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### **Blended Learning in Preparation for Studying Abroad**

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As student mobility has become common practice in higher education, courses for exchange students are increasingly important in the language training offered by University Language Centres. The problem these courses have to deal with is usually groups of learners with heterogeneous language skills. On the other hand, e-material for autonomous language learning has been developed to support exchange students' preparation for studying abroad. The advantages of e-material are that students can learn in their own pace, time and place, whereas there are restrictions in programmed software for productive skills training.

In this paper, we are going to focus on the use of e-material, designed for exchange students, as a basis for university language centre courses. Our aim was to explore whether blended learning would provide an added value to traditional contact teaching, on the one hand, and to autonomous language learning with e-material, on the other, and what this added value would be like. So, we used e-material as a basis in German language courses for exchange students at the Language Centre University of Jyväskylä. The focus of the language training was on oral skills. Autonomous work on the e-modules was used to prepare students' oral paper presentations before the class. According to a constructivist learning approach, the students' presentations were videotaped and evaluated in three steps: 1. co-learner-evaluation (discussion in the group), 2. evaluation by the tutor (written feedback based on the video recordings) and 3. self reflection (written by the students). The feedback given by the students demonstrated that blended learning was seen as very useful in oral academic discourse training. The results show that blended learning opens up possibilities for combining both learner autonomy and individual feedback to productive skills training.

Keywords: blended learning, added value, oral skills training, exchange students, constructivist learning approach