



## HERMES – Language Teaching at Universities and Colleges of Agricultural and Related Sciences



### - Report on HERMES activities in Project Year 3: 2002 to 2003 -

Project Year 3 (October 2002 to September 2003) was an extremely active year for the HERMES group with the development, piloting and revision of professional development modules, the organisation of numerous professional development courses for teachers of English, French, German and Italian, the development and piloting of teaching material for all four languages, and the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual HERMES Conference with an increasing number of participants.

#### **HERMES workpackage 1 “Key curriculum research on language levels and assessment”:**

Within **HERMES workpackage 1 “Key curriculum research on language levels and assessment”** the second training set for a Professional Development Course for language teachers on language testing has been developed, i.e. the modules on testing productive skills. These modules have been piloted in a second Professional Development Course on language testing at the Szent István University in Gödöllő (HU). This very successful workshop was carried out in English and attracted a larger number than in the previous year. Unfortunately, a German workshop could not take place as the number of registrations was not sufficient. It is deplorable that by the end of Project Year 3, after having undertaken enormous efforts to develop and pilot the training modules for the past three years, Ildikó Tóth and Judit Szabó both declared that due to other obligations they were no longer available for any activities within the AFANet project in the future, which had put a stop to a very successful activity.

#### **HERMES workpackage 2 “Professional development courses for language teachers”:**

In **HERMES workpackage 2 “Professional development courses for language teachers”** our activities concentrated on the development of professional development training modules for teachers of French and Italian. The complete set of training material has been translated and adapted into French and Italian, teaching material for language teaching for students of agriculture and related sciences has been developed and piloted, and the professional development modules have been successfully piloted in four HERMES Professional Development Courses at Hohenheim University (DE), Tübingen University (DE) and the University of Bologna (IT). The development of this training material in two more languages has probably been the biggest step of the HERMES project in project year 3 and will hopefully be the beginning of an active HERMES network of French and Italian language teachers.

As in the previous project years a general Professional Development Course for teachers of English took place, this time in Moscow (entirely financed by a TEMPUS project co-ordinated by Hohenheim University), and for teachers of German at Hohenheim University in Stuttgart (DE).

A second major activity in Project Year 3 was the development and piloting of a series of case studies on agricultural topics for language teaching purposes in English, German, French and Italian. At the end of Project Year 3 a total of 21 case studies (three case studies in English,

seven case studies in French, six case studies in German and five case studies in Italian) have been developed. These case studies are paper-based or Internet-based (8 paper-based case studies, 13 Internet-based case studies). 19 of these case studies are now ready for use in language teaching or are in their final revision phase, 2 case studies are under development.

Furthermore, our activities have been linked with the HERMES activities in the MINERVA project WebCase aiming at the development and piloting of Internet-based case studies in agri-business and their integration into the study programme. In a piloting course on a team-teaching basis between a language teacher and the author of a WebCase case study useful results on the joint delivery of courses have been collected.

The piloting of these case studies both in language classes with students and in Professional Development Courses with language teachers has provided interesting results on

- the motivation of the learner
- the problems encountered by the teachers
- differences in teaching styles
- the acceptability of paper-based and Internet-based teaching material by both groups
- efficient means of using ICT in language teaching and learning
- efficient methods in ODL for language teaching and learning
- the advantages of Internet-based teaching material
- appropriate models of co-operation between language teachers and subject-area specialists

The development and piloting of Internet-based case studies and the development of special HERMES Professional Development Courses aiming at the use of subject related case studies in language teaching for students of agriculture and related sciences has created a bridge between HERMES workpackages 2 “Professional Development Courses” and 3 “Professional Development ICT Courses”.

### **HERMES workpackage 3 “Professional development ICT courses”:**

The activities of **HERMES workpackage 3 “Professional development ICT courses”** concentrated on two separate sets of activities:

- the development of a HERMES Professional Development ICT Course “**Texts, corpora and language testing software: Tools for the language teacher**” in English and German:

After the successful development and piloting of the English modules in Project Year 2 this year’s activities concentrated on the development of equivalent modules in German. Although two attempts were made to organise an ICT course “Texts, corpora and language testing software” in English and German, this course could not take place due to the low number of registrations and the limited budget available. It is planned to organise this workshop for both languages during the Dissemination Year.

- the development of a HERMES Professional Development Course “**Internet and case studies**”:

Modules for a HERMES workshop “Internet and case studies” aiming at the integration of paper-based and Internet-based case studies in language teaching for students of agriculture and related sciences have been developed and successfully piloted in English, French, German and Italian. This included the development of the

case studies for the use in the classroom, the piloting of the case studies with students and the recording of student presentations on video (see workpackage 2).

**HERMES workpackage 4 “Research on the most appropriate methods to develop a stronger interaction between language teachers and scientists of agriculture and related sciences”:**

The main activities within **HERMES workpackage 4 aiming at strengthening the “interaction between language teachers and scientists of agriculture and related sciences”** were:

- a pilot distance learning course based on a team-teaching model in co-operation of a language teacher and a scientist
- a detailed analysis of surveys carried out in Project Years 1 and 2
- the development of the “Best practice guidelines for Language Teachers (LTS) and Scientists of Agriculture and Related Sciences (SAS) at Universities of Agriculture and Related Sciences (UCARS)”

A separate workshop with language teachers and scientists had been planned on two occasions: the workshop was supposed to take place during an AFANet conference or a WebCase workshop, but unfortunately both activities were cancelled.

**Dissemination:**

The dissemination activities of the HERMES working group included:

- the production of two **HERMES Newsletters**
- regular **mailings** to the network by email and postal mail
- presentation of an **academic paper at a conference** in Poznań (PL)
- submission of **academic papers for publication**
- updating of the **HERMES website** and development of a **French** version of the website
- the **6<sup>th</sup> Annual HERMES Conference** in July 2003 in Tübingen

**Co-ordination and networking:**

The change of the co-ordinating institution from Aberdeen to Nancy, the late setting up of a reimbursement procedure for project partners in Nancy and the more detailed analysis of expenses claims by INPL Nancy have had a very negative impact on the HERMES activities:

- reimbursement of expenses has taken a particularly long time, occasionally exceeding one year
- this has put several project partners (and not the least active ones) in a very difficult financial position
- several project partners have therefore declared that they will no longer be available for the project in the future or will have to reduce their efforts
- the HERMES co-ordinator has spent more time on administrative, financial and logistic problems than on content activities
- administration and partners at INPL Nancy has not been perceived by the HERMES group as being very helpful in trying to solve the problems

- the huge number of problems during the whole project year and beyond have had a very negative impact on the motivation of all project partners concerning their personal input and their future involvement in the AFANet project.

This situation is particularly unfortunate as the HERMES group had become more and more active over the past years and the exchange of information via the mailing list and the interest in our workshops and the Annual HERMES Conference had encountered a considerable increase of interest.

### **Results and perspectives:**

Although the financial problems encountered in Project Year 3 have had an extremely negative impact on the HERMES activities, this project year has been a very successful year for the HERMES group from a content point of view. This success can be seen first of all in the development of Professional Development modules for teachers of French and Italian at UCARS, opening our network to a far larger group of language teachers, and in the development of case studies for use in language teaching.

Most of our activities that had been planned could be successfully carried out, although the project had encountered a considerable reduction of the budget. Only the following activities we had originally planned could not take place:

- a Professional Development ICT course “Texts, corpora and language testing software”:

This was compensated by four workshops “Internet and case studies” in English, French, German and Italian.

- a larger workshop with language teachers and scientists (due to the cancellation of the AFANet conference and the WebCase workshop):

A small workshop with scientists took place around a piloting course of a WebCase case study, leading to the development of “Best practice guidelines”.

On the other hand the workshops “Internet and case studies” had not been planned originally, so four extra activities could take place including a considerable number of delegates.

The HERMES groups will continue the activities during the Dissemination Year by:

- organising HERMES Professional Development Courses, in order to familiarise more language teachers with modern teaching and training methods and useful tools
- disseminating our results at conferences and contributing papers to conference proceedings
- disseminating our results at the 7<sup>th</sup> HERMES Conference
- publishing our results in an academic publication in 2004.

Johann Fischer, HERMES Co-ordinator

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