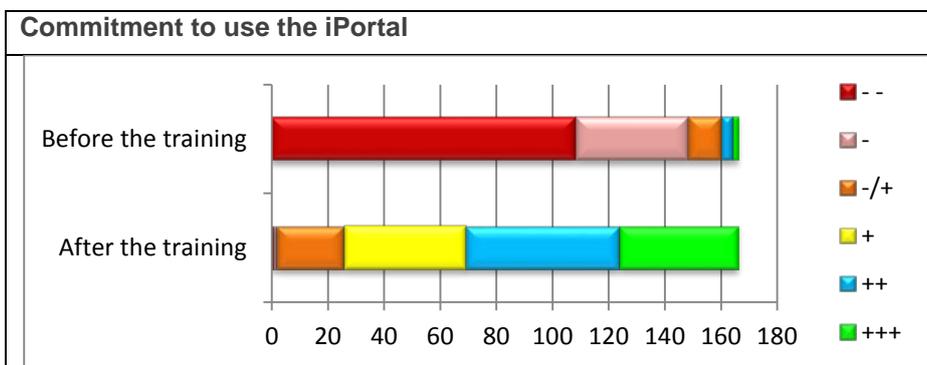
11) What was the highlight of the training for you? Why?

To sum up the training participants appreciated, liked or enjoyed the following

* The interactivity and possibilities of iPortal
* The interactive exercises
* Creating lessons, because children love interactive online learning
* Joining other people's lessons, so I can use more resources
* The way to do exams online and check them
* The fact to have a private tutor, to help to the student
* Trying out and exploring the possibilities of the virtual classroom (especially the whiteboard and the chat) and Second Life
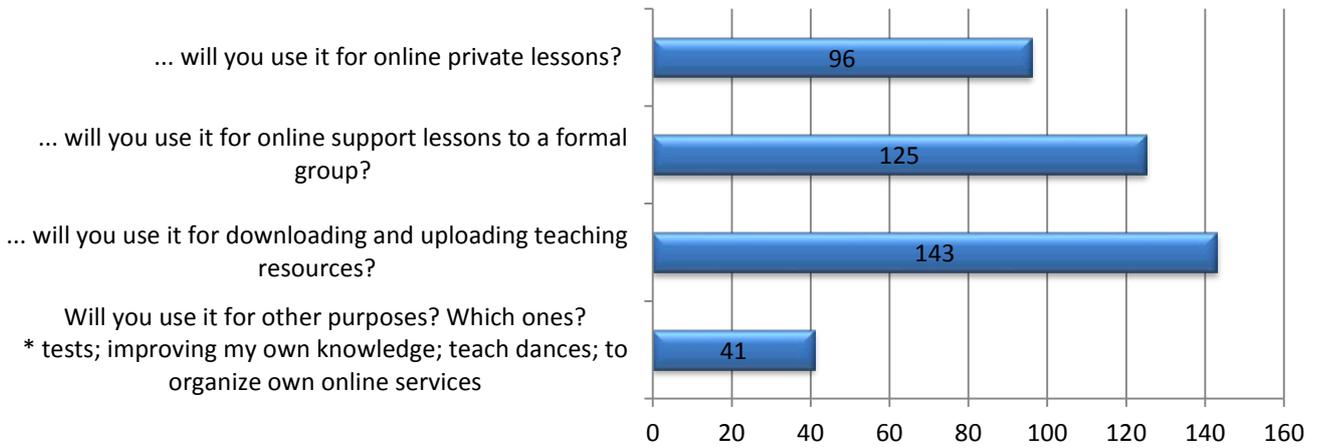* The way the training was delivered and the support provided by the trainer

Impact of the training

The majority of the participants is committed to use the iPortal for teaching. Most participants will use it for downloading and uploading teaching materials or to support lessons to formal groups. Half of the participants would like to use it for private online lessons.

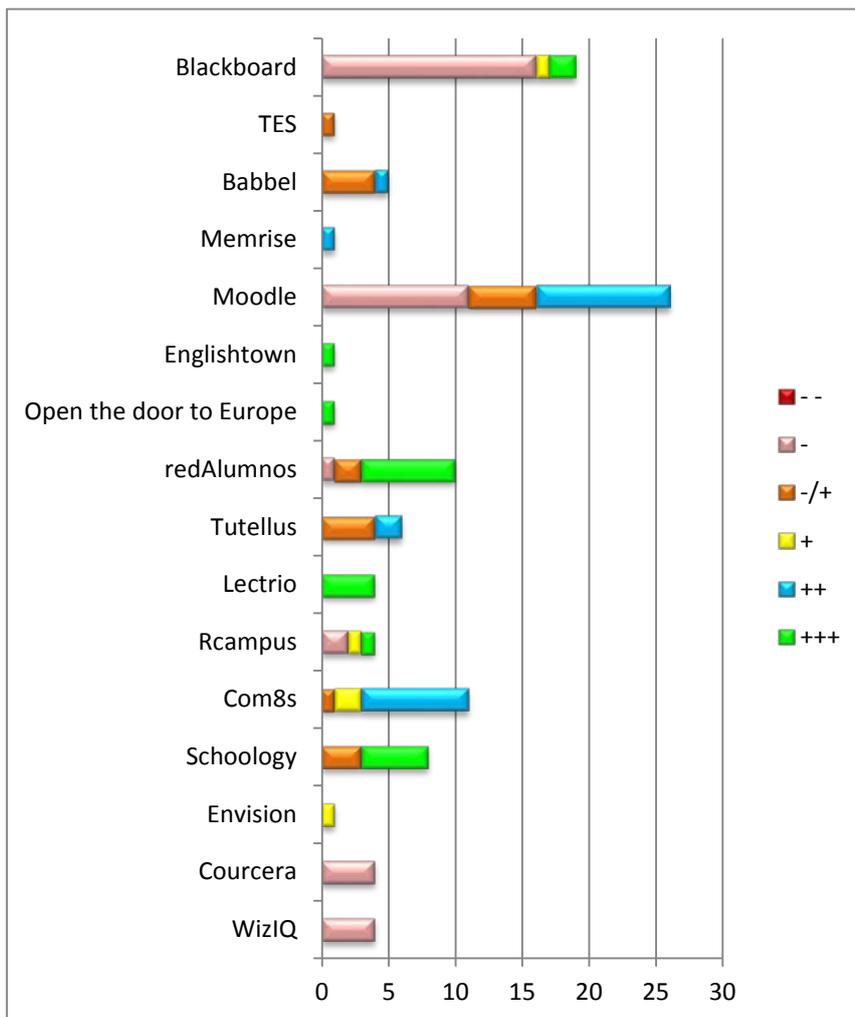12) What is your commitment to use the iPortal as a teacher?

Commitment to use the iPortal

Legend: - - , - , -/+ , + , ++ , +++

If you feel committed to use the iPortal in the future...

Bar chart:
- ... will you use it for online private lessons? — 96
- ... will you use it for online support lessons to a formal group? — 125
- ... will you use it for downloading and uploading teaching resources? — 143
- Will you use it for other purposes? Which ones? * tests; improving my own knowledge; teach dances; to organize own online services — 41

What is your experience with other online teaching/learning platforms?
Which one?   What level? (- -   -   -/+   +   ++   +++)

Platforms: Blackboard, TES, Babbel, Memrise, Moodle, Englishtown, Open the door to Europe, redAlumnos, Tutellus, Lectrio, Rcampus, Com8s, Schoology, Envision, Courcera, WizIQ

Legend:
- - -
- -
- -/+
- +
- ++
- +++

Conclusion

In general, the feedback of the participants was very positive, which can be seen from the graphs above. An important observation from the evaluation is the fact, that most of the teachers don't have any or just little experience with online teaching platforms. Therefore, the participants appreciated to get an insight into online language teaching and the variety of possibilities through the iPortal. Especially the possibility to combine synchronous and asynchronous learning with the platform was rated very well. However, many participants also stressed that they would need much more time to get to know everything better and practice before using it with their students. For some participants the platform seemed to be too complex and for them it took more time to get familiar with the different functions.