# LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES

Technology Supports Cross Cultural Education

TECHNOLOGY

EURODESK

This case study incorporates a report presented to the 1991 Würzburg ELNET conference by Bernd Scherbauer and Wolfgang Michel, tutors at the Berufliches Schulzentrum in Würzburg, Germany. It focuses on the creation of an authentic multilingual learning environment.
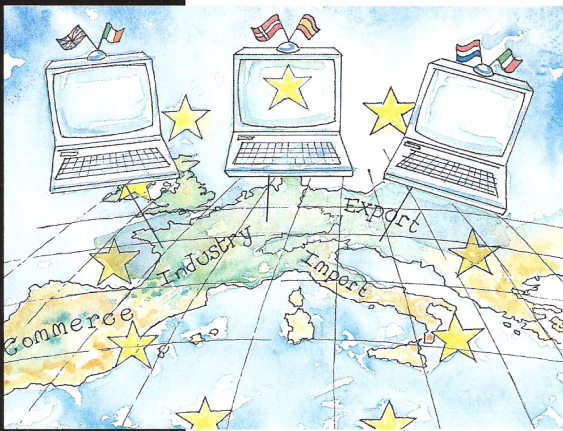
Introduction to EURODESK

EURODESK is a competitive multilingual 'newswire' business simulation game, designed to be delivered via ELNET. The simulation involves the dissemination of multilingual business information which is dispatched online over a short period to participating groups. Competing 'marketing intelligence' teams work to tight deadlines to produce and send out a 'newsletter' to 'European Marketing Managers'.

Background to the Creation of EURODESK

The implementation of EURODESK within ELNET aimed to foster lively interaction between competing colleges. ELNET itself was originally structured as sets of single UK-French-German institutions and was viewed as the facilitator of the communications infrastruture and of appropriate teaching/learning techniques.

This view took no account of:

a) the operation of each of the colleges ie vacations, work placements, examinations, etc.

b) the development within ELNET colleges of the desire to work with other colleges in the infrastructure. Potential accessibility to anybody at anytime is a key feature of the medium!

Students and tutors in some colleges found themselves facing prolonged periods of enforced inactivity whilst they waited for their partners to return from vacation, take examinations etc.

Interventionism

At the beginning of 1990 the ELNET team reassessed its approach and decided to become more interventionist. This entailed offering

ELNET

TUTOR

STUDENTS

NETWORK   **SERVER**
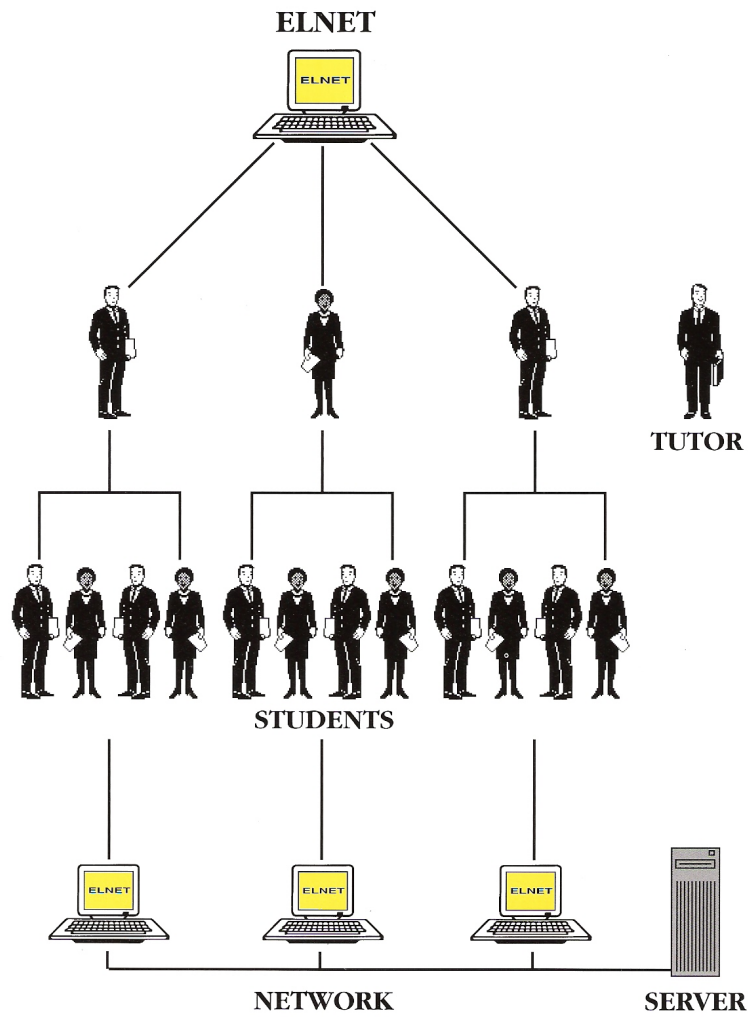
content in addition to infrastruture. Participating colleges concurred, agreeing that the ability of the ELNET team to devise and deliver a range of centralised learning experiences was one of the key features of the system.

The EURODESK Challenge

This was an intensive multilingual competitive learning experience. The Schulzentrum undertook its project in a series of carefully planned phases:

1. Preparation of the class

The Schulzentrum selected 18 students and used 1 computer. The preparation took the form of:

- elucidation of the mode of operation of a News Office

- identification of the goal (ie informing American business partners)

- discussion about how to organise work on the EURODESK simulation

- identification of distinct topics (eg finance, the world of work, industrial firms)

- division of class into work groups

2. Establishing the two day rhythm for collection and assimilation of incoming messages.

3. Initial skim reading and translation of the news reports.

4. Classification of the news reports according to topics in work groups.

5. Work within the work groups.

This involved:

- working out the key emphases of each of the reports

- combining the latest reports with earlier ones

- prioritising the reports according to significance

- comparison of the reports with other sources of information

- discussion of any differences

- detection of similar facts within reports

- development of a line of recommendation

- summarising and reduction of the texts

- delivery of each group's contributions.

6. Overall monitoring and in particular monitoring of the key points raised by EAT (Elnet Access Team).

This included:

- a decision as to content of the selected topics

- decision as to the number of lines per topic

- offline word processing

- frequent reordering and writing of the texts.

Eurodesk Competition Results

EURODESK was played over one week in April 1990. Participants in the EURODESK game faced an exciting challenge. Groups had to deal with business concepts and terminology in their own and foreign languages – all in the pressured atmosphere

of a business information bureau. Competing teams also had to handle large volumes of incoming information and make editorial decisions as to its newsworthiness at speed.

EURODESK adjudicators were impressed by the enthusiasm and commitment of all competitors, many of whom commented on the educational value of the experience.

Competition Winners

The adjudicators selected four teams which had submitted exceptional entries. Peter Symonds College was named as runner-up, with special mentions for the Kollegschule des Kreises, Minden and South Downs College, Havant.

However, the overall winner was the team of the Berufliches Schulzentrum in Würzburg. The team's newsletter covered a range of topics including inflation, energy and the automotive industry and included analysis and advice in addition to news. The entry was praised for being concise, highly readable and for using appropriate business language throughout.

General Conclusions

The Schulzentrum learned a number of important lessons through its participation in the EURODESK simulation. The first of these was the importance of speed of response. Exercises that may take only a day in face-to-face interaction can take considerably longer when carried out telematically.

The nature and presentation of all online material was also important. Not only should text be succinct, but the participation in the project of older and vocational learners meant that it was vital to use only authentic material.

It was also essential that interaction was carefully timed so that all activity was properly co-ordinated.