# OFLEBO, an online teacher-training programme for teachers of French in Botswana as an example of professionalisation

Boingotlo Winnie Kaome[1] and Anne-Laure Foucher[2]

**Abstract**. Technology has influenced not only our everyday lives, but our education systems and the opportunities for teacher development. The introduction of information and communications technology has presented new training platforms to respond to the needs of the workforce. While traditional institutions have greatly impacted teachers, there are now other viable outlets through which many of the required 21st century skills, such as professionalism, can be satisfied. Our project *OFLEBO* is one such example, an online training tool targeting the teaching of oral skills for in-service teachers of the French language in Botswana. This area was chosen because of the teachers' admission on finding teaching oral skills a challenging task. This paper therefore aims to study the professionalisation of teachers through the *OFLEBO* project. Professionalisation as a process is continuous, and practice is its focus, therefore the aim is to inspire the evolution of classroom practices concerning the teaching of oral skills.

**Keywords**: teacher-training, professional development, continuing education, French as a foreign language, Botswana, OFLEBO.

## 1. Introduction

"In an era of school reform, many consider the education and professional development of teachers as the keystone to educational improvement" (Hawley & Valli, 1999 cited in Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2010, p. 127). It is from this

1. Université Clermont Auvergne, Clermont-Ferrand, France; boingotlo_winnie.kaome@etu.uca.fr
2. Université Clermont Auvergne, Clermont-Ferrand, France; a-laure.foucher@uca.fr

**How to cite this article**: Kaome, B. W., & Foucher, A.-L. (2021). OFLEBO, an online teacher-training programme for teachers of French in Botswana as an example of professionalisation. In N. Zoghlami, C. Brudermann, C. Sarré, M. Grosbois, L. Bradley, & S. Thouësny (Eds), *CALL and professionalisation: short papers from EUROCALL 2021* (pp. 172-176). Research-publishing.net. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2021.54.1328



© 2021 Boingotlo Winnie Kaome and Anne-Laure Foucher (CC BY)

school of thought that the project *OFLEBO*[3] was born. This paper reports on an ongoing study in Botswana where French is taught as a foreign language in secondary schools and will discuss the first results from the data collected. The teaching of French started in 2000 in this context, hence there is a lot still to be achieved to promote the teaching and learning of the language. Taking into consideration that it is the first foreign language in the country's syllabus, there are many learning curves and opportunities for growth. One area identified is the need for further training of teachers as far as the teaching and development of oral skills is concerned, which is how *OFLEBO* came about. *OFLEBO*'s main aim is to address the gaps that the teachers have identified in their teaching of oral skills, in the form of training modules that concentrate on the difficulties they experience e.g. how to choose teaching aids for oral comprehension, how to evaluate oral skills etc. This paper will share the first results of the study so far. We are demonstrating professionalisation in the sense of Ingersoll, Alsalam, Quinn, and Bobbitt (1997) who see it as "the movement to upgrade the status, training, and working conditions of teachers, including their credentials, induction, professional development, authority and compensation" (p. 7), the focus being on training and professional development. Moreover, we will also consider Snoek's (2010) addition that professionalisation is "a process in which a professional group pursues, develops, acquires and maintains more characteristics of a profession" (p. 3). The definitions are what led us to conclude that our project is indeed an example of professionalisation. The following research questions guided this study.

- How do teachers in Botswana define teaching oral skills?
- What are their current practices when teaching oral skills?
- What difficulties do they have in teaching oral skills?
- What kind of training would inspire the transformation of classroom practices that develop students' oral skills better?

## 2. Method

A form of action research was chosen to carry out the project whereby a problem was identified, and all concerned stakeholders were invited to work together to try and find a solution. This form of research calls for the same tools to be used

3. Oral Français Langue Étrangère in Botswana

in the different phases of the research, hence a somewhat circular effect of using the same tools at different phases. From the data collected at the beginning of the research, a pilot project is designed online, influenced by the fact that there are training workshops in this context that aim to accompany teachers in their practice. However, they take place once or twice a year, and still do not reach the whole teacher population because of distance and time constraints. To respond better to the needs of teachers, an online training was prioritised in this project, responding to the shortcomings that the current set-up presents.

### 2.1. Participants

Secondary school teachers of French were asked to participate in this study. They were randomly invited to take part in the questionnaire in the first phase of the research and 42 out of a total of 90 responded. In the second phase, class observations were done with seven teachers (out of 12) from one region of the country. The reason for the choice of the region was that the teachers in this region rarely benefit from in-service training due to distance constraints.

### 2.2. Data collection

An online questionnaire was set up, then administered to 42 teachers, being 46% of the population of teachers. The main aim of this tool was to understand the teachers' understanding of oral didactics, what classroom practices are associated with the teaching of oral skills, what material is used, and how oral skills are evaluated. The questionnaire had both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Class observations were also conducted with seven teachers from the Maun region to witness exactly how the teaching of oral skills is currently done.

## 3. Discussion and results

The questionnaire showed that teachers in this context were not confident in teaching oral skills, 61% of the participants responded that it was a challenging task for them, while 95% expressed the desire for further training in the area. The survey revealed that teachers find teaching oral difficult and are not certain of ways to go about it. Their initial training, comprised of a bachelor's degree of four years and a postgraduate diploma of one year, was proving not to be enough for them to organise and put in place the kind of teaching that developed the oral skills of their students. As a result, the students in this context often have problems expressing themselves orally. Our project was piloted as a possible solution to address the gaps

that the teachers have identified from their initial training. *OFLEBO* came about as a way of providing support and further development to in-service teachers.

The first results from the first phase of the project, i.e. the pre-training stage, bring to light what teaching oral currently looks like for our participants. It is evident that further training is needed to bring teachers up to speed with evolving teaching methods, hence making sure they develop their craft and are in a better position to serve their students. The following were noted from the questionnaire results:

- teaching oral language is deemed essential but difficult to implement by 61% of the teachers in this context;
- the level of experience does not seem to be a factor on those who made the above conclusion, as 79% of our respondents had more than five years of experience. This suggests that even with practice, the problem persists hence the need for intervention;
- the teachers identify external causes as being the source of the problem e.g. lack of resources (83%) and lack of motivation of learners (57%);
- there is no clear method used when it comes to teaching and evaluating oral skills, the teaching is not presented in an organised manner; and
- teachers admit to needing help in the area.

After administering the questionnaire, the researcher had the opportunity to carry out classroom observations to observe the reality of the students' experiences. This further provided insights into the teachers' interpretations of teaching oral skills and the following conclusions were drawn:

- the atmosphere in which teaching is done seems conducive to learning, however, there is not enough use of activities aimed at oral competence;
- learners are not very involved in oral activities;
- the type of communication that is dominant is that of question-and-answer type, with very little interaction; and
- there is a rare use of teaching aids.

With the observations, another reality is painted, and that is the fact that besides the external sources that were cited previously, there seems to be a need for further training on how to proceed with the teaching of oral skills. With one-on-one interviews that were carried out with teachers after the classroom observations, they stated that they were not satisfied with their own lessons and that they need guidance to improve.

## 4. Conclusion

The results from this survey reinforced the need for in-service training of teachers of French in Botswana. The data collected helped the researcher in establishing the kind of training to deliver as well as the content that training could cover, therefore guiding the next step of the training tool design. The study investigated how the teaching of oral skills is currently organised, and the results showed that a transformation of classroom practices is necessary if teachers are to produce competent communicative learners. The survey made way for the next step of the research, which is the training design, and then the evaluation of the training thereafter to establish if it inspired any new classroom practices.

## References

Darling-Hammond, L., & Sykes, G. (2010). *Teaching as the learning profession: handbook of policy and practice*. Jossey-Bass.

Hawley, W., & Valli, L. (1999). The essentials for effective professional development: a new consensus. In L. Darling-Hammond & G. Sykes (Eds), *Teaching as the learning profession: handbook of policy and practice*. Jossey Bass.

Ingersoll, R. M., Alsalam, N., Quinn, P., & Bobbitt, S. (1997). *Teacher professionalization and teacher commitment: a multilevel analysis*. National Center for Education Statistics.

Snoek, M. (2010). *Theories on and concepts of professionalism of teachers and their consequences for the curriculum in teacher education*. https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Theories-on-and-concepts-of-professionalism-of-and-Snoek/7560a953f19897334e444aad6feb37bc9ce41cbc

Published by Research-publishing.net, a not-for-profit association
Contact: info@research-publishing.net

© 2021 by Editors (collective work)
© 2021 by Authors (individual work)

**CALL and professionalisation: short papers from EUROCALL 2021**
**Edited by Naouel Zoghlami, Cédric Brudermann, Cedric Sarré, Muriel Grosbois, Linda Bradley, and Sylvie Thouësny**

**Publication date: 2021/12/13**

**Rights**: the whole volume is published under the Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives International (CC BY-NC-ND) licence; **individual articles may have a different licence**. Under the CC BY-NC-ND licence, the volume is freely available online (https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2021.54.9782490057979) for anybody to read, download, copy, and redistribute provided that the author(s), editorial team, and publisher are properly cited. Commercial use and derivative works are, however, not permitted.

**Disclaimer**: Research-publishing.net does not take any responsibility for the content of the pages written by the authors of this book. The authors have recognised that the work described was not published before, or that it was not under consideration for publication elsewhere. While the information in this book is believed to be true and accurate on the date of its going to press, neither the editorial team nor the publisher can accept any legal responsibility for any errors or omissions. The publisher makes no warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein. While Research-publishing.net is committed to publishing works of integrity, the words are the authors' alone.

**Trademark notice**: product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

**Copyrighted material**: every effort has been made by the editorial team to trace copyright holders and to obtain their permission for the use of copyrighted material in this book. In the event of errors or omissions, please notify the publisher of any corrections that will need to be incorporated in future editions of this book.

Typeset by Research-publishing.net

Cover Theme by © 2021 DIRCOM CNAM; Graphiste : Thomas Veniant
Cover Photo by © 2021 Léo Andres, Sorbonne Université
Cover Photo by © 2021 Sandrine Villain, Le Cnam
Cover Layout by © 2021 Raphaël Savina (raphael@savina.net)

Fonts used are licensed under a SIL Open Font License

ISBN13: 978-2-490057-97-9 (PDF, colour)

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data.
A cataloguing record for this book is available from the British Library.

**Legal deposit, France**: Bibliothèque Nationale de France - Dépôt légal: décembre 2021.