



Title:	R6.3.1: Teaching Report – Hungary, Information Society Research Institute
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Reviewers:	-
Identifier:	R6.3.1
Type:	Report
Version:	Final version
Date:	15 December 2008
Status:	Final version
File:	NETIS_ITTK_teaching_report_FINAL.doc

Topic of report

This report summarizes the results of the teaching carried out by Hungarian NETIS coordinator (Information Society Research Institute) during the project period in Budapest, Hungary.

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NETIS Teaching Report, Information Society Research Institute

By Robert Pinter (Information Society Research Institute)

Budapest, January-December 2008

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Introduction: teaching NETIS materials in Hungary

NETIS teaching materials were used in many courses in Hungary. This report includes only the teaching experiences of Information Society Research Institute (ITTK), Budapest University of Technology and Economics (BME), the coordinator of NETIS project. The report summarizes the results of two courses in 2007/2008 semesters carried out by ITTK:

- A traditional course for sociologists in autumn semester 2007/2008 at Eötvös Loránd University of Sciences (ELTE), Faculty of Social Sciences.¹
- An experimental blog based e-learning course for sociologists in spring semester 2007/2008 at ELTE, Faculty of Social Sciences.

The NETIS partner University of West Hungary compiled an own teaching report with its teaching experiences in Hungary, that is why their results are not covered here.²

Thanks to the successful dissemination activity during the project period other universities and organizations also organized teaching based on NETIS materials outside the project control:

- Two blended learning courses for teachers in autumn and spring semester 2007/2008 at Information Society Education and Research Group of ELTE, Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology and Márton Áron College of the University.³
- A six-week-long blended learning course for adult social workers in September-October 2007, organized by Infonia Foundation, Budapest.
- Lectures within the *E-Government in International Studies Programs* international course in 2008 at Corvinus University, Budapest (formerly Budapest University of Economics).⁴
- A Hungarian Moodle-based course on information society for adult learners in micro-region of Szécsény by Kernel Elektronikus Oktató Központ (Kernel Electronic Education Centre) in spring 2008.⁵

The experiences from these latter courses are not included in official Hungarian teaching reports of NETIS. These activities are not funded by the Leonardo da Vinci support, and are not official part of the project. These teaching formed part of dissemination and in some cases were reported in our project newsletters.

¹ We would like to thank Mária Heller, associate professor of ELTE that she made possible to organize courses at ELTE with NETIS materials. Without her it could be not possible to carry out experimental NETIS courses on university level by ITTK.

Carrying out courses at Budapest University of Technology and Economics was not possible because ITTK has no teaching activity at the university and the founding department of the Institute was closed in 2007 (after the NETIS project has already started) because of the inner reform based on the so called Bologna process.

² See the Report 6.3.2: *NETIS Teaching Report, University of West Hungary* on the project website: http://www.ittk.hu/netis/doc/teaching_reports/NETIS_UWH_teaching_report.pdf

³ We would like to thank János Ollé, assistant professor of ELTE that he used NETIS materials in his information society courses. He and his colleague, Adrienn Danka prepared short 3-page-long conclusions of experiences in Hungarian on both courses.

⁴ We would like to thank István Tózsza for using several chapter of NETIS course book in his teaching as resource material for students.

⁵ Kernel Elektronikus Oktató Központ implemented an own Moodle and prepared an information society course based on imported NETIS Moodle materials, see: <http://oktatas.kernel.hu>. We would like to thank Sándor Ferge for preparing the course.

The first course: traditional learning

1. Administrative information

In the case of first course the semester has started at September 2007, and ended in January 2008 (with the exam period). Participants were students in sociology (mainly in 3-5th years). 32 students started the course and two of them left the group in the first weeks. Students usually visited the course the average absence was 3 classes by students in the semester.⁶ All 30 students took successful exam at the end of the semester.

Classes were held by Robert Pinter, except the class on technology (held by the author of the chapter, Attila Kincsei), and culture (held by Bence Kollanyi, a PhD student and also an author of the book). The entire semester was focused on the NETIS curriculum, with 13 classes. The first class was an introduction to the NETIS project and explained the basic conditions of the course, structure of class, exam etc.

The entire course book was taught except the last chapter.⁷ Students could have a free copy of the printed book in Hungarian, or could use the NETIS Moodle. Approximately half of the students asked for the printed version. Faculty library also received several volumes of the book.

Registration in Moodle was obligatory, but using Moodle was elective. With these conditions, only one student made comments in the system, students mainly did not use Moodle, or used it only as the source of texts (passive usage).

2. Structure of classes

The course was a “classical”, normal semester with student presentations (two presentations for each topic, one introduction and one critique of the given chapter). Student presentations were mainly recorded in mp3 format (only in cases when students permitted the recording).⁸

⁶ Three absences are the maximum that are accepted without penalty in Hungary in a course. Above three absences students had to do extra work to finish the course.

⁷ There was not enough time to finish the book, due the class was on Wednesdays and a national holiday is happened to be on also a Wednesday in autumn 2007.

⁸ These records are available on the project website: http://www.ittk.hu/netis/teachm.htm#Curriculum_and_Teaching

Student presentation at Information society course, autumn semester, ELTE 2007/2008

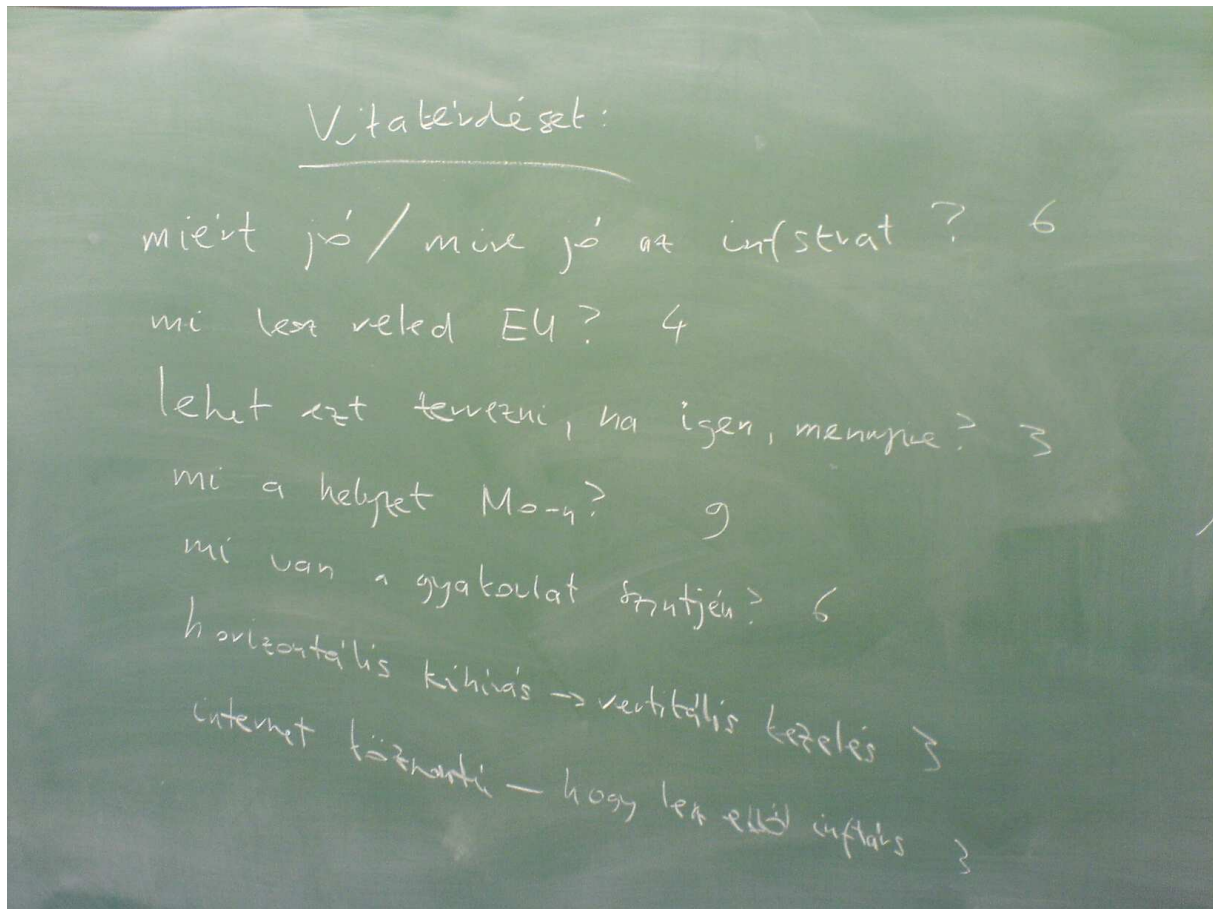


Source: own picture

First two classes were taught by the teacher as an introduction to the course (chapters of Karvalics and Pinter). After the presentations of students there were short teacher comments.

Conversation took part in the last 30-50 minutes of the classes, based on questions of presenters, teacher and students, ranked by group voting. Short memos of classes prepared by the teacher contain the questions and the number of votes.

Example: discussion topics and votes of students on information strategies



Source: own picture

In some cases (e.g. in topics of e-government and e-learning) group work was organized. Students were divided into 4 sub-groups, and had joint work, then presentations and a debate.

Group work in class



Source: own picture

Finally, students filled out the same questionnaire at the end of all classes: what was the most exciting/boring, helpful/obstructing, surprising in the class, and they evaluated the given class with a grade between 1-10 with an explanation.

3. Exam

Students were graded based on their class work and presentation. Students without the presentation needed to prepare 3 short essays (no longer than one page each), based on elective questions found on the NETIS Moodle.

Results:

- 23 students received 5 (the best grade)
- 3 students received 4
- 4 students received 3

Table 1: Results of Information society course at ELTE, autumn 2007/2008

ID	absence	grade	presentation
student 1	1	5	yes
student 2	3	5	
student 3	6	4	yes
student 4	2	5	
student 5	1	5	yes
student 6	3	5	
student 7	3	5	yes
student 8	6	3	
student 9	5	4	yes
student 10	7	3	yes
student 11	3	5	yes
student 12	3	5	yes
student 13	6	5	
student 14	1	5	
student 15	2	5	yes
student 16	2	5	yes
student 17	0	5	yes
student 18	2	5	
student 19	0	5	yes
student 20	2	5	yes
student 21	3	5	yes
student 22	1	5	
student 23	5	5	yes
student 24	6	3	
student 25	9	3	yes
student 26	3	5	yes
student 27	3	5	yes
student 28	6	4	
student 29	2	5	
student 30	3	5	

Source: own course statistics

4. Overall opinion on the course

Students mostly liked the course, and attended the classes regularly (more so than for other, typical courses). Most of the class disliked the students introductory presentations, as these presentations served only as summary introductions and did not have added value. But some students stated that they did not read the chapter in advance because these summaries were enough for them.

However students liked the critique presentations especially where their classmates had formed independent opinions. Some students stated that they would have preferred lectures from the teacher and would have eliminated all students' presentations.

Conversation was an important part for everybody – they liked to participate in debates, hear new arguments and share personal experiences. Students most enjoyed the group work – however they remarked that the first assignment was more exciting than the second one, maybe because it has lost its novelty.

In the following semester we have planned to have an entirely e-learning course with students in order to have comparable data on teaching methods from the same university.

The second course: eLearning with blogging

I. Administrative information

Semester has started at February 2008, and ended in May 2008 (with the exam period). Participants were again students in sociology from the same University (ELTE). 19 students took the course but only 9 students started the course (attended at the first class) and three of them left the group in the first weeks. The remaining six students participated in the activities and were graded based on their weekly work (blogpost, comment on given blogpost from previous week and fill Moodle test).

The entire semester was focused on the NETIS curriculum, with 13 classes. Two introductory classes were held by Robert Pinter (face to face classes) and then in the next 11 weeks students worked in e-learning method with two personal consultations (first in end of April, second at the end of semester in May⁹). The first class was an introduction to the NETIS project and explained the basic conditions of the course, structure of class, exam etc. The second class served as a helpdesk for students, held in a computer room at BME, where students could acquire NETIS Moodle ID, course blog ID and could get familiar with the systems.

The entire course book was taught except the last two chapters.¹⁰ Students could read the course book in NETIS Moodle or download it from the project website (in Hungarian or English languages)¹¹, or lend a copy from the library (in Hungarian).

Registration in Moodle and using the system was obligatory (filling the tests and filling the feedback questionnaires after each class). With these conditions, six students used the system until the end of the semester (active usage).

2. Structure of “classes”

The course was an experimental e-learning semester with active blog use. Because of the nature of blog, the entire semester was “recorded” and publicly available at <http://netiselte.edublogs.org/> in written format (in Hungarian).¹²

In the first two weeks students received information on the NETIS project, the structure of the class, exam etc. In these two weeks they had to prepare their ID in Moodle and course blog then prepare their competence portfolio (in a blog post).

⁹ In this occasion students have visited together a museum with an exhibition on innovative ICT technologies and had a conversation on the whole semester. The most active six students have received their grades also this time.

¹⁰ There was not enough time to finish the book, because the semester started with an introductory class and then a “helpdesk” class, then the students had to prepare a competence portfolio. The first “normal” class when we started to work with the course book was on the third week.

¹¹ One student has read the chapters and filled the tests in English and posted on the blog in Hungarian.

¹² It is possible to use blog within Moodle, but we have chosen a public blog in order to be visible without registration for anybody.

After the first two introductory classes students had the same weekly workload in each week (deadline: Tuesday midnight):

- reading the given chapter of the course book,
- filling the test of the chapter in Moodle,
- choosing one from the teacher essay questions of the chapter on the blog and replying it shortly (app. 1 page),
- writing a comment for the previous week essay chosen by the teacher,
- filling the questionnaire in the Moodle on *Reaction the past events* and reflecting this way the last week activities.

The most interactive element of the work, the commenting was suggested by the students at the second class in order to increase interactivity. Even if the students were involved in this decision they did not like this part of their work, and after several weeks all of them stopped this compulsory commenting. However several times students had debates on theoretical questions after it, because they have read the blog posts of the others and sometimes didn't agree with each other. It means that students mainly did not reflect to each other and learning was no so collaborative as initially was planned by the teacher, but the students weren't entirely inactive.

Beside the blog, the group had an e-mail list for inner communication and organizational purposes. This list was mainly used by the teacher to communicate teaching information regarding the class and students did not use it for any purposes. It is interesting that students used e-mail only for communicating with the teacher directly. It means that teacher remained the knowledge and organizational centre of the group.

3. Exam

Students were graded based on their weekly work (tests, portfolio and blog posts). There was no exam at the end of the semester. Six students finished the class:

Results:

- 4 students received 5
- 2 students received 4
- 3 students did not finish the class

Table 2: Results of Information society course at ELTE, spring 2007/2008

ID	tests	portfolio	blog posts	grade
student1	11	yes	9	5
student2	2	yes	4	-
student3	6	yes	13	4
student4	10	yes	13	5
student5	11	yes	9	5
student6	2	yes	3	-
student7	1	yes	2	-
student8	9	yes	6	4
student9	11	yes	9	5

Source: own course statistics

4. Overall opinion on the course

Students mainly liked the idea that e-learning can be organized around a blog, but some students found it impersonal. They spent much more time with this course (app. 8 hours, a full working day weekly) than with any other course in the semester, and more than with a usual course. They were committed to participation and enjoyed it, learned a lot from each others, even if the interactivity was sometimes lower than they would have expected and it was surprised some of them. However they missed the personal debates and suggested to keep the whole structure with reading the course material, filling the tests, preparing the blog posts in e-learning way but integrating face to face debates.

Based on the written feedback of the students¹³ they found helpful that the whole course was divided into weekly parts, and there were deadlines for tasks. It was welcomed also because the time scale was flexible, students could decide when they want to work. Students found the tests boring and easy (“it is not necessary to read the chapters for filling the tests and there are some mistakes in them”). Laziness was reported as the main barrier of work during the semester – it was a new situation for the students that they can and also must manage their time in the entire semester to be effective and successful.

¹³ It was in the same structure as for the students in the traditional class in the previous semester: what was the most exciting/boring, helpful/obstructing, surprising in the class, and they evaluated the course with a grade between 1-10 with an explanation.

Conclusions: summary of teaching and methodological implications

The overall experience of the test teaching of ITTK was that instead of a traditional course or an e-learning course, blended learning can incorporate the merits of both methods. If we could have the possibility to organize more courses based on the same materials and the experiences of the first two test semesters we would prepare a blended learning class where students' interactivity and the knowledge of teacher would be amalgamated.

The most critical part of teaching information society based on NETIS materials is to keep activity and interactivity of students. We think that the structure of the course and the used teaching methods define the process of learning and the possible success. For example the dynamics of the course could be changed in the case of second course if not the teacher but the students could raise essay questions to each other after reading the actual chapter. Choosing blog post to be reflected by students could be also affected the interactivity level.

The other important point is the connection of target group and the teaching material, mainly the course book: whether the book is suitable for reading, learning without the mediation of teacher. The teaching materials of NETIS are mainly social science oriented, guidance of a teacher can be helpful if students are not familiar with the concept of information society, even if they are social scientists. E-learning course is not possible if students find the teaching material too complicated for individual work.

These experiences show that blended learning can be probably the most suitable way to teach a semester long course on information society based on NETIS materials. However, it must be highlighted that NETIS materials can be used not only in this way, as an entire course, but in modular way as well. In this case it is possible to pick 1-2 chapters, or using several book chapters only as elements of a reading list.