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## LANGUAGE KNOWLEDGE FOR EXCHANGE STUDENTS - THE EXAMPLE OF EUROMOBIL.<sup>1</sup>

**Sabine Ylönen & Johanna Saario**  
University of Jyväskylä

The aim of this paper is to discuss whether language knowledge should be part of task based e-material and if so, what type and in which way it should be dealt with to meet the needs of the target group and to offer an added value compared to traditional material for language learning. By using the EUROMOBIL programme as an example, a task-based, interactive multimedia language training and information programme for exchange students in different host countries, we argue that the level of the language learner plays a crucial role in deciding on the contents for language knowledge. Here, the contents were chosen mainly based on our needs analysis survey: basic grammar knowledge for exchange students at beginner level, and focus on the features of spoken language for advanced learners. Our principles in designing the EUROMOBIL programme included emphasis on the basics, brevity and making use of the possibilities that multimedia offers for illustration (colours, pictures, sounds).

**Keywords:** CALL software, language knowledge, exchange students, EUROMOBIL

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Early computer-assisted language learning (CALL) from the 1960s on favoured the acquisition of language knowledge in a narrow sense, i. e., especially grammar and vocabulary training. E-material for self-learners was designed according to the principles of programmed instruction. The advantages of the computer were seen in its role as a tutor who never grew tired or judgmental and supported the student's individual learning pace. (Warschauer & Healey 1998:57) Grammar and vocabulary exercises that enable right-wrong feedback are still popular in many online and offline e-material for language learning because of their edutaining character that seems to further learners' motivation, among other reasons. Another reason is the fact that the development of intelligent software that guides the learner individually is still quite exacting and expensive. Naturally, simple right-wrong grammar

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exercises do not meet the needs of a constructivist learning approach with its emphasis on language use in context rather than on acquiring contextless language knowledge. Thus, CALL today aims at a more integrative use of technology for language learning, using it for developing e-literacies and social interaction. Still, the importance of target group specific material for communicative skills training in general is, naturally, not questioned and the development of language learning software for computers and mobile devices will remain an important field of CALL.

Thanks to the fast development of technology that allows the inclusion of pictures, animations, sounds and videos of an increasing quality, newer software enables a more holistic view on communication in social context. Raising awareness for both organisational and pragmatic language knowledge<sup>2</sup> as well as for the multimodal character of language, makes it possible to include these media into CALL software. This awareness again helps developing communicative competence and language proficiency. Tasks, based on authentic video sequences, for example, can improve learners' abilities to comprehend and evaluate target-specific communication and to get insight into social and culture bound communicative conventions (such as following a lecture at a British university or renting a flat in Hungary). Connecting offline software to the web or using it within contact teaching offers opportunities for productive skills training. Consequently, e-material can nowadays be designed for task-based language training, i. e. focus on meaning and language use primarily (Ellis 2003, Nunan 2004). Nevertheless, organisational language knowledge provides learners with confidence in foreign language use and is, finally, part of communicative competence (Bachmann 1990: 87). In other words, language knowledge can support appropriate and successful foreign language use.

In this paper, we will focus on the question of how to present language knowledge for specific target groups, i. e. what kind of language knowledge do specific target groups need and how can it be presented with e-material in a way that offers an added value compared to traditional material. These questions arose during the process of designing the EUROMOBIL programme, a task-based software developed for exchange students in different countries. In the following, the programme is briefly introduced. After this, this paper will look in more detail at the choices for the presentation of language knowledge in two versions of EUROMOBIL, the Finnish version designed for beginner level and the German one designed for advanced level language learners.

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<sup>2</sup> Bachman and Palmer (1997:67ff.) divide organizational knowledge into grammatical (vocabulary, syntax, phonology/graphology) and textual knowledge (cohesion, rhetorical or conversational organization) and pragmatic knowledge into functional (ideational, manipulative, heuristic, imaginative functions) and sociolinguistic knowledge (dialects/varieties, registers, natural or idiomatic expressions, cultural references and figures of speech).

## 2 WHAT IS EUROMOBIL?

EUROMOBIL is an interactive multimedia language training and information programme on CD-ROM with links to the web, designed for students who want to prepare themselves for studying abroad<sup>3</sup>. It can be used for self-study as well as for tutor-based language teaching sessions. At the moment, programmes for the target countries Germany, United Kingdom, Hungary and Finland with the target languages German, English, Hungarian and Finnish are available.<sup>4</sup>

The levels and contents of the programmes were designed on the basis of a needs analysis survey (see chapter 3). Because exchange students in Germany and Great Britain have to follow the university courses in the language of the country, the German and English programmes have been designed for **advanced levels** and their contents are based on situations students will encounter at university. Special focus is on **oral study situations**, such as *Study Advice*, *Lecture*, *Seminar* and oral *Exam*, since clearly in Germany and to some extent in Great Britain oral skills seem to play a more important role than, for example, in the Finnish studying culture (Ylönen 1994; Mauranen 1994). The German and English EUROMOBIL programmes were designed unilingual and task-based using authentic video recordings of the study situations mentioned above (see also Ylönen 2005).

In Finland and Hungary, knowledge of the local language is not expected but experience has shown that the majority of foreign exchange students (over 90%) are very interested in the language of their host country and join language classes at **beginner level**. The Finnish and Hungarian language programmes were aimed at this target group. In addition to **study related topics**, **everyday situations** were also included here. Both programmes contain modules on *Studies*, *Services* and *Leisure* but differ in the fourth topic. Based on different results of the needs analysis, the Hungarian programme includes a *Travel book* module and the Finnish programme a *Library* module instead. The “Language Course” of every module is accompanied by an *Information* and a *Quiz* section. The Hungarian and Finnish EUROMOBIL programmes were designed bilingual using English as a supportive language. A variety of pictures, sounds and video inserts are used in this multimedia language training material for beginners.

In all the versions of EUROMOBIL, the language course modules (i. e. *Lecture*, *Seminar*, *Services*, *Leisure*) contain tasks and exercises for practicing interactive skills and raising awareness for social and culture bound communicative conventions of the particular target country. In

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<sup>3</sup> For detailed information see the project website at <http://www.euro-mobil.org>.

<sup>4</sup> The first EUROMOBIL project was supported by the European Commission (SOKRATES/Lingua 2) and completed in 2003. Additional programmes to include French, Portuguese, Czech, Polish and Rumanian are being developed until 2007 within another Lingua 2 project. The programme can be adapted for further languages.

addition, a *Good to know* section with knowledge about language and culture of the target country was included.<sup>5</sup> This *Good to know* section was not planned at the beginning of the project. The need for it emerged only during the work in progress when it became clear that additional explanations to some of the tasks and exercises could support successful language acquisition and orientation in the target culture. In the language course, we tried to avoid traditional grammar drills in favour of communicative tasks<sup>6</sup>, but wanted to offer some knowledge also about the formal grammatical aspects of language for those interested in it. To sum up, while in the language course the main focus was on interactive aspects of language use, knowledge on the formal aspects of the languages was included into the separate *Good to know* section in form of additional information.<sup>7</sup>

The information on language knowledge for the *Good to know* section was chosen and prepared according to the needs of the target group, mainly based on our needs analysis survey. In presenting and formulating the section, we also kept in mind that the target group consisted of exchange students of different subjects and not only linguists to be. Consequently, we tried to avoid explanations that were too linguistic. In the planning process, we had to consider what type of language knowledge would be meaningful for the different target groups, i. e., beginners on the one hand and advanced learners on the other. Next, we will look more closely at our reasons for choosing and preparing material for the *Good to know* sections with the aid of examples from the Finnish EUROMOBIL programme for beginners and the German one for advanced language learners.

### 3 WHAT TYPE OF LANGUAGE KNOWLEDGE?

Knowledge on the formal aspects of the languages is offered in the *Good to know* section of the EUROMOBIL programmes in the form of additional information. The contents of the section were chosen on the basis of our needs analysis survey realised in 2000/2001. A total of 75 answers from exchange students in Finland and 81 answers from those in

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<sup>5</sup>Other supplemental parts of the EUROMOBIL programmes are a *Glossary* (unilingual for advanced level, bilingual for beginners' level) and a *Read me* section with information on the project and the language version in question as well as on technical details and help.

<sup>6</sup> Only a few drill type exercises are used sometimes on the beginner level.

<sup>7</sup> By interactive language knowledge we understand knowledge about social practices (Fairclough 2000), i. e. knowing the ropes for successful social and communicative behaviour in certain situations. By formal language knowledge we understand roughly the same that Bachman & Palmer call organizational knowledge. Formal language knowledge is, up to a point, part of interactive competence, of course. Nevertheless, native speaker like grammar competence is not a prerequisite for successful communicative interaction: "Ebenso ist es natürlich möglich, dass jemand [...] in fehlerhaftem Deutsch schönere Liebesbriefe schreiben kann, als die meisten Sprecher des Deutschen." (It is also possible, of course, that somebody can write more beautiful love letters in incorrect German than most of the native German speakers. Coseriu 1981: 29, translation S.Y.)

Germany were received. The students came from different countries all over the world and were asked about their experiences in studying and every day situations in the host country as well as about language related topics, amongst others.<sup>8</sup> In addition, an earlier case study was utilised for the choices concerning the German *Good to know* section (Ylönen 1994). These studies indicated clearly that different target groups had different needs in terms of language knowledge required. We will now look at the language knowledge needs and the choices made for the *Good to know* sections of the Finnish and the German EUROMOBIL programmes.<sup>9</sup>

### 3.1 LANGUAGE KNOWLEDGE FOR BEGINNER LEVEL LANGUAGE LEARNERS

An example of language knowledge presentation at the elementary level is the *Good to know* section of the Finnish EUROMOBIL programme. On arrival, exchange students usually have no skills in Finnish whatsoever. Skills in the language of the host country are not needed for studying at Finnish universities as faculties offer programmes in English for international students. Even so, foreign students usually want to gain at least some survival skills in Finnish.

In our needs analysis, exchange students in Finland mentioned as problematic a different vocabulary, difficulties with pronunciation and the difference between standard (written) language and colloquial spoken language, among other things. These problems with the language emerge in the following quotes:

- (1) Vocabulary is different from that in other languages. (M29, Switzerland)
- (2) The most difficult aspect of the Finnish language is pronunciation and especially putting the stress on the first syllable of the word. This is very alien for me. (M 28, Canada)
- (3) Hard that there is written and spoken language (differing). (F23, Germany)

Since exchange students in Finland have generally learned no Finnish before, we considered it important to offer some basic grammar knowledge. All explanations are given in the supportive language English and only the examples are given in Finnish.

The structure of Finnish is, indeed, different from many other languages and that is why we came up with the idea of a *Typical features* chapter. This chapter is based on a short text and was thought to represent a **collection of features** that particularly characterise the

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<sup>8</sup>For detailed information on the needs analysis survey see [www.euro-mobil.org](http://www.euro-mobil.org).

<sup>9</sup> The Finnish *Good to know* section was developed as part of project work during a university course together with students from the study programme in Technology in Language Teaching and Learning 2001 – 2002. The German *Good to know* section was also developed with the help of students. These students worked as summer trainees for the project.

Finnish language. Naturally, even more features could have been added, with good reason, but as it was considered to be an overview we did not want to extend it too much. In addition to being a short overview of the language, this part also serves as an introduction, although not a complete one, to the contents of the Language knowledge section. As we wanted to avoid a plain list of “rules”, we came up with the idea of an **authentic text** as a starting point for the introduction. A suitable piece of text was not that easy to find. On the one hand, the text had to be **short**, because it should also be translated into English and we did not want to fill up the whole screen. On the other, we also wanted the text to be somehow **connected to the Finnish Culture section**. Finally, we chose the following joke as representative for a world-wide genre. Furthermore, this particular joke deals with the Finnish culture (food) and after all it is also related to the European Union that funded this EUROMOBIL-project.

#### (4) TYPICAL FEATURES

**Toimittaja** haastatteli **entistä EU-edustajaa**:

- Mikä on suurin saavutuksesi **europarlamentissa**?
- Me **suomalaiset saimme** yksinoikeuden määmiin.
- Mikä **sitten** on suurin pettymyksesi **eurokansanedustajakaudellasi**?
- **Suomalainen makkara** määriteltiin direktiivillä leivonnaiseksi.

*A journalist interviewed a former member of the EU Parliament:*

*-What do you see as your greatest achievement in the EU Parliament?*

*-That we Finns gained the monopoly of producing “mämmi” (Finnish Easter pudding).*

*-And what, then, do you consider your greatest disappointment during your period as a member of the EU Parliament?*

*-The Finnish sausage was defined as a pastry by a directive.*

The task here is to move the cursor on the words in bold to get more information on the typical features of the Finnish language. The explanations appear in boxes under the text and the typical features pointed out are marked in red and bold. Some examples for the explanations are given in the following:

(5) **entistä EU-edustajaa**  
(a former member of the EU Parliament)

In Finnish, the adjectives, pronouns, and numerals that modify a noun appear in the **same number** and **same case** as the noun itself.

is**ossa** kaupung**issa** **in** a big city

täl**llä** kadu**lla** **in** this street

paksu**t** kirja**t** **thick** books

(6) eurokansanedustaja-  
kaudellasi  
(during your period as  
a member of the EU  
Parliament)

Finnish words are often **quite long** due to the large number of possible **endings, prefixes and suffixes** that can be attached to a word. **Compound words** are also fairly common.  
euro/kansan/edustaja/kaude/lla/si  
during your period as a member of the EU Parliament

**HYVÄ TIETÄÄ**  
Good to Know

**Language**

- Typical Features
- Sound Structure
- Words and Endings
- Sentence Structure
- Word Formation
- Spoken-Written

**Culture**

- History
- Weather
- Time
- Communication
- Festivals
- Food
- Sports

Vowels and Consonants Short and Long Sounds Vowel Harmony

Consonant Change

**CONSONANT CHANGE 1/2**

→ Consonants **k, p** and **t** have two grades, strong and weak:

**Example 1:** Yksi **kukka** on punainen ja muut kukat ovat keltaisia.  
One flower is red, the other flowers are yellow.

**Example 2:** Minulla on sininen **kuppi**.  
Kupissa on kahvia.  
I have a blue cup.  
There is coffee in the cup.

**Example 3:** Talossa on vihreä **katto**.  
Katolla istuu kissa.  
The house has a green roof.  
There is a cat sitting on the roof.

**What?** Consonants **k, p** and **t** can change or disappear.

**Where?** In the word **stem** before the last syllable.

**When?** When **endings** are added.

Pages: 1 2

**Figure 1.** Language knowledge presentation in the Finnish *Good to know* section of EUROMOBIL: Screen 1 of *Consonant Change* from the *Sound Structure* chapter.

The *Good to know* section was designed to be connected with the contents of the CD-ROM programme but also a coherent unity. After some considerations the traditional classification of grammars (phonology – morphology – syntax, Karlsson 1983) was adopted, but with modifications. Because the target group of the CD-ROM programme are all exchange students, we preferred to avoid too linguistic terms and ended up with the headings *Sound structure*, *Words and endings* and *Sentence structure* which we hope tell more about the content of each chapter (see the content for language knowledge in the column on the left in Figure 1). In addition, the ways of creating new

words (*Word-formation*) were considered useful for those coming to Finland: As seen in one of the quotations above, Finnish words were mentioned to be different from those in other languages (see example (1)). Finally, some aspects of the "two Finnish", that is, standard (written) and colloquial spoken language, were also included. The awareness of this dichotomy or variety is fairly important also for the Finnish learners on elementary level as seen, for instance, in the quotations (see example (3)).

In all the chapters of the Language knowledge section, we had some common principles: 1. Basics only, 2. Keep it short (rules and examples), and 3. Illustration (colours, pictures and sound). These rules will be demonstrated with the *Sound structure* chapter as an example.

**Principle 1: Basics only.** First of all, we decided to restrict the contents to **basic information** only. We wanted to introduce the most characteristic aspects, based on the results of the needs analysis. In addition, we also looked at the contents of language courses for beginners. In the *Sound Structure* chapter, we came up with the topics *Vowels and Consonants*, *Short and Long Sounds*, *Vowel Harmony* and *Consonant Change* (see the links in the head of the right column in Figure 1).

**Principle 2: Keep it short.** We did not find it a reasonable idea to transfer a complete grammar book onto the screen. The contents had to be easy to read, so we tried to **keep all rules or principles short**. They are illustrated with examples in which also colloquial spoken language is used. The following example is taken from *Short and Long Sounds* of the *Sound Structure* part:

#### (7) SHORT AND LONG SOUNDS 1/2

→ In Finnish, the length of a sound distinguishes between words that can have very different meanings.

→ All **vowels** and **consonants** (except **d v j h**) can occur as either short or long sounds (written with either one or two letters).

	<b>k</b> issa <i>a cat</i>		<b>a</b> alto <i>a wave</i>
	<b>k</b> isa <i>a competition</i>		<b>a</b> asia <i>a thing, matter</i>

**Principle 3: Illustration.** Naturally, we wanted to take advantage of the multimedia possibilities, to some extent at least. Depending on the theme, for example colours (a), pictures (b) and sound (c) were used. a) **Colours** were used to distinguish between the Finnish examples (brown) and their English translations (black and italics), for example. The short and long vowels were marked red and bold, and the consonants blue and bold (see example (7)). b) **Pictures** were used to illustrate the language examples, such as the cat sitting on the roof in the example for *Consonant Change* (see figure 1). c) **Sound files** were attached to many pronunciation related topics, such as in example (7). Here, by clicking

the play button the learner can hear the difference between short and long vowels and consonants.

In designing the Finnish *Good to know* section, the traditional classification of grammars was adopted because it appeared to offer some basic language knowledge that helps learners at beginner level to understand Finnish and gain confidence in using it. However, the situation was different for the target group of advanced learners, i. e. exchange students in Germany.

### 3.2 LANGUAGE KNOWLEDGE FOR ADVANCED LEVEL LANGUAGE LEARNERS

As studying at a German university requires confidence in using German at an advanced level and as one can assume that basic grammar was part of the earlier language studies of the students at school and the university, we did not see a need for a traditional grammar section in the German EUROMOBIL programme. Instead, we saw a general gap in material explaining the characteristics of spoken German, especially because we were going to focus on oral study situations.

In most language learning material, spoken language is dealt with from the viewpoint of written language rules. Authentic oral discourse is almost never used, and if it occurs in some rare material, even language teachers are afraid to make use of it. In their opinion, the transcripts look so strange, “chaotic” and “incorrect”, even though with their help the conventions of native speakers, the rules of spoken language can be made transparent. Judged by the material available for German language teaching, it is still very much oriented towards the norms for written standard language in Germany<sup>10</sup> and learners are not prepared for coping with authentic situations of oral communication.

Our decision to concentrate, in the German *Good to know* section, on spoken German was mainly based on an earlier case study that showed the importance of oral skills in studying at a German university (Ylönen 1994). In addition, the choice of contents for the language knowledge presentation was based on the answers of the exchange students in Germany in the needs analysis survey. In this survey, only a few students complained about language problems. Some mentioned difficulties in understanding German dialects or “faux pas” in using informal forms of address instead of formal ones, as is shown in the following quotes:

(8) Least I enjoyed the Saxon dialect. (M23, France)

(9) I didn't use the formal 'Sie' (= 'you') when I should have used it.

(M22, USA)

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<sup>10</sup> The German standard varieties in Austria and Switzerland are often neglected.

The *Good to know* section of the German EUROMOBIL programme was also designed to give additional information for the actual language training part, for all those interested, in more depth, in knowledge about German language and culture. As topics for the language knowledge section, we chose the following: *WWW* (*Wichtige Wörter und Wendungen*), i. e. Important Words and Expressions<sup>11</sup>, *Gesprochenes Deutsch* (= Spoken German), *Schimpfwörter* (= Swearwords), and *Sprachspiele* (= Language Games)<sup>12</sup>; see the content for language knowledge in the column on the left in Figure 2. The general principles in designing the German language knowledge section were the same as for the Finnish programme (see chapter 3.1): 1. Basics only, 2. Keep it short and 3. Illustration. In the following, we will focus on the **Spoken German chapter** and specifically on its **sub-chapter Reductions**.

**GUT ZU WISSEN**

.: Sprache

.: **WWW**

.: Gesprochenes Deutsch

.: Schimpfwörter

.: Sprachspiele

.: Kultur

.: Studium in Deutschland

.: Als AustauschstudentIn in Deutschland

.: Humor

.: Quiz

.: **Gesprochenes Deutsch**

Verschleifungen Stile Dialekte

Habter ma'n Euro? Sorry, hammer nich'.

**Verschleifungen (= Reduktionen)** von Lauten in und zwischen Wörtern sind typisch für gesprochenes Deutsch. Am häufigsten kommen sie in **informellen Sprechsituationen** vor, in denen auch das **Sprechtempo** sehr schnell sein kann.

**Verschleifungen** entstehen,

- wenn ein Laut an einen Nachbarlaut angepasst wird (= **Assimilation**)
  - *kann man* > *kammman* (= regressive Assimilation: ein Laut beeinflusst den vorhergehenden)
  - *haben* > *habm* > *ham* (= progressive Assimilation: ein Laut beeinflusst den folgenden, in diesem Fall erst durch Verschwinden des „e“ möglich)
- wenn **Laute** völlig **verschwinden** (= **Elision**)

**Figure 2.** Language knowledge presentation in the German *Good to know* section of EUROMOBIL: Screen of *Verschleifungen* (= reductions) from the *Gesprochenes Deutsch* (= Spoken German) chapter.

<sup>11</sup> The WWW part contains *Begriffe aus der Hochschulsprache* (= study related words), *Redewendungen* (= German idioms) and *Sprichwörter* (= proverbs).

<sup>12</sup> Swearwords and Language Games are related to the Seminar module of the language training part in which a French student gives a paper (studentisches Referat) about “Humour in France and Germany”.

**The Spoken German chapter** is introduced with a short text about *Gesprochenes Deutsch* in which we tried to summarise the main characteristics of spoken German and to justify the choice of topics in this chapter: *Verschleifungen* (= reductions), *Stile* (= styles ) and *Dialekte* (= dialects), see example (10).

(10) **Gesprochenes Deutsch/Spoken German**<sup>13</sup>

Spoken language differs from written mainly in its **spontaneous** and unplanned character. That is why its **sentence structure** is often, compared to written language, simpler, shorter and more uncompleted. Planning signals (ahm), interruptions, speaker's own corrections and corrections made by others occur. Also **words** are often reduced (owing to assimilations and elisions) and shortened. But spoken language differs also in word choice from written language because of its frequent use in informal (less punctilious) situations. **Vocabulary** typical of spoken language only may be used or created.

The **style** used, depends on geographic, social and situational factors, respectively. The supra-regional spoken German with its generally accepted pronunciation is called **Hochdeutsch** (standard German) although it is less standardised than written German.

The regional **colloquial languages** are comprehensible on a supra-regional level but contain traits of dialects. **Dialects** differ very much within the German language area. Stylistic and group bound variants (for example youth jargon) contribute to the diversity of spoken German.

This part is focused on reductions, styles and dialects.

In the *Stile* sub-chapter, language varieties according to attitude are discussed using the traditional classification of style into *gehobener* (= formal/stiff), *neutraler* (= neutral), *salopp-umgangssprachlicher* (= informal colloquial) and *vulgärer Stil* (= vulgar expressions). Here, some conventions for using the formal and informal 'you' are mentioned, for example. Geographic variation in German is dealt with in the *Dialekte* sub-chapter. In addition to maps and a short introduction into the history of the German language, German dialects are presented with sound examples.

The aim of **the sub-chapter *Verschleifungen* (= Reductions)** is to raise awareness for some of the characteristic features of spoken German by using examples from authentic video recordings in different study situations (*Study Advice, Lecture, Seminar, Exam*). In the language training modules of EUROMOBIL, the transcripts of the recordings already follow spoken language with hesitation and planning signals (äh, mm), reductions (ist > is'), self corrections, etc., for example. However, seeing spoken German in a written form is, at least to some extent,

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<sup>13</sup> The German *Good to know* section is designed unilingual like the whole German EUROMOBIL programme. To save space, only the English translation is given here.

awkward and often causes aversion in language teachers and learners. That is why we considered knowledge about spoken German useful for overcoming such aversions. Seeing the transcripts may, in our opinion, help to realise the regularities of spoken language and hence better understand native speakers of German.

Consequently, in the German *Good to know* section we used categories that could describe the features of the spoken language variant (Fiehler 1994, Schwitalla 1997), and did not present traditional grammar rules of (written) standard German. In addition to the reasons for reductions in spoken language (such as assimilation, elision and vocal reduction), different forms of reductions are listed, for example.

The dialogue in the picture of Figure 2 (*Habter ma'n Euro? Sorry, hammer nich'*) is the colloquial or normal spoken version of the standard expression "Habt ihr mal einen Euro? Tut uns Leid, haben wir nicht." (= Do you happen to have a Euro, perhaps? Sorry, no we have not). In this case, the word *hammer* is the strongly reduced version of *haben wir* (= we have) and not, of course, the tool *hammer*. Medium reduced forms (*habmwer* > *hamwer*) may also occur. These make the reasons for the reductions more transparent:

1. Progressive assimilation in the verb (one sound affects the following)  
*haben* (to have): *haben* > *habm* > *ham*
2. Weakening of the vowel in the pronoun in unstressed position  
*wir* (we) > *wer*
3. Merging of both words with progressive assimilation  
*hamwer* > *hammer* (we've)

More reductions typical of spoken German are listed in the *Verschleifungen* sub-chapter and illustrated by examples from the authentic video recordings of EUROMOBIL. In designing the German *Good to know* section emphasis was put on the characteristic features of spoken language that are often neglected in traditional language training.

#### 4 CONCLUSION

Information on language knowledge is a helpful tool in developing learner's communicative competence and may therefore enrich task based e-material. A needs analysis survey carried out at the beginning of the EUROMOBIL project ([www.euro-mobil.org](http://www.euro-mobil.org)) and an earlier case study on culture bound differences in studying at Finnish and German universities (Ylönen 1994) were helpful for deciding the contents of the language knowledge section for different target groups. In the Finnish EUROMOBIL programme for beginners, a traditional grammar classification (phonology – morphology – syntax, Karlsson 1983) is presented as exchange students in Finland usually have no basic knowledge of Finnish. Grammatical knowledge about Finnish as a non

Indo-European and agglutinizing language (see example (6)) is part of the surviving skills that the students mentioned they were interested in. In the German EUROMOBIL programme for advanced language learners, no basic grammar knowledge is presented because one can assume that basic grammar has been part of earlier language studies. Instead, the main focus here is on the characteristics of spoken German (Schwitalla 1997) that are often neglected in language training but, nevertheless, a reality that foreign language learners have to deal with in German speaking countries. The aim of the German language knowledge section is to prepare students for this reality and to offer explanations to the authentic video sequences used, especially as studying at a German university requires good oral language skills as shown in the earlier case study (Ylönen 1994). In both programmes, an emphasis on basics and brevity were the principles guiding the presentation language knowledge. An added value of e-material compared to traditional language learning material arises from using the possibilities that multimedia offers for illustration (combination of colours, pictures and sounds).

## SOFTWARE

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