Education and Culture

Leonardo da Vinci

Writing Professional English

METHODOLOGICAL MODULE

A Language Competences Project

METHODOLOGICAL MODULE

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1	INTRODUCTION

## 1.1	Overview of the Project

The aim of the Project was to develop training materials to help scientific and technical researchers improve their writing skills in English, and thereby enhance their work effectiveness and career prospects. Although the number of partners participating actively in the project was necessarily limited, it was hoped that the outcomes of the project would be disseminated more widely so that they would benefit similar workers in other countries throughout Europe.

The Project was conducted in 2 phases:

1	**Phase 1** (1999 – 2001): this was a Pilot Project, which investigated the needs of the targeted end-users more closely and developed a set of informative guidelines for generalised use by scientific writers in the form of a **Reference Handbook**.

2	**Phase 2** (2002 – 2005): this extended the work achieved in the Pilot Project by producing a revised version of the Handbook, based on feedback from testing it with end-users, and by developing modified **Reference Modules**, tailored to the needs of a wider, but more specific, spectrum of end-users. These included *chemistry and chemistry-related sciences, electronic engineering, informatics, mechanical engineering, medical engineering* and *pharmacy*. The modules also contained glossaries in the national languages of the project partners (Czech, Slovenian, Italian and Icelandic). All the Reference Modules were made available online and on CD-ROM.

On the basis of these Reference Modules, practical task-based exercises were developed in the form of **Instructional Modules**. These exercises were made available on-line, together with answers and feedback hints for the end-user. They were primarily designed to be used for independent learning, but were also suitable for incorporation into a course for training students in the skills of scientific writing. There were 2 versions of the Instructional Modules, one for *chemistry (science)* and one for *engineering (technology)*. In addition, there were optional exercises for the language groups of the project partners.

## 1.2	Purpose of the Methodological Module

The present scope of the Project is restricted in certain ways, in particular in the scientific areas that it covers and the languages and national backgrounds of the partners who have contributed to it. Since it is clearly desirable that the results of our research should be made relevant to a wider audience – both in different scientific areas and different nationalities – this Methodological Module is designed to fill that gap. Its aim is to enable researchers or materials writers in other countries or scientific disciplines to build on the work we have done and to adapt or develop it for their own particular needs.

1.3   What the Methodological Module contains

It was assumed that any user of the Methodological Module would be thinking of making use of our project outcomes in one of two ways. They could either wish to use the core of our work as it stands, but adapt it to suit the needs of their own end-users, e.g. by cutting certain parts, adding new parts, changing the text in places, adding new examples, etc. Alternatively, they may intend to set about a similar project of their own from scratch, in which case the procedures we have followed will be of greatest relevance, while the actual materials we have developed will be of lesser importance. So the text of the Methodological Module has been prepared with these two purposes in mind.

The content of each section includes the following
- o A factual account of the procedures we followed as our project gradually developed. Some of these were prepared in detail at the outset, whereas others were only fleshed out when we actually embarked onto a new stage of our work. We hope that this account will provide insight for others involved in this kind of research and development work in the future.
- o At the end of each section there is a summary of *Points to think about in your Project*. This is intended to highlight key factors for you to consider, whether it be for adapting our materials or undertaking a new project of your own.

The section headings in the Methodological Module follow the obvious chronological development of our work. These are:
- o *Conducting a Needs Analysis*
- o *Designing the Reference Handbook*
- o *Testing the Materials*
- o *Designing the Instructional Modules*

We hope that this module will be of benefit to you and to your colleagues who are working with you. Good luck with your research – we wish you every success.