Innovative language teaching and learning at university: facilitating transition from and to higher education

Edited by

Cathy Hampton

and Sandra Salin

Innovative language teaching and learning at university: facilitating transition from and to higher education

Edited by Cathy Hampton and Sandra Salin

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

© 2022 by Editors (collective work)
© 2022 by Authors (individual work)

Innovative language teaching and learning at university: facilitating transition from and to higher education
Edited by Cathy Hampton and Sandra Salin

Publication date: 2022/05/30

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.2022.56.9782490057986) 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 layout by © 2022 Raphaël Savina (raphael@savina.net)

ISBN13: 978-2-490057-98-6 (Ebook, 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: mai 2022.

Table of contents

v Notes on contributors

1 Transitioning as a language act
Cathy Hampton

11 Transition in languages in trying times – challenges and opportunities
René Koglbauer

23 Navigating a triple challenge: linguistic, academic, and sociocultural integration of students in refugee-like situations
Anne Morel-Lab

35 Enhancing employability skills and supporting transition to the year abroad: a case study
Aziza Zaher and Niveen Kassem

45 Language education as public engagement: designing authentic projects on German-speaking film
Thomas Jochum-Critchley

57 Using machine translation as a parallel text to access literature for modern language learning
Ulrike Bavendiek

69 Using remote communication tools to facilitate student engagement, language learning, and cross-disciplinary professional development before, during, and after the pandemic: the Newcastle Calls project 2020 as a case study
Barbara Guidarelli, Carole Moore, and Cristina Peligra

81 How Covid-19 has changed language assessments in higher education: a practitioners' view
Elena Polisca, Sascha Stollhans, Romain Bardot, and Cyrille Rollet

93 Student-centred learning and formative assessment: a possible answer to online language and literature teaching and learning
Miao Li

103 Metacognitive awareness in L2 listening: a transition from doing listening to teaching it
Jesús Toapanta

113 From face-to-face to online in foreign language teaching: an outstanding experience
Cristina Rodríguez Oitavén

121 Task-based projects for transition from university to placements abroad: development of academic, sociocultural, and employability skills for students of Spanish as a foreign language
Nazaret Pérez-Nieto and Ares Llop Naya

133 Real-world translating: learning through engagement
Angela Uribe de Kellett

143 Author index

Notes on contributors

Editors

Cathy Hampton is Reader in the French section of Warwick's School of Modern Languages and Cultures, and the Academic Lead for Teaching and Learning across the School. Much of her teaching is centred upon first-year learners, and she is particularly interested in the processes of transition between school and higher education modes of learning. Other key areas of interest include e-learning pedagogy and blended learning, higher education pedagogy and the year abroad, interdisciplinary and cross-curricular learning, student-centred pedagogy, and widening participation.

Sandra Salin is Senior Lecturer in French and Director of Excellence in Learning and Teaching in the School of Modern Languages at Newcastle University. She is also Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. She has led and presented a number of learning and teaching projects, including two on transition. Her current interests are in the field of graduate skill development, and reflective and digital learning. She led the organisation of the InnoConf2020 Conference that formed the basis of this publication.

Authors

Romain Bardot is Teaching Fellow in French at Lancaster University. His academic interests include translation and language pedagogy. He was the departmental undergraduate assessments and examinations officer from 2015 to 2020.

Ulrike Bavendiek is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures at the University of Liverpool and has been teaching German language and linguistics in higher education since 1993. She graduated with a Magister Artium in German and Japanese studies (Göttingen, 1992) and holds a PhD in applied linguistics (Liverpool, 2006). She is the Director of CTELL, the University's Centre for Teaching Excellence in Language Learning. She teaches

German language and linguistics. Her research focuses on applied linguistics, psycholinguistics, and language pedagogy.

Barbara Guidarelli is a lecturer at Newcastle University and Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. She teaches Italian language and culture at undergraduate level at Newcastle University. She is a DPSI interpreter and she has 18 years' experience in teaching Italian in various universities in the North East of England. Her research interests include CLIL, interpreting, and innovative teaching methods. Recently she has been working on developing and coordinating the Newcastle Calls Project as part of her research project.

Thomas Jochum-Critchley is a lecturer at the University of York where he teaches the language and culture of German speaking countries at all undergraduate levels and coordinates the German Languages for All team. His scholarship interests are in learner autonomy, project-based language learning, and teaching grammar.

Niveen Kassem is a lecturer in Arabic cultural studies at Birmingham University and Honorary Research Fellow at Durham University. She is Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and has a PhD in literature, and a postgraduate certificate in academic practice. Her research interests include Arabic pedagogy, Middle Eastern literary heritage and culture, and representations of identity and memory.

René Koglbauer is Professor of Professional Learning and Leadership and Dean of Lifelong Learning and Professional Practice at Newcastle University. René is chair of the Association for Language Learning, executive board member of the University Council for Modern Languages, and a member of the International German Teacher Association's Language Policy SIG.

Miao Li is a French instructor in the University of Calgary. She holds a PhD in French literature from Queen's University in Kingston, Canada. Her research interests include 18th century French literature, and French language pedagogy. With Dr Devika Vijayan, she co-edited a special issue of the journal

'Otherness: essays and studies on the representation of the other'. She is currently collaborating with Dr Caroline Lebrec and Dr Frenand Léger on the textbook *La Francophonie en Action*.

Dr Ares Llop Naya holds a PhD in linguistics from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and two masters in teaching Spanish and Catalan L1/L2. She also worked at the School of Modern Languages (Cardiff University) and the Faculty of Education at Universitat de Barcelona. She is now the Batista i Roca Fellow at Fitzwilliam College and Associate Lecturer at the Spanish and Portuguese Department at the University of Cambridge. Her research focuses on the relationship between theoretical linguistics, SLA research, and MFL pedagogy.

Carole Moore is a lecturer at Newcastle University, currently teaching Italian and French to English translation. With 40+ years of teaching, interpreting, and translation experience, she also spent 13 years as Managing Director of her own translation agency. A former Chair of the Italian Committee of the Association for Language Learning, she has written several Italian language textbooks and acted as a consultant for publishers. Her research interests include language teaching methodology, post-war education in Italy, and Shakespeare's Italy.

Anne Morel-Lab holds a PhD in social anthropology and language sciences. She is a certified English teacher in Université Lumière Lyon 2 in France, working with students who live in a refugee-like situation and have registered on DU Passerelle, an innovative programme which has been specifically designed to respond to the needs of this new type of students. Her research focuses on the social consequences of diglossia and glottophobia. She is particularly interested in finding new ways of healing the effects such linguistic discriminations have on language learning practices.

Cristina Peligra is Associate Lecturer at Newcastle University, UK, where she currently teaches English to Italian translation practicals. She also teaches Dutch language and literature at the University of Padova, Italy. She was awarded her PhD in translation studies from Newcastle University in 2019, with a thesis comparing English and Italian translations of selected works by

Dutch author Hella S. Haasse. Her research interests include issues of culture and multilingualism in literary translation, postcolonial translation, paratexts, and innovation in language teaching.

Nazaret Pérez-Nieto is Lecturer in Spanish at the School of Modern Languages in Cardiff University where she teaches Spanish language and translation modules at undergraduate and postgraduate level. Sworn translator for the English language and Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, she currently holds the roles of Assessment and Feedback Lead, Programme Director of Spanish and Portuguese for the Languages for All programme, and Language Coordinator for Year 2 Spanish language modules.

Elena Polisca is Senior Partnerships Manager at the University of Bolton. She was previously Senior Teaching Associate in Italian studies at Lancaster University. Her interests lie in innovative pedagogical approaches to language learning, learner autonomy, digital language acquisition, language assessment, and digital feedback practices. She is also interested in nation-wide language policies and recently published a book on languages and employability.

Cristina Rodríguez Oitavén is a tutor in Spanish at the University of Oxford Language Centre. She also collaborates on the MFL PGCE programmes with the University of Wolverhampton. Her research interest lies in teacher cognition and more specifically on the impact that secondary trainee teachers' beliefs have on their use of the target language while teaching.

Cyrille Rollet is Teaching Associate in French at Lancaster University. He has been teaching at all levels (A1 to C2) of the European Framework for Languages in French since 2002. His academic interests include the linguistic varieties of the French-speaking world, language identity, language development, and language teaching.

Sascha Stollhans (@SaschaStollhans) is Lecturer in digital language pedagogies at the University of Leeds. His academic interests include German language and linguistics, digital approaches to teaching and learning, as well as educational

policy. He is co-lead for German on the 'Linguistics in Modern Foreign Languages' project (www.linguisticsinmfl.co.uk). In one of his most recent open-access papers, he reflects on the delivery of language teaching and learning activities during the pandemic (https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2021.49.1224).

Jesús Toapanta holds an MA in linguistics from Ohio University and a PhD in applied linguistics from the University of Alberta. His academic and professional interests lie in the areas of language instruction and Spanish sociolinguistics. He enjoys interacting with his students and loves spending time with his family.

Angela Uribe de Kellett taught at the School of Modern Languages, Newcastle University from 1988-2019. She initiated the Real Translation Project in 2009 and directed it until 2019. Her special interests focus on bilingualism, translation, and indigenous languages. She is co-author of 'Pasaporte al Mundo Hispano: Advanced Spanish Resource Book' (2009), Continuum.

Aziza Zaher is an associate professor of Arabic teaching at Durham University and Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. She has a PhD in critical discourse analysis, an MA in linguistics, and a postgraduate certificate in learning and teaching in higher education. Aziza has co-authored textbooks for teaching Arabic as a foreign language.

Reviewers

Carmen Alvarez-Mayo is a philologist and a lecturer at the University of York in the Department of Language and Linguistic Science. She is a CMALT assessor and an approved UNILANG examiner. In terms of teaching, she is particularly interested in the promotion of student-centred active learning fostering discussion and reflection through innovative, varied, and inclusive work and assessment that will allow students to develop creativity, intercultural competency, interdisciplinarity, and employability skills.

Miao Li, see authors' list

Cristina Peligra, see authors' list

Nazaret Pérez-Nieto, see authors' list

Sascha Stollhans, see authors' list

Aziza Zaher, see authors' list

Transitioning as a language act

Cathy Hampton[1]

> "The world is but a perpetual see-saw. […] I cannot fix my subject. He is always restless, and reels with a natural intoxication. I catch him here, as he is at the moment when I turn my attention to him. I do not portray his being; I portray his passage; not a passage from one age to another […] but from day to day, from minute to minute. I must suit my story to the hour, for soon I may change, not only by chance but also by intention" (Montaigne, 1588/1958, On Repentance, *Essays* III, 2, p. 235).

This musing on perpetual change from the plague-swept and war-torn France of the late sixteenth century seems to capture, across time, the new mindset that Covid-19 has engendered in all of us. Montaigne (1588/1958) is talking about the very essence of transition: the movement from one state to another. What is encouraging for us is the final line of the quote: "I may change, not only by chance but also by intention". The papers in this volume reflect the positive choice to be in transition, seen as both an engaged approach to being a linguist at a time when the discipline urgently needs re-orientation, and as a fundamental, 'signature' quality of foreign language learning itself, with its see-saw, back-and-forth motion across cultures and forms (Ham & Schueller, 2012). They also tackle the current defining topics in 21st century higher education: technology enhanced learning, employability, wellbeing, engagement, and innovation. This landscape presents its own challenges, as far as facilitating transition is concerned.

Brunila and Lundahl (2020), in *Youth on the move: tendencies and tensions in youth policies and practices*, note that "the discourses on youth transitions do not simply describe young adults but create them, not only as objects but also

1. University of Warwick, Coventry, United Kingdom; c.m.hampton@warwick.ac.uk

How to cite: Hampton, C. (2022). Transitioning as a language act. In C. Hampton & S. Salin (Eds), *Innovative language teaching and learning at university: facilitating transition from and to higher education* (pp. 1-9). Research-publishing.net. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2022.56.1368

© 2022 Cathy Hampton (CC BY)

as subjects, due to the way in which they can also influence the individual's sense of self" (p. 3). Let us begin, then, by seeking to understand the varied pictures of transitioning presented to higher education students at the general level. In the run into the new academic year, journalism tends to have recourse to a vocabulary of endurance: how to 'survive' Freshers Week, how to 'cope' with university. At the more positive end of the spectrum, we have the 'how to get the most out of …', 'Top Ten list of things to do in …'. Incoming students have to position themselves emotionally and socially within the higher education experience when they cross its threshold, and we know that the marketised dimension to university education can add pressure to find a productive way through. Wellbeing and resilience feature heavily in the current discourse, as do employability and agency. Indeed, as Brunila and Lundahl observe, these elements can come into conflict, with students depicted as vulnerable and yet also encouraged to be autonomous and self-propelled. In turn, university teachers often feel enjoined to present a somewhat linear picture of the transition process, from secondary school to a degree leading to 'employability' and to a set of attributes that straightforwardly respond to workplace needs.

This big picture of seamless transition is both problematic and insufficient. Meehan and Howells (2019) argue that new students should be taught that transitioning is a process rather than an event, or series of events. Gravett and Winstone (2019), who asked participants to complete stories about imaginary students at various transitional stages in their university lives, report findings suggesting that "a conception of transition as inherently troublesome and uncomfortable", sitting "in direct contrast to notions of seeking smooth, comfortable, transitions […] offers the potential to see the value of emotional destabilisation and indeterminacy, the generative possibilities that risk, uncertainty and change can create, so that transition is viewed as 'a necessary phase of change and becoming'" (p. 9). In preference to a generalising narrative, these researchers stress the importance of bringing the personal and uncertain into the classroom, together with a "relational core" that "may lead to anyone learning anything", including the teacher (Brunila & Lundahl, 2020, p. 177). Replacing an "individual knowledge-minded approach" to progression (Shi-xu, 2001, in Dervin, 2016, p. 72) with something inherently more unstable means

presenting students with real-world scenarios, drawing on personal experience, and making meaning through negotiation and discussion. Our papers recognise and attest to this need. In his keynote paper, **Koglbauer** stresses the negative impact on Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) of past missed opportunities for conversation, causing mismatches between education policy and the experience of MFL teachers. He reminds us that Covid has revealed how much more we need to take account of students' living environments in order to understand how effectively they can learn. **Morel-Lab**'s and **Zaher & Kassem**'s papers show the benefits of projects that make students storytellers (narrators of their own transitions); **Jochum-Critchley**; **Bavendiek**; and **Guidarelli, Moore, & Peligra** emphasise the progress that can take place when students recognise that they occupy a position of uncertainty between languages and are helped to find the confidence to take risks. **Polisca, Stollhans, Bardot, & Rollet**; **Li**; **Toapanta**; and **Rodríguez Oitavén** consider design changes to teaching and learning formats and spaces that will facilitate more holistic metacognitive and discursive approaches to language learning.

1. Transition as a feature of MFL

It is impossible to separate the ambitions and actions to facilitate transitions evidenced in our papers from the fact that MFL study is a discipline that has transition at its heart. Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) describe language learning as "a dynamically evolving relationship between learner and context" (p. 85). Kramsch (1993) notes that "language study [is] an initiation into a kind of social practice that is at the boundary of two or more cultures... a linguistic reality that is born from the L1 speech environment of the learners and the social environment of the L2 native speakers, but is a third culture in its own right" (in Chick, Haynie, & Gurung, 2012, p. 9). So language learners discover, in the process of intensive language learning and working on other aspects of culture, that they occupy a space betwixt and between their own culture and the Target Language (TL) culture. We would like them to understand that this middle space is labile, and that learning requires investment of the self in the process (pragmatically, in terms of organising time, being rigorous, and

so forth, but also in terms of being ready to turn personal experiences into language through task-based learning.) Our papers show this process in action in various ways. With the help of technology, some teachers drop their students into TL cultural contexts, and scaffold activities that allow them to develop linguistic confidence in that space. **Jochum-Critchley**'s German students plan and run a German film evening as a public engagement event. Initially run live, **Jochum-Critchley** describes how the event has been enhanced by capturing a broader online audience. **Guidarelli et al.**'s *Newcastle Calls* project has intermediate students interview the Italian Antarctic survey team and reflect on their findings. In both cases students are given agency to direct the shape and sharing of real, new knowledge, and because they are doing this in the TL, they embrace their positions as multilingual subjects occupying Kramsch's (1993) third space, and are energised when they find that communication can function very well there.

Morel-Lab's French language programme for refugees seeking to access higher level education at the University of Lyon 2 follows Dervin's (2016) process-centred understanding of intercultural learning, whereby "instability [is placed] at the centre of any intercultural activity: instability of identifications, instability of discourses of culture, instability of power relations, instability of feelings towards each other, and so on" (p. 82). **Morel-Lab** shows how vital this non-hierarchical, flexible approach is with students whose confidence has been damaged not simply through a lack of knowledge of French language and culture, but also by the traumas they have suffered. Her programme involves competency-based work and real-world resources, including going out to visit an exhibition together (Morel-Lab, 2022, p. 29, this volume). Having examined objects given meaning by being on public display, students are asked to choose their own artefact and tell the story of why they have selected it. She notes that students feel more liberated to speak in this activity compared to a straightforward linguistic exercise because their focus is on emotion and creativity, rather than language production.

Transitioning between identities is a challenge many of our students encounter through a Residence Abroad (RA), which Ham and Schueller (2012) have called

“a ludic, improvisational space, a theatre where new identities are temporarily assumed” (p. 6). If all goes well, with time students gain “a profound sense of the perplexing interdependence and fluidity of their own identity” (Ham & Schueller, 2012, p. 6). As teachers, we know this experience to be so ripe with transformational potential that we wish to prepare them well for it and to acknowledge their new-found cultural expertise when they return. **Pérez-Nieto & Llop Naya**’s paper, ‘Task-based projects for transition from university to placements abroad’, gives us a detailed overview of an intermediate (second-year) language programme that gives an explicit RA focus to all key skills covered. All tasks problematise intercultural communication, and are associated with skills labelled academic, sociocultural, or professional, so that students are made metacognitively aware of the different dimensions of knowledge that will boost the RA experience. Via a scaffolded programme introducing concepts of cultural mediation alongside language, they develop skills to reflect actively on these through the creation of a vlog and a questionnaire. If this project leads students towards engaged learning, **Zaher and Kassem**’s project for final-year students of Arabic draws on the fruits of it, by harnessing the local expertise these students acquired on their RA. The Modern Standard Arabic taught in universities is never truly representative of the dialects used in the Arab-speaking world, so these students are tasked with creating country-specific videos on culture and spoken language for outgoing students, in an exercise that endorses the unique value of lived experience and challenges students to apply it empathetically on behalf of others.

This empathetic movement between cultures and languages is also a powerful *textual* experience in the case of translation. Williams (2006) notes that “reading, translating, and writing teach us to know ourselves to be in transition” (p. 36); the term mediation, often used in translation studies, emphasises the importance of cultural contextual knowledge and self-awareness in the act of translating (Liddicoat, 2016). The excitement of translation for students and teachers is that this movement between cultures is tangible, and even a small amount of simple translation theory allows students to think meta-reflexively about how they move between two spaces. As some of our papers note (**Polisca et al.**; **Li**), this excitement has been tempered in our experience of teaching and

assessing online, where the uninformed (and perhaps unacknowledged) use of machine translation by students has presented MFL teachers with problems of academic integrity, but several papers present creative solutions to this issue. **Polisca et al.** suggest that MFL practitioners draw on The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages 2018 mediation objectives, which emphasise the agentic role of the language learner. We see students discover this agency in **Bavendiek**'s paper 'Using machine translation as parallel text to access literature for modern language learning', which shows that even with fairly novice learners, machine translation can be employed critically as a tool for language progression and transcultural awareness. **Bavendiek** provides her intermediate students with machine translations of songs alongside the TL originals, both to speed up the reading process and to engage the students' critical interest: can they spot weaknesses in the machine translations? Where do these weaknesses stem from? Students' confidence is boosted when they discover that their own transcultural understanding trumps the machine, and this makes clear to them the purpose of personal, human interventions in the process. In her paper on the Newcastle 'Real Translation' project, **Uribe de Kellett** describes a longstanding extra-curricular project in which students are engaged to translate for local charities, discovering not only their agency as linguists, but also their social and moral agency (they must become effective practitioners in terms of determining and negotiating roles, establishing deadlines, and responding dynamically to real-world needs). As well as transitioning between cultures themselves, these students experience pivotal issues in the lives of other communities.

2. Building spaces for student agency

While task- and project-based learning features in many papers, other contributions examine broader methodological and systemic changes (at programme or cohort level) that look for ways to capitalise on the learning that emerges when students are given agency to manage transitions. **Toapanta**'s paper reminds us that the skill of listening is often not explicitly taught and sets out a case study of Spanish beginner learners given scaffolded group

tasks promoting meta-reflection on the challenges of listening, leading to enhanced performance and a readiness to manage difficulty through frank collaboration. On a larger scale, the ‘Oxford to the world’ online programme at the University of Oxford Language Centre, initiated pre-pandemic in 2019, makes use of an ‘interactive multi-modal learning environment’ in its fully online asynchronous programme of learning for advanced Spanish, French and German learners (entirely replacing previous face-to-face modules). **Rodríguez Oitavén** describes the benefits of a flexible online setting in which language centre students can set their own pace for covering scaffolded key skills activities and are invited to compare notes on their different linguistic backgrounds and consequent learning approaches via the non-threatening space of online fora. Students are further supported by targeted synchronous meetings with teachers. Such is the success of this blended approach that an adapted beginners programme has now been developed.

3. Practitioners in transition?

So far, this introduction has looked at the experience of transition largely from the perspective of the learner, but we teachers are also caught up in the mutability of current circumstances, with major change intensified by the pandemic, but already nascent in our post-Brexit, techno-communicative world. To this context we must add the precarity of UK language education. This volume can, we hope, inspire practitioners to further action, both by way of helpful practical examples of recent changes made to language teaching delivery formats, methods and assessments, and through exploration of the cultural, metacognitive, and affective awareness that our transition-focused discipline engenders in students. **Koglbauer** calls us to work more closely as a community of practitioners to ensure that these attributes are seen in the wider world by turning our curricula to the big questions of our day:

> “would this be also an opportunity to review to what extent the curriculum offer considers or reflects the global megatrends of climate change, technological advancement, accelerating urbanisation, global shifts

> in economic power, demography and social change (PWC, 2021), or the United Nations Global Goals for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2020)? Is there also a wider institutional or sector-wide call for collaborations between universities that could lead to new innovative cross-disciplinary offers involving future employers on a consistent basis rather than just in small-scale pilot projects?" (Koglbauer, 2022, p. 19, this volume)

Our volume is a window onto a range of small-scale projects revealing a 21st century MFL landscape that has "wider and more complex aims than simple language acquisition, including criticality, intercultural communication and empathy, creativity and innovation, independence, team working, ethics and emotional intelligence" (Hall, 2020, quoted by Bavendiek, 2022, p. 60, this volume). It is hoped that it will provide inspiration for broader conversations that could help us transition our sector onto a more stable footing.

References

Bavendiek, U. (2022). Using machine translation as a parallel text to access literature for modern language learning. In C. Hampton & S. Salin (Eds), *Innovative language teaching and learning at university: facilitating transition from and to higher education* (pp. 57-67). Research-publishing.net. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2022.56.1373

Brunila, K., & Lundahl, L. (2020). (Eds). *Youth on the move: tendencies and tensions in youth policies and practices*. Helsinki University Press. https://doi.org/10.33134/HUP-3

Chick, N. L., Haynie, A., Gurung, R. A. R. (2012). (Eds). *Exploring more signature pedagogies: approaches to teaching disciplinary habits of mind*. Stylus Publishing.

Dervin, F. (2016). *Interculturality in education*. Palgrave MacMillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-54544-2

Dörnyei, Z., & Ryan, S. (2015). *The psychology of the language learner revisited*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315779553

Gravett, K., & Winstone, N. E. (2019). Storying students' becomings into and through higher education. *Studies in Higher Education, 46*(8), 1578-1589. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2019.1695112

Hall, G. (2020). Literature, challenge, and mediation in 21st century language learning. In A. B. Almeida, U. Bavendiek & R. Biasini (Eds), *Literature in language learning: new approaches* (pp. 7-13). Research-publishing.net. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2020.43.1090

Ham, J., & Schueller, J. (2012). Traditions and transformations: signature pedagogies in the language curriculum. In N. L. Chick, A. Haynie & R. A. R. Gurung (Eds), *Exploring more signature pedagogies : approaches to teaching disciplinary habits of mind* (pp. 27-41). Stylus Publishing.

Koglbauer, R. (2022). Transition in languages in trying times – challenges and opportunities. In C. Hampton & S. Salin (Eds), *Innovative language teaching and learning at university: facilitating transition from and to higher education* (pp. 11-21). Research-publishing.net. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2022.56.1369

Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and culture in language teaching*. Oxford.

Liddicoat, A. J. (2016). Translation as intercultural mediation: setting the scene. *Perspectives, 24*(3), 347-353. https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2015.1125934

Meehan, C., & Howells, K. (2019). In search of the feeling of 'belonging' in higher education: undergraduate students transition into higher education. *Journal of Further and Higher Education, 43*(10), 1376-1390. https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2018.1490702

Montaigne, M. de. (1588/1958). *Essays* [Translated and with an introduction by J. Cohen]. Penguin.

Morel-Lab, A (2022). Navigating a triple challenge: linguistic, academic, and sociocultural integration of students in refugee-like situations. In C. Hampton & S. Salin (Eds), *Innovative language teaching and learning at university: facilitating transition from and to higher education* (pp. 23-34). Research-publishing.net. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2022.56.1370

PWC. (2021). *Megatrends*. PWC. https://www.pwc.co.uk/issues/megatrends.html

Shi-xu. (2001). Critical pedagogy and intercultural communication: creating discourses of diversity, equality, common goals and rational-moral motivation. *Journal of Intercultural Studies, 22*(3), 279-293. https://doi.org/10.1080/07256860120094000

United Nations. (2020). *The global goals for sustainable development*. Global Goals. https://www.globalgoals.org/

Williams, W. (2006). Being in the middle: translation, transition and the early modern. *Paragraph, 29*(1), 27-39. https://doi.org/10.1353/prg.2006.0010

1 Transition in languages in trying times – challenges and opportunities

René Koglbauer[1]

Abstract

This chapter – as the keynote at the InnoConf in September 2020 – is set out as a call for action. Following a brief introduction focusing on the wider context of the skills and lifelong learning debate in the UK, the term 'transition' is defined and the commonly known (language education) transition points in the English education system revisited. An analysis of the primary to secondary language transition point or border zones of learning (Kelly, Medeiros, & Hazard, 2019) is undertaken by adopting Downes's (2019) concepts of transition. The chapter then further unpicks unexpected transition points, such as the move from in-person to virtual delivery of the language classroom. Building on Downes's (2019) concepts, the author introduces a new concept of policy system mismatch, which is explored and tested on a couple of recent policy interventions impacting language teachers and learners (i.e. GCSE speaking endorsement, changes to the A-level specifications). As a consequence of the analysis of the various transition points, the role of collaboration in overcoming some of the barriers identified is discussed. The final section focuses on the transition from university student to graduate and employee. The reader is invited to engage with a call for action: how could we further enhance our education offer to increase our students and future graduates' employability prospects?

Keywords: lifelong learning, languages, transition, system mismatch, border zones of learning.

1. Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom; rene.koglbauer@newcastle.ac.uk

How to cite: Koglbauer, R. (2022). Transition in languages in trying times – challenges and opportunities. In C. Hampton & S. Salin (Eds), *Innovative language teaching and learning at university: facilitating transition from and to higher education* (pp. 11-21). Research-publishing.net. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2022.56.1369

© 2022 René Koglbauer (CC BY)

1. Introduction: setting the wider context

Lifelong learning[2] and its related agendas (up-skilling, re-skilling, flexible learning, blended/online learning, (degree) apprenticeships, T-levels, etc.) have lately been experiencing a rejuvenation, not just in the United Kingdom but globally. Continuous and rapid technological advancement, the climate emergency, and the related Net Zero targets, the COVID-19 pandemic, and its wide-ranging impact on the longer-term effects upon society, economy, health, and education are some of the drivers of the UK government's lifelong learning and skills policies. While the focus of the public debate lies on technical skills, the European Commission sets out in its (higher) education strategy that "all students need to acquire transversal skills, such as critical thinking and problem-solving and key competences, such as numeracy and digital skills" (European Commission, 2021). To achieve this, the European Commission champions a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics) approach, which is also endorsed by the UK Lifelong Education Commission (2021). In fact, at the launch of this commission in March 2021, language skills were highlighted as vitally important in the government's growth and levelling-up agendas. It is with this in mind, that this chapter explores the various stages and forms of transitional language which learners are facing from primary schooling age to the start of their working lives.

2. Transition

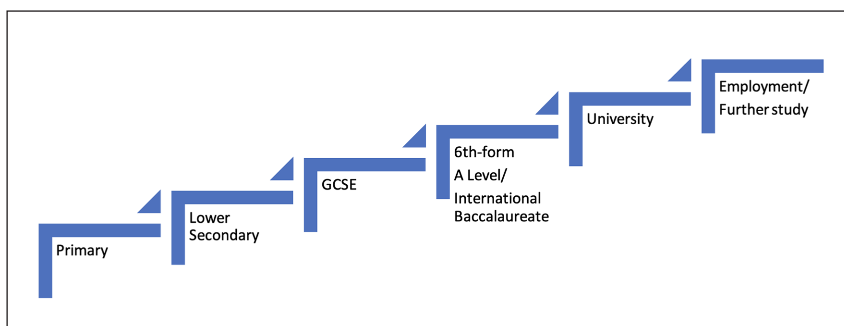
2.1. A brief exploration of the term 'transition' exemplified in primary to secondary transition

Amongst (language) educators, the term transition is commonly understood as points in a (language) learner's journey where they are transitioning to a different level/stage of learning, a new organisation, a more advanced (or in some cases more achievable) programme or exam course: from primary to secondary, from

2. This chapter is based on the author's opening keynote presentation at the online InnoConf in September 2020.

lower secondary to the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), from GCSE to A-level or international baccalaureate, and from sixth form to university (see Figure 1). As part of the Arts and Humanities Research Council Open World Research Initiative, 'Language Acts and Worldmaking' (European Commission, 2021), leaders of the transition strand (Kelly et al., 2019) challenged the concept of transition points by referring to them as 'border zones of learning' that frequently hinder the progression of language learners.

Figure 1. Common transition points in (language) education



Considering the first transition stage, primary to secondary, Courtney's work emphasises the impact that transition points and in particular their activities or lack thereof, as well as the related curriculum decisions made by teachers and school leaders, can have on learners' motivation towards learning languages (Courtney, 2017). At policy level, the Languages Programmes of Study (DfE, 2013) set out the aim of progression from Key Stage 2 (primary) to Key Stage 3 (secondary). However, with only 42% of responding primary schools in this year's Language Trend Survey reporting having contact with their secondary schools (Collen, 2021), it will not come as a surprise that prior learning of a language is not always taken into account when developing secondary schools' curriculum models.

According to Downes's (2019) four different interpretations of transition, it could be argued that the issue here is not the transition point itself but a

"system mismatch" between the primary and secondary school (p. 1467). While pandemic-related measures may have contributed more recently to the seven-year decline of primary schools having contact with secondary schools ("lack of communication" (Downes, 2019, p. 1470), reduced levels of resources are frequently given as a reason by schools (Collen, 2021). This in turn has reduced primary/secondary transition activities, which results in what Downes (2019) terms a "system mismatch in expectations and conditions" (p. 1469). Not to be ignored when managing these border zones of learning successfully are each learner's *individual* needs, their anxieties and worries (and potentially those of their parents/carers), their differing levels of excitement and motivation, as well as their socio-economic, physical, and psychological well-being. In Downes's (2019) framework, this aligns to the category of "individual change to the foregrounded child through supports in moving from background environment A to B" (p. 1467).

2.2. Border zones of learning, (policy) system mismatch and the learner

If we were to explore each of the border zones of learning in the English education system (illustrated in Figure 1 above) in the same way that we have explored the transition from primary to secondary, some of the parameters may shift, but the complexity of anticipating issues related to Downes's (2019) four interpretations of transition will remain. To support a young person to develop coping strategies in a new environment, planning, designing, delivering, and monitoring learners' progress academically and holistically is, of course, vitally important. While a worthwhile approach, the focus of this section is on those – often external – factors which impact on the challenges organisations, their teams, learners, and their parents/carers are confronted with, and this is not always planned for. For instance, in spring 2020, many of us (learners, parents, educators, school leaders, policy makers, etc. nationally and globally) were faced with an unexpected border zone of learning, the transition from in-person to a predominately virtual delivery of education during the first lockdown. The education sector dealt with an unprecedented logistical, technical, pedagogical, health, and welfare challenge. Many in the education community and beyond

came together to support each other; subject organisations, such as the Association for Language Learning, utilised their networks and expertise to offer support for teachers and opened up their professional development webinars, e.g. the *Technology in Language Teaching* series, beyond their members (Association for Language Learning, 2020-21). Initially, some schools reported positively that some students or groups of students were excited by the new mode of learning. This initial hype soon went when first concerns were raised of learners' progress being negatively affected. Early signs of the growth in inequality led to reactive regional support initiatives and the Department for Education's *Get help with technology* initiative (DfE, 2021). Thanks to these initiatives, lack of access to IT resources has not widened the gap between children from more affluent socio-economic backgrounds and those from poorer backgrounds as severely as commonly feared (see also Andrew et al., 2020). According to a study led by the Institute of Fiscal Studies at University College London, the quality of learning space at home and learning resources provided by schools has had a far more wide-reaching impact on the inequality gap, affecting children from poorer socio-economic backgrounds negatively (Andrew et al., 2020). The deficit in learning that the two lockdowns compounded, the resulting demotivation of groups of learners when returning to in-person delivery will, without doubt, have a lasting impact on education and skills providers, as well as some of their learners, for at least the next decade. Researchers will of course continue to analyse this moving forward.

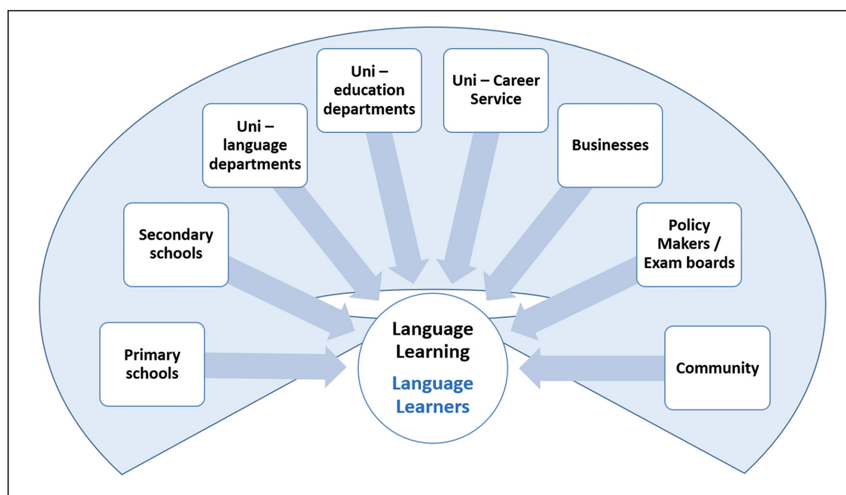
The pandemic – while immensely impactful – will hopefully be a once-in-a-life-time border zone of learning experience. However, a learner's progression can be influenced – halted or accelerated – by a change of form, teaching or friendship group, a new teacher or tutor, the experience of a school trip abroad or the year abroad for a university/college language student. While some of these are system-driven and may relate to an expectation or condition mismatch of the new or even existing environment, they all have the individual learner and the impact of these border zones of learning at their heart. There is however another phenomenon in education which is worth highlighting, mentioning, and scrutinising. Remaining with Downes's (2019) system mismatch concepts, I argue that there is a potential fifth category, namely the system mismatch

between the education provider and the policy makers, in short, a policy system mismatch. Decisions such as moving from a two-year Key Stage 3 to return to a three-year Key Stage 3 does not only impact on a school's curriculum structure and resources, but it also creates additional border zones of learning, where learners, who are midway through their learning journey, are potentially disrupted and must now follow a different path. Another example could be the one-year change to the GCSE language speaking examination, where speaking was removed from GCSE languages (French, German, Spanish) specifications and added as a separate teacher-assessed 'endorsement' resulting in a pass, merit, or distinction three tier system. Teachers and schools had not planned for these options; a pedagogical culture shift with regards to speaking was required. While some embraced this and the greater flexibility, as well as the potentially reduced administrative burden of not having to hold formal invigilated speaking (mock and real terminal) examinations, others were concerned that this would devalue speaking as a skill within the classroom, especially at the examination stage. While unavoidable, this policy system mismatch has led to further system mismatches, for instance when post-GCSE language learners enrol onto an A-level course, where the syllabus and/or teachers may have different expectations in speaking than the GCSE endorsement experience provided for. The option to choose not to study a film at A-level, put in place with the curriculum changes of 2018, is another recently-created policy system mismatch: as an A-level language learner, the student was confronted with an unexpected border zone of learning in terms of specification; as a university student enrolled on a language degree or combined honours degree with languages, the usual transition from A-level to university study might be further impacted by a system mismatch of expectations, for instance where the first year curriculum was built on the understanding that A-level language students have experience in studying a literature topic *and* a film.

A basic principle seems to be emerging: (language) educators, regardless of which phase of language teaching and learning they are involved in, must have an understanding of the wider (language) education system. This was also part of the InnoConf 2020 conference organisers' rationale, as the knowledge of current practice, priorities, challenges, and opportunities

will help language educators to adjust their education offer, their syllabi, expectations, or pedagogical approaches to facilitate a more positive 'border zone experience' for each and every learner. A keynote, a conference seminar, or an article are each starting points of gaining this knowledge and increasing understanding and awareness. Cross-phase policy engagement contributes to further enhancing one's understanding. However, true collaboration between education providers and wider stakeholders, as exemplified in Figure 2 below, will increase the positive experiences of those border zone experiences and limit the system mismatches.

Figure 2. Working collaboratively for success in language learning



However, this can only be achieved if all parties, including collaborators, policy makers, and school leaders accept that developing meaningful and successful partnerships requires resources, most importantly time, and ideally funding for some national initiatives. We would not start with a blank sheet: next to successful localised solutions, the highly praised *Routes into Languages Ambassador* scheme (Routes into Languages, 2021), through which university students gained an insight into language teaching and learning in schools, helped schools to promote languages through various projects and activity

days, and gave pupils access to university students' perspectives on languages, on studying at a British university, and on the students' year abroad/work experience. Utilising learners in making these border zone experiences more manageable is also one of many benefits of the *Foreign Language Leaders Award* (Sports Leaders, 2019). Students in those language departments in secondary schools that have adopted this scheme, plan, design, and deliver activity days for younger children, most commonly to those in feeder primary schools. It is worth noting here that such initiatives address some of the issues caused by the various system mismatches and lack of communication discussed earlier in this chapter. At the same time, students involved as language ambassadors or language leaders gain a wide range of transferable skills as well as build their own confident levels, which will stand them in good stead in their personal and professional lives.

3. Language learners' transition to graduate employees and lifelong learners

Another key border zone of learning is the transition from being a university student to becoming an employee (or in some cases an entrepreneur). It is commonly agreed that language graduates should have a positive outlook when it comes to employment, as studying languages is perceived as academically challenging, requires high levels of competence in communication and intercultural understanding, and a variety of life and transferable skills will have been developed through the year abroad. Those studying on a combined honours degree may also have acquired high levels of specific business, finance, and/or technical knowledge linked to their non-language subject choice(s). The most recent CBI (2021, p. 16) skills survey endorses this, with employers rating their skills priorities for the coming years (in percentages) as follows: industry, practical, technical knowledge (specific to a business/sector) 60%; leadership and management 58%; advanced digital skills 44%; critical thinking and problem solving skills 36%; communication/customer skills 32%; teamwork 20%; planning and organisational skills 19%; basic digital skills 12%; and basic literacy/numeracy skills 6%. These will not come as a surprise.

4. A call for action

A 'traditional' language course, whether focused on linguistics, culture, literature/literary criticism, or translation will touch upon many of the required skills. For some this may be enough. However, whether one agrees with it or not, graduate employment is one of the accountability measures of 21st century university education. Therefore, the following question emerges for university language departments: how can we further enhance our educational offer to increase our students' and future graduates' employability prospects? This question is even more pressing as 'a job for life' is a phenomenon from the past. Current and future graduates will have to embrace the fact that their journey as a learner is not coming to an end with their graduation, when in fact this is the contrary and is the transition to the exciting next step of their learning journey, as a professional and lifelong learner. If we accept that this question is legitimate, then the following may be worth considering: in many language departments, curricula reviews are taking place with decolonisation in mind: would this be also an opportunity to review to what extent the curriculum offer considers or reflects the global megatrends of climate change, technological advancement, accelerating urbanisation, global shifts in economic power, demography and social change (PWC, 2021), or the United Nations Global Goals for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2020)? Is there also a wider institutional or sector-wide call for collaborations between universities that could lead to new innovative cross-disciplinary offers involving future employers on a consistent basis rather than just in small- scale pilot projects (which are nevertheless key for testing new approaches)? To what extent could we challenge ourselves pedagogically by ensuring every graduate has had the opportunity to develop a wider range of transferable skills as part of their university undergraduate education, including experiences in the workplace and/or as a volunteer?

Many of these questions are partially explored and addressed by the various stakeholders – our real challenge is to join efforts to ensure that the transition from graduate to employment does not continue to be a system mismatch but a positive transition towards a professional learning experience.

References

Andrew, A., Cattan, S., Costa Dias, M., Farquharson, C., Kraftman, L., Krutikova, S., Krutikova, S., Phimister A., & Sevilla, A. (2020). Inequalities in children's experiences of home learning during the COVID-19 lockdown in England. *Fiscal Studies, 41*(3), 653-683. https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-5890.12240

Association for Language Learning. (2020-21). *ALL London webinars*. ALL London. http://all-london.org.uk/site/index.php/webinars/

CBI. (2021). *Skills for an inclusive economy. CBI/Birkbeck Education and Skills Survey 2021*. CBI. https://www.cbi.org.uk/media/7020/12684_tess_-survey_2021.pdf

Collen, I. (2021). *Language trends 2021. Language teaching in primary and secondary schools in England.* British Council. https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language_trends_2021_report.pdf

Courtney, L. (2017). Transition in modern foreign languages: a longitudinal study of motivation for language learning and second language proficiency. *Oxford Review of Education, 43*(4), 462-482. https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2017.1329721

DfE. (2013, September 11). *National curriculum in England: languages programmes of study.* www.gov.uk: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-languages-progammes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-languages-progammes-of-study#key-stage-2-foreign-language

DfE. (2021). *Get help with technology*. Gov.uk. https://get-help-with-tech.education.gov.uk/

Downes, P. (2019). Transition as a displacement from more fundamental system concerns: distinguishing four different meanings of transition in education. *Educational Philosophy and Theory, 51*(14), 1465-1476. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2018.1561366

European Commission. (2021). *Education and training. Policies*. European Commission. https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/higher-education/relevant-and-high-quality-higher-education_ka

Kelly, D., Medeiros, A., & Hazard, A. (2019). *Language transitions research*. Language Acts and Worldmaking. https://languageacts.org/language-transitions/language-transitions-research/

Lifelong Education Commission. (2021). https://www.lifelongeducation.uk/

PWC. (2021). *Megatrends*. PWC. https://www.pwc.co.uk/issues/megatrends.html

Routes into Languages. (2021). *The Ambassadors*. https://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/resources/ambassadors

Sports Leaders. (2019). *Foreign language leadership*. https://www.sportsleaders.org/accredited-awards/foreign-language-leadership

United Nations. (2020). *The global goals for sustainable development*. Global Goals. https://www.globalgoals.org/

2 Navigating a triple challenge: linguistic, academic, and sociocultural integration of students in refugee-like situations

Anne Morel-Lab[1]

Abstract

According to the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF), since 2016 many French universities have set up French language teaching programmes for refugees and people with subsidiary protection to respond to their need of linguistic support in French before starting or resuming their higher education studies. Welcoming such students however requires taking into consideration a wide range of complex situations for which the French higher education system is not designed. The universities concerned have therefore to face the same issue: what kind of programme can be set up to support the integration of such students and respond to their linguistic insecurity without altering standards? In 2017, the AUF launched AIMES (Accueil et Intégration des Migrants dans l'Enseignement Supérieur), a programme initiated to support universities willing to develop the appropriate learning structures needed to obtain the accreditation for the University Diploma Passerelle (DU Passerelle), an integrated university diploma aiming to enable students with an atypical background to acquire a B2 level in French, B2 being the language level required to continue their studies at a French university. In this chapter, I will first introduce the CIEF (Centre International d'Études Françaises) of the University of Lyon 2 which is one the language centres involved in this programme. I will then present the CIEF curriculum for the DU Passerelle and finally, develop the teaching

1. Université Lumière Lyon 2, Lyon, France; anne.morel-lab@univ-lyon2.fr; https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4233-7149

How to cite: Morel-Lab, A. (2022). Navigating a triple challenge: linguistic, academic, and sociocultural integration of students in refugee-like situations. In C. Hampton & S. Salin (Eds), *Innovative language teaching and learning at university: facilitating transition from and to higher education* (pp. 23-34). Research-publishing.net. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2022.56.1370

© 2022 Anne Morel-Lab (CC BY)

methods set in place to respond to the specific needs of the students in refugee-like situations, introducing the notions of *glottophobia* and *bientraitance linguistique* as theoretical tools helping to analyse their linguistic environment.

Keywords: Glottophobia, linguistic insecurity, bientraitance linguistique, DU Passerelle, exiled students.

1. The DU Passerelle – an innovative approach to French learning developed by the CIEF

The CIEF is an institute within the Université Lumière Lyon 2 in France, specialising in linguistic and cultural training for people wishing to learn French. It designs and delivers programmes in French language and culture, and contributes to teacher-training in French as a foreign language (FLE). The CIEF caters mainly for year abroad and exchange students studying at the university, and provides foundation courses for international students wishing to apply to French universities. Most students are enrolled in the DUEF (Diplôme Universitaire d'Études Françaises), a diploma offered at all levels of the CEFR (the Common European Framework of Reference for languages) by over 40 universities, and increasingly recognised for access to higher education. Their aim, beyond acquiring their certification, is to practise their French in context, get an international experience, and discover the country, especially its social and cultural environment. Every year, hundreds of students join one of the CIEF's programmes and stay in the city of Lyon for at least one semester. Most of them plan on returning to their home country once they pass their DUEF. Some of them decide to carry on their studies in France in a given field of studies. Various curriculums and programmes have been developed over the years to respond to this consistent activity. Beyond the student population, the CIEF also serves the needs of non-francophone adults living in Lyon. Since 2015 and the surge in numbers of refugees and asylum seekers, the number of applicants has increased, leading the teaching team to reconsider the relevance

of the curriculums. This is how a working group was set up to start thinking about innovative approaches to meet the demand of these students in refugee-like situations, who arrive in France without having mastered its language, which represents a serious obstacle to their settlement in what is to become their new home country. In 2018, the CIEF joined the working group that developed the *DU Passerelle - étudiants.es en exil*, a nationwide initiative of the MEnS (Migrants in Higher Education) network and the Association of the Directors of University Centres for French Studies for Foreign Students (ADCUEFE). In 2019, the first cohort completed its DU Passerelle B2 CEFR.

2. FLE for students in refugee-like situations

When they register to the CIEF, most of the refugees and asylum seekers have already lived in France for quite some years (between two and five). However, the precarity of their everyday life has not allowed them to learn beyond a survival type of French which is hardly sufficient to get basic employment. Their main reason for applying to the DU Passerelle is to learn standard French as they have come to realise that mastering the language is the gateway to their socioeconomic integration and the unique way to fulfil their dreams of a better life. The CIEF has chosen to develop its DU Passerelle to support all the selected students in fulfilling their aspirations and potential as much as possible. Mastering the language is the main goal, but many other factors must be considered to reach B2 CEFR level. The framework set by the teaching team attempts to take all these different elements into account.

2.1. The framework

The general framework of the *DU Passerelle - étudiant.es en exil* is designed to support exiled people transiting from living in their home country to settling in their host country, enabling their acquisition of B2 level, and preparing them for French higher education or for their return to graduate level employment. All candidates must be at least 18 years old, be a refugee, asylum seeker, or beneficiary of subsidiary protection. They also need to hold a high school

diploma (equivalent to the baccalaureate), or a higher education diploma. Within this general framework, each university implements its own variation according to its approach, resources, and existing practices.

At the CIEF, it has been decided that group sizes do not exceed 15 students. Due to the number of candidates, the selection process takes place in three steps. First of all, there is an online pre-registration. Then applicants have to provide information to confirm they match the requirements. Once applications are completed, all applicants sit a placement test followed by an interview. This enables the teaching team to constitute a group of 15 students whose level in French, personal objectives, and commitment are considered compatible with the programme's aim of reaching a B2 level between September and May.

The equivalent of A2 level is required to be selected. This is a major impediment as most candidates have no knowledge of French at all before reaching the host country, after weeks and weeks of a wretched and sometimes traumatising transit, followed by months and even years of tedious bureaucracy. The survival French they have learnt since their arrival is usually far from being standardised, with often an important gap between their oral and written skills. Due to their situation, exiled people are forced to acquire basic oral skills in order to survive, much before they get the opportunity to work on their writing or reading skills. Only a few of them have had the opportunity to follow proper linguistic training. In any case, the basic sessions that the local authorities have a statutory duty to provide to enable applicants to deal with everyday life during the residency application process are not sufficient to prevent common mistakes and prepare candidates for French university standards. Furthermore, not all of them have yet completed the residency process by the time they apply to the CIEF for this programme which is accredited by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research and gives access to reduced tuition fees and subsistence grants. Overall, the main characteristic of this population lies in the heterogeneity of their profile due to the complexity of their various backgrounds and current circumstances. Their determination is usually their best asset, but their life journey and their living conditions – sometimes close to survival – have been identified as their

major drawbacks. All these vicissitudes have been taken into account when designing the curriculum.

2.2. The curriculum

One of the issues of the CIEF DU Passerelle was to keep the framework compatible with the curriculum of the normal DUEF diploma. The DU Passerelle plays the part of an incubator adapting to individual projects. This is seen as essential to the social recovery of these refugee-like students, as many of them used to be students or graduates or established professionals, a status they lost, together with much of their belongings. The curriculum therefore offers a mix between dedicated classes and activities they share with other students. A strong focus is put on social and cultural activities within Unit 5, which represents 44 out of the 240 contact hours of the curriculum. This unit offers a wide range of activities within the university, such as sports or outings organised by the CIEF, as well as other types of activities outside the university, such as volunteering for various organisations.

Eleven hours of individual mentoring are also scheduled, together with a workshop on academic and careers advice, which complements Unit 3 that is dedicated to university study skills. This last topic makes the real difference with the DUEF which does not focus on options after the CIEF, as most enrolled students are meant to return to their home country or already know which studies they want to undertake in France. The last significant difference lies in the reinforcement of the written skills (63 hours instead of 42), as reading and writing have been identified as the main difficulties faced by this population of students whose first language is frequently based on a different alphabet. Apart from these special arrangements, refugee-like students follow the same core curriculum, with a total of 240 contact hours corresponding to 20 hours of classes over 12 weeks.

As an illustration here is the curriculum presented in the B1 syllabus of the DU Passerelle:

- Unit 1 – Oral skills (42 hours) – focuses on phonetics in half groups;
- Unit 2 – Written skills (63 hours) – focuses on constructing an argument;
- Unit 3 – University study skills (21 hours) – focuses on the French university system;
- Unit 4 – Complementary (42 hours) – focuses on French culture and social life;
- Unit 5 – Social and cultural activities (44 hours) – Other activities offered by the university including sports, individual mentoring (11 hours) and a workshop on academic orientation.

To consolidate language acquisition, Units 1 and 2 are based on the same topics as for DUEF students, chosen for their relevance: languages (French as a world language); city (housing, transportation); leisure (money and consumption); health and environment; and human rights and differences (racism, disabilities, sexism...). At the end of the semester, the students from the DU Passerelle sit the same final examinations in Unit 1 and 2 as the DUEF B1 students.

It has been decided that the same teaching team composed of three to four dedicated teachers will manage the programme for several years. This facilitates practice sharing amongst teachers and team-building between teachers and students, which has proved to be essential to the success of this programme and which is now ensured through common teaching methods.

3. The teaching methods

The precarious situation of these students has an impact on teaching methods. Teachers have to take into consideration the fact that they do not live the life of exchange students, free to choose their priorities and organise their free time. Quite the contrary, most of the refugee-like students are young adults who have

to deal with grown-up obligations, either because they have to care for their family or because they are left alone to face the hazards of their new life. One of the main challenges is to make sure they attend classes regularly and keep up with their independent work, without putting them under too much pressure. This is achieved with a balanced timetable and competency-based work. Priority is given to authentic resources in classes, together with outings, such as visiting an exhibition together. The aim is to encourage students to consider their environment in Lyon and the social interactions they can develop there as a source of learning. Over time, it has been identified that their past, often traumatising, social interactions lead to their linguistic insecurity, which is one of the major barriers they have to face in their struggle to succeed.

3.1. Dealing with linguistic insecurity

Linguistic insecurity was first described by the linguist William Labov (1972) in a paper on the social stratification of the pronunciation of common sounds. His fieldwork in three different retail stores in New York demonstrated the gap between social attitudes and speech patterns. In other words, how awareness of not keeping up to the linguistic standards can create a feeling of linguistic insecurity which, depending on the situation, will lead to a wide range of social behaviours such as negative attitudes, lack of confidence when it comes to speaking, and even complete withdrawal from any speech interactions. This gap, which is revealed during a face-to-face formal or informal conversational exchange, or when having to write a paper, or read and complete a form, can have stimulating positive effects on linguistic training when it occurs in a supportive environment. However, as often in the case of exiles and asylum seekers, this awareness can also provoke more negative reactions, when misused speech patterns stigmatise a lack of knowledge of the appropriate codes and norms of the current environment. Consequences of such an awareness are lack of confidence, low self-esteem, social non-integration, and attempts to compensate for what speakers consider as a deficiency.

Such observations can be made among the DU Passerelle students, indicating the instability of their psychological state. Most of the time, nothing in their

previous life has prepared them for feeling dismissed or undervalued for not mastering standard speech patterns. Hence, they remain ill at ease, torn between their will to master standard French, their awareness of their linguistic shortcomings, the need to improve their language practice, and the belief that they will never be able to measure up. This belief is mostly based on the fact that they did not expect learning French to be so difficult, and reinforced by their personal experience of *glottophobia*, by far the most challenging issue the teaching team has to deal with.

3.2. Language insecurity and glottophobia

Most of the DU Passerelle students, who in no way feel, behave, or even look like visiting students enjoying exotic discoveries, have already experienced glottophobia in their everyday life or in their interactions with French bureaucracy before joining the CIEF, and will continue to do so during their studies. This linguistic discrimination derives from dissymmetrical relations which can take violent forms because of cultural and linguistic stereotypes and a lack of experience of otherness. This type of combined discrimination linked to speech patterns was coined under the name of *glottophobie* by the French sociolinguist Blanchet (2013):

> "[t]he contempt, hatred, aggression and thus overall rejection of people, actually or allegedly based on the fact of considering certain linguistic forms (perceived as languages, dialects or language uses) used by these people as incorrect, inferior or bad, generally felt when focusing on linguistic forms without always being fully aware of the extent of the effects produced on the people concerned" (p. 45, translated by the author).

The expressions of this glottophobia contribute to the linguistic suffering experienced by and observed in some of the DU Passerelle students during classes. It requires teaching methods capable of rebuilding their self-esteem and taking into account their suffering to make them feel safe while working to improve their linguistic abilities.

3.3. *Bientraitance linguistique* or linguistic healing: a response to linguistic insecurity and glottophobia

Annemarie Dinvaut (2016) first introduced the notion of linguistic healing as a

> "teaching posture to encourage speech on all language practices, research posture and action when variations are received with equal esteem to that enjoyed by standard productions. […] It can refer to macro, meso and micro behaviours. It can be the answer to glottophobia in the political, institutional and professional fields, to the phenomena of undermining and domination" (p. 105, translated by the author).

This transdisciplinary concept can be applied in various ways aiming to build a balanced linguistic relationship between all members of the group: students and teachers.

One of the learning devices which I have tested during classes with the DU Passerelle students is the *art of conversation* (Morel-Lab, 2020), a very informal introduction to the topic of the session in which everyone is welcomed to contribute by relating personal experiences or sharing anecdotes. Depending on the topic, students are invited to come with a cultural object or something they have created themselves to illustrate what they want to talk about. I have often noticed that speaking out about a personally created item or a cultural object relating to someone's life or identity facilitates speech production and communication with the rest of the group, whose interest is maintained through the joy of sharing a common discovery. The speaker can then forget about linguistic issues to focus on their desire to communicate, and therefore reduce the stress and pressure due to the fear of mistakes.

To illustrate this point, I will relate one specific moment that occurred after a cultural outing at the *Musée des Confluences*. The photo exhibition we had gone to see was on the Kalash, who are people living in the mountains in the North West of Pakistan. The photographer was there to comment on his photos – mainly portraits and images of traditional events – and share his stories and

memories. The students had many questions to ask and memories to talk about as some pictures reminded some of them of their own previous life. The following week, once back in class, quite naturally, we started to talk about the visit to the museum. One of the youngest students – one of the most insecure too – started to talk about the feelings and emotions these pictures had brought up, how she had kept on thinking about them. Then she started to talk about traditions in her own country, and all the students started to compare their own traditions, what they meant symbolically and socially. They asked me to help them find the right words, the exact expressions. This lasted for quite some time, longer than usual, but this moment stayed as a milestone in their appropriation of the French language.

This transcultural approach, based on an informal conversation in which all students got involved, in the way they wanted and as much as they wished, to share what they believed would be of some interest to the others, contributed to the building of a community capable of accepting and supporting each of its members with their different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. It participated in the reconstruction of everyone's self-esteem and had an effect on the improvement of linguistic abilities. The young student who spoke up spontaneously for the first time on this occasion was a revelation not only to all the other students who had hardly heard her voice in class until then, but to herself too. Passing this gateway opened the path for her to feel more secure in speaking French.

This occurrence of *bientraitance linguistique* was made possible through an innovative pedagogical approach based on a process – from the preparation for the visit to the exhibition and for the encounter with the artist to the narration of what this experience represented to everyone. In such a process, the teacher, who is the one to initiate the project and who controls its processing, has several roles, from being an organiser to acting as a linguistic mediator facilitating creative communication amongst the group of students in the class. Combined with more formal pedagogical approaches, this holistic approach can offer creative alternatives to support students who have been made to feel insecure in their learning of foreign languages.

4. Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the innovative programme set up by the CIEF of the Université Lumière Lyon 2 to help exiled students transiting from their home country to France, their host country. The linguistic and socioeconomic situation of this population necessitated the creation of a dedicated curriculum focusing on cultural and socioeconomic integration as part of the DU Passerelle, a university diploma accredited by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research. At the end of the year, divided into two semesters, refugee-like students should reach a B2 CEFR level, as this is a prerequisite for foreigners wanting to study at a French university.

Alongside this dedicated curriculum, special care has been given to the teaching methods. A small team of dedicated teachers supports the 15 students selected. It has been shown that for this programme to succeed, it is vital to take into consideration both the socioeconomic context of these students and their cultural and linguistic background. Healing their self-esteem that has been partly damaged by their experience of *glottophobia*, this linguistic discrimination relaying cultural stereotypes, is one of the key challenges. Based on the principles of linguistic healing, special teaching postures encouraging speech and language practices are consolidated to facilitate the process of appropriation of standard speech patterns. This approach has proved to be helpful in supporting students in refugee-like situations who need to reach a B2 CEFR level, this gateway to fulfilling their career aims in their new life in France. This holistic approach, based on creativity and interactions in which the teacher contributes to the consolidation of a learning community, could possibly open new perspectives in teaching practices and benefit all students experimenting transition in their lives.

References

Blanchet, P. (2013). Repères terminologiques et conceptuels pour identifier les discriminations linguistiques. *Cahiers internationaux de sociolinguistique, 2*(4), 29-39.

Dinvaut, A. (2016). *Sociodidactique et ergologie, des savoirs en dialogue - deux démarches de connaissance et d'action à propos des contacts de langues et de cultures*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Université Jean Monnet, Saint Étienne.

Labov, W. (1972). *Sociolinguisitic patterns*. University of Pensylvinia Press.

Morel-Lab, A. (2020). L'art de la conversation, une approche informelle et transculturelle de la bientraitance linguistique. In L. Biichlé & A. Dinvaut (Eds), *Mieux vivre en langues. De la maltraitance à la bientraitance linguistique* (pp. 61-75). L'Harmattan.

3 Enhancing employability skills and supporting transition to the year abroad: a case study

Aziza Zaher[1] and Niveen Kassem[2]

Abstract

The year abroad is one of the most exciting yet challenging aspects of studying modern languages. In addition to the difficulties that all students face in transitioning to the year abroad, students of Arabic face the challenge of Arabic diglossia, given the existence of different written and spoken language varieties. To help with the transition to the Arabic year abroad, Durham University provided funding to recruit a team of staff and final-year students who had completed their year abroad to produce videos to help prepare students for their year abroad in Jordan, Lebanon, and Morocco. This project provided students with a unique experience that equipped them with crucial employability-related skills such as creativity, problem-solving, and teamwork, among others. This paper presents a case study of the project, its outcomes, and some feedback received from students who worked on the project and those who have used the videos.

Keywords: Arabic, diglossia, transition, year abroad, employability.

1. Durham University, Durham, United Kingdom; aziza.zaher@durham.ac.uk

2. Birmingham University, Birmingham / Durham University, Durham, United Kingdom; n.kassem@bham.ac.uk

How to cite: Zaher, A., & Kassem, N. (2022). Enhancing employability skills and supporting transition to the year abroad: a case study. In C. Hampton & S. Salin (Eds), *Innovative language teaching and learning at university: facilitating transition from and to higher education* (pp. 35-43). Research-publishing.net. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2022.56.1371

© 2022 Aziza Zaher and Niveen Kassem (CC BY)

1. Introduction

Students of Arabic at Durham University spend the third year of their study abroad. Before the year abroad, they study Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) which is mainly a written variety. Since it has many 'mutually unintelligible codes' (Hymes, 1964), Arabic is characterised by diglossia, and in fact MSA is nobody's mother tongue (Maamouri, 1998), since Arabic speakers use local dialects. This causes communication problems for students at the beginning of the year abroad, as they do not learn colloquial dialects before they travel. Studies conducted in the USA reveal that 86% of Arabic students believe that they should learn spoken dialects before travelling abroad (Palmer, 2008). However, many students start their year abroad without having learned any colloquial dialects. To help improve this situation, a team of Arabic staff and final-year students created videos to support Arabic students' transitions to the year abroad by teaching them the basics of the colloquial dialects present in the country of their study abroad. The project provided an opportunity to boost employability skills such as creativity, problem-solving, and teamwork among students who contributed to the project.

1.1. Presentation of the project

The situation of Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language (TAFL) has been a topic of heated discussion among professionals for a long time. Al-Batal (2017) published an edited volume calling for the integration of the teaching of MSA and colloquial dialects from the beginning of language courses. However, in practice, many TAFL institutions, including Durham University, focus on teaching MSA in the first instance. This creates problems for students embarking on their year abroad. Arabic students at Durham University spend four to seven months in Jordan, Lebanon, or Morocco to further their understanding of the Arabic language and culture. However, they start their year abroad without having learned colloquial dialects at university. As a result, many suffer shock, have poor oral communication skills, experience frustration, and are sometimes ridiculed once abroad. Ad hoc support has been given to students in preparation for their year abroad by providing them with lists of useful expressions and

advice sessions with final-year students. However, a more sustainable and innovative solution to this problem was deemed necessary.

To support transition to the year abroad, a team of three staff members at Durham University requested funding via the University's Enhancing Students' Learning Experience awards. The funding would be used to produce videos that introduce Arabic students to the basics of the dialect and culture of the country in which they intend to study and to provide them with the basic expressions they would need to communicate once abroad. The funding, awarded in June 2018, was used to recruit teams of Arabic final-year students who had already spent a year abroad. They would work collaboratively to produce material that could prepare students for their experience abroad to help minimise the chances of potential culture shock, embarrassment, and time wasted trying to learn the basics of communication with locals.

1.2. Recruitment and implementation

The project aimed to recruit three teams to work on videos for Jordanian, Lebanese, and Moroccan Arabic. The Jordanian team had three students and the Lebanese team four. However, no students were interested in working on the Moroccan dialect. Based on their actual experience abroad, the teams were asked to identify the communicative needs of students embarking on the experience, and to imagine scenarios, write scripts for videos, and act in, film, and edit them in order to provide junior colleagues with the basics they would need at the beginning of their stay.

Students were enabled to take ownership of the project and use their creative skills to produce the materials they thought would be most useful to their colleagues. Initially, both teams collaborated to decide on relevant topics for the videos and potential content. They agreed on certain scenarios, such as greetings, cultural expressions, and taking a taxi. However, the videos produced by each team were unique and reflected the needs and experiences of each group, as well as the characteristics of each destination country and culture. The students had all the freedom required to work creatively, and they were supported by

staff who helped them in revising scripts, filming, etc. The project had a tight timeframe for the videos to be available to second year students before starting their year abroad.

1.3. Challenges

Students faced various challenges in producing the videos. One of the main issues was working under pressure to complete all the stages of such a complex project within a very short timescale, especially since all students were in their final year and had very busy schedules and academic commitments. Another major issue was the allocation of duties, and some students worked more hours than they had envisaged. These issues helped students to develop resilience and other competencies, including the creativity required to find new and alternative solutions, and time management skills, along with a sense of responsibility that enabled them to complete the tasks assigned to them successfully and punctually. A third issue was the logistics of completing the project with very limited resources; however, students overcame this problem by being resourceful and creative. One additional obstacle facing the organisers was the lack of interest among students in working on the Moroccan dialect. This was resolved at a later stage by recruiting two part-time teachers at Durham University who worked on the production of videos for the Moroccan context.

1.4. Outcome and dissemination

By the end of the project, the three teams had produced 27 videos: ten for Lebanese Arabic, seven for Jordanian Arabic, and ten for Moroccan Arabic. These were made available to Durham University students via Blackboard and YouTube, and they were shared with staff from Leeds University and other institutions. They were also available in the University Council of Modern Languages Supporting Virtual Mobility Year Abroad Resource Pack[3]. Moreover, they have been shared with the Learning and Engagement Team at the Oriental

3. https://university-council-modern-languages.org/year-abroad/ucml-virtual-mobility-resource-pack/

Museum, to be available for students and community users working with Islamic collections.

2. Discussion of outcomes

After completing the project, a focus group was conducted with students who worked on it to gather feedback on their experience. Questions were asked about their motivation to take part, how they found working on the project, and what skills they thought they had developed (see below).

- What inspired you to participate in this project?
- How did you find the experience of working on this project?
- What did you enjoy about this project, and what did you not enjoy?
- Do you think that the skills you have developed in this project will be good for you in terms of finding employment in the future?
- If you could do this project again, what would you do differently and what else would you like to do?

In terms of motivation, it was clear from the feedback that the students understood the need for the project and how it would benefit their junior colleagues: “I think it would be really helpful for other people to have this resource to be able to have some knowledge or at least understand the basics of the dialect before they move to the Middle East”. It was also clear that they had very positive perceptions of their experience of the project. For example, one commented that they “thought it was very useful to keep up with colloquial” and that “it was an unusual opportunity”.

Working on this project helped students to develop and expand a range of employability-related skills, including collaborative work, problem-solving, and

innovative thinking, as well as fostering a heightened sense of responsibility. These skills are not explicitly covered or included in class activities; however, they are beneficial and important for employability (Lowden, Hall, Elliot, & Lewin, 2011). For example, students commented that working on the project was an opportunity to improve both their creative and 'soft' skills: "I think it was a good opportunity to use creative skills that we don't usually use in class at all like editing or filming and acting, things like that; things we don't usually get the chance to do". One student said "it was nice to have artistic licence and it was exciting to be part of something that is so innovative. Doing something that hasn't been done before".

Problem-solving skills and creativity are some of the key skills students thought they developed. One presented the common issues they faced:

> "in terms of planning, having to know how many hours we needed and to organise our time effectively and have that plan over the course of the project, and then things like filming. Where we are going to film, and how are we going to do this? How do we overcome the problems?".

Moreover, students did not need to consult Arabic textbooks or rely on the literature to produce the material; rather, they combined their experiences with their existing knowledge acquired while studying at Durham to create an engaging and innovative resource. This generated high levels of motivation for students to show competency and complete the tasks. As one student noted,

> "it was an unusual opportunity in that in the beginning we had very free licence to do something that has not been done before! […] That really enabled us to take our experiences that we've had in the year and go, okay, what would be the most useful, what do we need to prioritise, what is the knowledge that we would have loved to have had at the beginning of our time".

Students also mentioned the experience of team development and collaborative work during this project, which are key employability skills. Several of them

highlighted the fact that working in teams gave them the opportunity to develop and improve their decision-making abilities and enhance their collaborative potential. One noted that "teamwork will be relevant to any situation that we come across in life, but it was new territory working with our friends. So, I think that teamwork has definitely improved".

This project represented an empowering experience for the students, not only because they were motivated and felt competent to carry out the tasks, but also because they found the tasks 'meaningful' and had the potential to generate a meaningful 'impact' (Frymier, Shulman, & Houser, 1996; Houser & Frymier, 2009). Students also found the tasks in this project valuable because they gave them the opportunity to practise Arabic dialects that they would not usually use in class. One student claimed:

> "I wanted to take part in the project because we had dialect classes as part of our curriculum at IFPO (the French Institute for the Near East), and I found these classes the most practical and applicable to life in Beirut. I wanted to have a way to keep going with the dialect while in Durham, but also, had it been one of those skills that students learnt a bit earlier in the second year, when they arrived they would not feel so shocked".

Working on this project enabled students to engage in activities relevant to real-life situations, which motivated them to show creativity, and apply existing and transferable skills which they developed in their year abroad, including problem-solving and how to overcome challenges. These are key and essential skills and qualifications needed to increase employability (Lowden et al., 2011; Pardo-Garcia & Barac, 2020). Moreover, students were motivated to take part in this project because they felt that their work would have an impact on students before they start their year abroad:

> "I was lost in the first few weeks in Beirut, so it would be really helpful for other people to have this resource to be able to have some knowledge, or at least be able to understand some dialect before they move to the Middle East".

Furthermore, the project prepared students for life after graduation, as one pointed out:

> "You get slightly out of practice being a student, because you have quite a lot of free time you can structure your life exactly how you wish to, but this was a reminder that we cannot be selfish in our use of time in the future".

The first group to use the videos in Durham included 21 students preparing for the year abroad. They welcomed the opportunity to use the videos and provided encouraging feedback about them, for example:

> "I found the videos very useful, and I felt they really prepared me for the basics upon arriving in Jordan (which is very important!)".

> "I liked how practical the videos were too. The topics like arriving at the airport and taking a taxi to well-known areas in Beirut were so relevant and I don't know what more I could have asked for from a transitional video".

> "Having pre-year-abroad students knowing the absolute basics, just really helps integration during small conversations and really boosts confidence to pave the way to better fluency".

3. Conclusion

To facilitate the transition of Arabic students to their year abroad, teams of final-year students were recruited to produce videos to teach second year students the basics of colloquial dialects and give some cultural insights to support this transition. The project provided an opportunity for the students to improve their employability skills and to prepare for life after graduation. A focus group was conducted to elicit students' views on the project, and they confirmed that it helped improve skills such as creativity, teamwork, organisation skills, and time

management, among others. Moreover, it provided students preparing for their year abroad with a useful resource to make their transition to a different culture and a new variety of language smoother. The project also enlightened staff, showing that more creative and practical elements can be integrated into the syllabus to give students more of such experiences.

References

Al-Batal M. (2017). *Arabic as one language: integrating dialect in the Arabic language curriculum*. Georgetown University Press.

Frymier, A. B., Shulman, G., & Houser, M. (1996). The development of a learner empowerment measure. *Communication Education, 45*(3), 181-199. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634529609379048

Houser, M. L., & Frymier, A. B. (2009). The role of student characteristics and teacher behaviors in students' learner empowerment. *Communication Education, 58*(1), 35-53. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634520802237383

Hymes, D. (1964). *Language in culture and society*. Harper and Row Publishers.

Lowden, K., Hall, S., Elliot, D., & Lewin, J. (2011). *Employers' perceptions of the employability skills of new graduates. Project Report*. Edge Foundation.

Maamouri, M. (1998). Language education and human development: Arabic diglossia and its impact on the quality of education in the Arab Region. In *Mediterranean Development Forum*. World Bank.

Palmer, J. (2008). *Arabic diglossia: student perceptions of spoken Arabic after living in the Arabic-speaking world*. *Arizona Working Papers in SLA & Teaching, 15*, 81-95.

Pardo-Garcia, C., & Barac, M. (2020). Promoting employability in higher education: a case study on boosting entrepreneurship skills. *Sustainability, 12*(10), 1-23. https://doi.org/10.3390/su12104004

4 Language education as public engagement: designing authentic projects on German-speaking film

Thomas Jochum-Critchley[1]

Abstract

This chapter argues for the integration of public engagement into language teaching in order to respond to the current challenging environment for language study. *Impact teaching* seeks to develop language education through engagement with audiences beyond the classroom and especially outside higher education. One illustration of this approach is the student projects which have been designed as part of the module 'Contemporary German-speaking film', first introduced at the University of York in 2018/2019. The project brief asks students to organise, prepare, and deliver a film evening event including a film introduction and a post-screening Q&A in German. The approach has proven very successful with very positive student feedback on the initial in-person format, despite the limited audience numbers. The move to an online format during the pandemic has increased the impact of the event dramatically and the newly collected attendee feedback has confirmed very positive responses to the projects.

Keywords: project-based language learning, public engagement, German, film education.

1. University of York, York, United Kingdom; thomas.jochum-critchley@york.ac.uk; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4703-8546

How to cite: Jochum-Critchley, T. (2022). Language education as public engagement: designing authentic projects on German-speaking film. In C. Hampton & S. Salin (Eds), *Innovative language teaching and learning at university: facilitating transition from and to higher education* (pp. 45-55). Research-publishing.net. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2022.56.1372

© 2022 Thomas Jochum-Critchley (CC BY)

1. Introduction

Language education in the current UK context, and more specifically language studies as an academic field, finds itself in a very challenging position. A decline in the uptake of languages in secondary education (Collen, 2020) as well as a declining number of students in higher education language programmes – despite some positive trends in institution-wide language programmes (Critchley, Illingworth, & Wright, 2021, p. 7) – seem to suggest that the value and relevance of language skills in the UK are diminishing.

Integrating public engagement into the curriculum in languages is therefore not simply a matter of pedagogic innovation: it provides a motivating and stimulating environment for the development of students' language proficiency, cultural knowledge, and a range of experiences and skills, such as digital literacy, collaboration, problem solving, etc. It also sends a political message about the value and relevance of language learning and multilingualism in a society where a monolingual ideology prevails (Blackledge, 2000, p. 26) by rendering the work of language learners as language users and their cultural expertise more visible to the wider community.

2. Impact teaching: integrating public engagement into the language curriculum

2.1. Background and inspiration

Impact teaching takes its cue on the one hand from the growing field of research impact which can be defined as knowledge and innovation generated by research activities and contributing to, benefiting, and influencing society (University of York, n.d.).

On the other hand, it relates to pedagogical approaches with high impact which usually involve experiential learning as well as public engagement and/or performance (Kuh, O'Donnell, & Reed, 2013).

Impact teaching also builds on the notion of the student as producer (Neary, Saunder, Hagyard, & Derricott, 2015) which promotes a vision of and strategy for learning and teaching in higher education which re-evaluates the role of student work. Learning is not merely preparation for an assessment, but the production of genuine knowledge which contributes to the output of higher education. Rather than an 'expert in waiting', whose knowledge is partial and not fully developed, the student is seen as an expert in their own right. Insofar as student work involves the performance of tasks for authentic audiences beyond a teacher or peers, it is assessed through authentic assessment tasks (Zilvinskis, 2015).

A similar re-orientation of the perspective on the learner can be observed in languages. The language learner is less seen as having an incomplete or deficient knowledge of the language of study, in opposition to an idealised 'native speaker' of an imaginary target language, but as a learner who builds on their existing knowledge to develop a repertoire of linguistic and communicative resources whilst becoming a multilingual subject (Kramsch & Gerhards, 2012, p. 75).

The language learner is viewed first and foremost as a competent language user who needs opportunities for authentic communications and interactions with other language users and multilinguals. Thus, *impact teaching* in languages puts "authentic learning" (Zwahlen, 2017, p. 37) at its heart and builds on examples of language and culture activities that are often organised as extra-curricular activities, such as creating a theatre play, organising film screenings, or curating an exhibition (Jochum-Critchley, 2018).

2.2. Project design – pre-pandemic

The student projects are part of the module 'Contemporary German-speaking film', an optional second- and final-year module introduced in 2018/2019 at the University of York. This 20-credit year-long module is taught through two weekly seminars of one hour with four compulsory film screenings. As part of the summative assessment (40% of the module mark), students had to complete a group project which runs for about six to seven weeks in the spring term.

The project brief consists of organising a film screening of a German-speaking film from one of the directors studied in the first part of the module. The event has to be organised as a public event open to a non-academic German-speaking audience. The project brief further specifies a number of specific elements that were required from the students:

- a film introduction in German preceding the screening;
- a post-screening discussion or Q&A session with the audience in German;
- the creation of a poster for the event; and
- a small programme leaflet with four pages of A5 to be distributed to the audience at the event.

During the group work phase, seminar sessions are used to introduce the project brief, raise awareness of essential aspects of event organisation, marketing, and identifying potential target audiences, as well as to facilitate group work and collaboration. Using authentic examples, students work on analysing and understanding the content and structure of relevant text types such as film posters, event brochures, programme leaflets, and film introductions so as to develop students' understanding of how best to engage with an audience that is not part of the academic setting. Students are also required to give regular updates on the progress of the project and they have an opportunity to practise the film introduction one week ahead of the event.

2.3. Project adjustments during the pandemic

In 2020/2021, the move to online teaching and learning required a change of some of the core elements of the project brief. The film event was changed to an online event and all related documents had to be produced in an online form, especially the programme leaflet. Students were free to choose a suitable platform, with GoogleSites being suggested as the university provides technical

and pedagogic support for this tool. The online event was set up as a Zoom meeting by the tutor in line with the support given for in-person events. As an additional support structure for online group work, a collaborative online group log was created where students could log their individual contributions as well as document the outcomes of group meetings. This ensured greater transparency of contributions and an additional resource for monitoring project progress in the absence of in-person seminars or group meetings.

3. Project outcomes

3.1. Project completion

Since first running in the academic year 2018/2019, four film events have been organised by students who worked together in groups of four for each of the events. Group membership was decided by me as tutor with the aim of forming groups that were as balanced and fair as possible with regards to language level, gender, and engagement with the module.

All four project teams completed all aspects of the project brief and the quality of the student work was of a high to very high standard (see Figure 1). The marks awarded especially for the quality of language used in the spoken and written elements were in the first or high 2.1 category and for all but one student higher than their language mark in the core language module.

Overall, students seemed to have embraced the projects and the collaborative process with great enthusiasm. The events and the documents showed that all members of the project groups were actively involved in the event organisation. Although no specific requirement was given as to how the groups distributed the tasks, the groups allocated the main spoken part to final-year or more advanced second-year students. Nevertheless, it was noticeable that all group members contributed to the interactive part of the film events. Students showed great creativity in promoting the event: they used a range of methods including social media and email, in addition to using the event poster as a marketing tool. In

pre-pandemic times, students also decided to offer drinks and snacks to make the event more appealing. This confirmed that project-based learning is a good way of integrating creativity and allowing initiative to develop among students.

Figure 1. Film poster created by students in 2018/2019. © Alex Male[2]

2. Reproduced with kind permissions from the copyright holder.

3.2. Pre-pandemic outcomes – student feedback

In the first two years, the film evenings were organised on campus and approximately 15 people attended each of the three events.

After completion of the 2018/2019 projects, a questionnaire was distributed to understand the students' perception of the project work. The questionnaire comprised ten questions covering various aspects of the project such as overall benefits of and experience with the project, its collaborative nature, the skills developed, the experience of speaking German in front of a real audience, and the assessment of group work as well as the preparation for the film evening. Students also rated the project on a five-point Likert scale from excellent to very poor; 62.5% of students responded (five out of eight) and all students gave the project an overall rating of good (60%) or very good (40%).

Students commented on a very wide range of aspects and their responses showed a wide range of different perceptions. It is, however, possible to identify a few individual items that seem to support the reading that this approach did work in the intended way. Speaking in front of a real audience was perceived as giving students a sense of achievement, and at the same time it was seen as stressful and making them aware of gaps in their language skills.

Despite the stress involved, students acknowledged the positive emotional impact of the project work as some selected to describe the experience with the project as fun; they also found it entertaining to work with others and exciting to do something outside the classroom. Students also said that they developed their written and spoken German skills.

As all students also stated that they were well or very well prepared for the project, the stress was manageable and ultimately contributed to a positive and satisfying experience. One student who had participated in their second year, told me two years later at the farewell get-together with finalists that they still had the film poster on their room wall, which is a striking statement about the impact the project had on this student.

As for the impact of the event and its reach to a wider audience, it became clear after the first two years that organising this event on campus would attract only a small non-academic audience (if, indeed, it attracted one at all). Although the events had clearly reached out to students outside the department, including regular or visiting students who were native German speakers, and whose lively engagement in the post-screening discussions in German made an important contribution, the impact on a non-academic audience was very limited. Altogether only one attendee was a member of the general public, and they were enrolled in a *Languages for All* German evening class.

3.3. The online project

In 2020, the adjustment to the online format of the event led to a stronger emphasis on digital skills in preparing and running it. The basic structure of the preparation was maintained with the main difference being all seminars and group meetings being held online. However, one additional tool was used successfully to facilitate group work and collaboration. A shared Google Docs was used to create a group work log where students added their individual contributions and logged their notes about group meetings and decisions made. This document has proven very effective in monitoring students' progress, but also helped students to keep track of each other's contributions.

The film programme was created as a website which was shared with all attendees ahead of the film screening (see Figure 2). Students used Google Sites to create a well organised and informative programme in German. The promotion of the online event relied essentially on the same tools used in previous years, such as social media postings, emailing of relevant audiences such as student societies, university newsletters, and local schools, but the online nature of the event allowed organisers to invite contacts from further afield, such as students from the University of Münster in Germany with whom the departmental German student society had been collaborating previously.

The event itself was organised as a Zoom meeting and thus required more detailed planning compared to the in-person situation. To make the event

secure and free from disruptions and unexpected intrusions, students created a registration form in English and German and a link to the Zoom meeting with an enabled waiting room was distributed to all registered attendees. Specific roles such as monitoring the chat and leading the discussion were also distributed amongst the group members.

Figure 2. Online film programme created in 2020/2021. © Keely Blanchard[3]

The attendance at the event took everybody by surprise. Approximately 100 people logged on and about 70 attendees participated in most of the event, as documented by the user statistics provided by Zoom. This included German native speakers, some of whom resided in Germany, students of German from the university and from local schools, a range of academics from the department and elsewhere in the university, as well as local German teachers and other German speakers. The post-screening discussion in German was very lively and engaging and lasted approximately 30 minutes. German native speakers as well as non-native speakers participated alike. In addition to comments or questions on aspects of the film, a German attendee also contributed personal experiences to the discussion.

3. Reproduced with kind permissions from the copyright holder.

The online nature of the event enabled an authentic inter- or transcultural encounter between German learners and German speakers located not only in the UK but also in Germany (and potentially elsewhere).

The audience feedback collected via a short online questionnaire was completed by 46 people, of whom 43 claimed to have attended the event. With just above 95% of attendees rating the event as very good (60.5%) or good (34.9%) and only one attendee each rating it satisfactory or unsatisfactory, the event was a resounding success. Open comments were also overwhelmingly positive.

> "Thank you for putting on this event. As it was online it meant that I could attend although I don't live in York. Very well done to the students: they were very professional and delivered an amazing thought-provoking evening! Very well done!".

The positive impact of the event could also be seen in the large number of attendees expressing an interest in being informed of similar events in the future.

4. Conclusion

The experience with linking language and culture teaching and learning to public engagement via student-led film screenings supports the claim that real-life tasks with authentic interactions in the language of study have a positive outcome for language proficiency and skills learning (Ozverir, Osam, & Herrington, 2017, p. 272) as well as the overall student experience. The pivot to the online format in 2020 has increased noticeably the attendance and impact of the student-led event, which makes a strong case for continuing with the online format for the foreseeable future.

In initiating and stimulating discussion and exchange on a German-speaking film, students have shown that they can contribute in a meaningful way to both the cultural life of society and the promotion of languages in the UK.

References

Blackledge, A. (2000). Monolingual ideologies in multilingual states: language, hegemony, and social justice in Western liberal democracies. *Sociolinguistic Studies, Estudios de Sociolingüística, 1*(2), 25-45. https://doi.org/10.1558/sols.v1i2.25

Collen, I. (2020). *Language learning is still in decline in England's schools.* https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/language-learning-decline-england-schools

Critchley, M., Illingworth, J., & Wright, V. (2021). *Survey of language provision in UK universities in 2021. Report no. 3, July*. https://university-council-modern-languages.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/UCML-AULC-Survey-2021-Report.pdf

Jochum-Critchley, T. (2018, June 1). *Rethinking the curricular and extra-curricular divide* [Slides]. https://prezi.com/uf-pe3xmuhrd/?token=422d89c1b58f364c16cdf21118834fc1c4666068f6d099a1d5b2bedefb080df3

Kramsch, C., & Gerhards, S. (2012). Im Gespräch: an interview with Claire Kramsch on the “multilingual subject”. *Die Unterrichtspraxis / Teaching German, 45*(1), 74-82. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1756-1221.2012.00120.x

Kuh, G., O’Donnell, K., & Reed, S. (2013). *Ensuring quality & taking high-impact practices to scale*. Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Neary, M., Saunder, G., Hagyard A., & Derricott, D. (2015). *Student as producer: research engaged teaching: an institutional strategy*. Higher Education Academy. https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/projects/lincoln_ntfs_2010_project_final_report_fv.pdf

Ozverir, I., Osam, U. V., & Herrington, J. (2017). Investigating the effects of authentic activities on foreign language learning: a design-based research approach. *Educational Technology & Society*, *20*(4), 261-274.

University of York. (n.d.). *What is research impact?* https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/research/research-impact/impact-definition/

Zilvinskis, J. (2015). Authentic assessment: using authentic assessment to reinforce student learning in high-impact practices. *Assessment Update, 27*(6), 7-13. https://doi.org/10.1002/au.30040

Zwahlen, C. P. (2017). Authentic learning: boosting ELL language and academic proficiency development. *The International Schools Journal, 36*(2), 37-43.

5 Using machine translation as a parallel text to access literature for modern language learning

Ulrike Bavendiek[1]

Abstract

Parallel texts in the form of Graded Readers have a long tradition in foreign language learning. When presenting the translation in the reader's first language alongside the target language text, parallel texts offer access to literary texts, to their stories, characters, plot developments, and cultural content, without the need for time-consuming vocabulary or grammar searches, which would otherwise distract from the enjoyment of the texts. This chapter will describe and evaluate a teaching activity that makes use of Google translation as parallel text. This activity exploits the inconsistencies and obvious mistakes of the English machine translation as incentives to undertake close reading of the affected passages in the original foreign language text and to suggest a better translation. It allows beginners and intermediate students to benefit from the aesthetic qualities of literary texts while developing their grammatical accuracy and cultural understanding through focus on form. The evaluation of its effectiveness will be based on class discussions. Pedagogic translation exercises are used to promote deep engagement with the foreign language. At the same time, the students learn to appreciate the complexities of translation both as a process and as a product and develop a critical understanding of translated, especially machine translated, text. The opportunity to improve inferior machine translations while engaging

1. University of Liverpool, Liverpool, United Kingdom; u.bavendiek@liverpool.ac.uk; https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3059-1924

How to cite: Bavendiek, U. (2022). Using machine translation as a parallel text to access literature for modern language learning. In C. Hampton & S. Salin (Eds), *Innovative language teaching and learning at university: facilitating transition from and to higher education* (pp. 57-67). Research-publishing.net. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2022.56.1373

© 2022 Ulrike Bavendiek (CC BY)

with rich, multi-layered literary texts is shown to be a motivating activity for language learners, who also develop their digital literacy with an understanding of the shortcomings of machine translations.

Keywords: literature for language learning, translation for language learning, parallel texts, machine translations, translanguaging, digital literacy.

1. Introduction

Literary texts include a range of motivating and engaging features that make them particularly suited to the foreign language classroom. The long and continued popularity of Graded Readers in libraries and language centres is evidence of language learners' appreciation of literary texts for their learning. Students seek to access literature in the foreign language through simplified or even parallel texts in a familiar language which can either be their first language or another language they have learned. Véronis (2000) defines parallel text according to the computational linguistics community as "texts accompanied by their translations in one or several other languages" (p. xiii), which brings the traditional concept of Graded or Easy Readers into the 21st century. While aids that draw on the learner's linguistic knowledge of their existing repertoire of L1 and other L2s, such as parallel texts, have long been ignored in monolingual classrooms, they are here reconsidered for their ability to create translanguaging spaces that draw on the learners' existing skills to develop their understanding of the foreign language. For this reason, parallel texts can be useful from an early stage in the language learning process, even at A1 level. Beginners can rely on the translation for text comprehension and focus only on selected extracts in the foreign language text.

The proposed teaching project uses Google translations as parallel texts, to encourage students to notice differences between the first and second language grammar and vocabulary and thus sharpen their understanding of the foreign language. The fact that Google translations contain mistakes that are obvious

on the surface level can be an incentive for beginners to investigate that particular section in the foreign language text in more detail. Students at a higher proficiency level can be expected to start from the foreign language text and evaluate the entire translation. Most importantly, parallel texts enable students to engage with literary texts rather than the more mundane and less stimulating texts found in many textbooks.

2. Presentation of the project

The aesthetic quality of literary texts invites and rewards the close reading and deep engagement that is necessary for linguistic investigation and understanding. Kusch (2016) describes literature as "a set of texts […] whose purpose includes, but extends beyond, communication, in which language itself is as much a part of the end product as is the content" (pp 3-4). Such texts can be a motivating and interesting addition to the language classroom. Furthermore, literary dialogues in particular exhibit features that are closer to authentic language use than scripted textbook dialogues (Jones & Oakey, 2019), making them particularly useful for the language learner who wishes to explore language use beyond the flatness of the codified standard used in most textbooks.

As authentic texts, literary texts also counteract the disconnectedness of the foreign language classroom that often comes with mundane and decontextualised controlled input (Widdowson, 1998). Dealing with the interface between individuals and society, they allow an insight into social and cultural aspects of the target language community. Fictional literary texts in particular "invite students to adopt different viewpoints and thus enhance intercultural awareness" (Almeida, Bavendiek, & Biasini, 2020, p. 2). At the same time, they deal with transcultural, essentially human themes and, as such, they encourage authentic communication between the text, the readers as learners, and the teacher. Hall (2020) explains that using literary texts challenges readers "to independent interpretations, learning, and creativity, with refreshed understandings of what language, culture or indeed literature might be" (p. 1).

Literary texts are particularly suited to language teaching in the 21st century, which, in its ambitions, should reach beyond the teaching of another standard language system. “Wider and more complex aims than simple language acquisition, including criticality, intercultural communication and empathy, creativity and innovation, independence, team working, ethics and emotional intelligence, and a host of other 21st century skills (Naji, Ganakumaran, & White, 2019, as cited in Hall, 2020, pp. 1-2) are fostered through the use of literature, drawing on the multilingual and multicultural space of the language classroom.

Using parallel texts in the form of Graded Readers is not a new idea. The popularity of Graded Readers amongst learners reflects the desire to engage with literary texts from an early stage in their learning. It is also evidence of many learners’ feelings that bi- or multilingual engagement with texts is conducive to their language learning. Graded Readers offer familiarity with story, characters, and plot, even if the students do not yet have the language skills to access the whole text in the target language. Graded Readers come in different forms, sometimes offering simplified versions of the original text, adjusted to the target readers’ proficiency levels, sometimes offering the translation alongside the foreign language text.

2.1. Using machine translations as parallel text

I would like to show how L1 machine translations can function as parallel texts, allowing students the pleasure of reading, of jumping in and out of the foreign language text, without the distraction of constant word or grammar searches. Learners or teachers can choose the direction of the work. Beginners are advised to start with the L1 machine translation and dive into the foreign language source text when questions arise, whereas more advanced students should start with the source text and comment on the L1 machine translation.

The problematic nature of machine translations, with their inconsistencies and obvious mistakes, is seen as an advantage in the proposed project, since it encourages students to close read affected extracts in the original foreign

language text and to suggest a better translation. Williams (2006) explains how the use of translation tools can sharpen the students' understanding of the complexity of language: "[i]f students can see that communicating in another language is not simply a matter of plugging words into a formula that can be calculated by a machine, they will begin to understand language and communication as complex and multi-layered" (p. 572). A critical awareness of the shortcomings of machine translations is also an important part of the students' digital literacy.

2.2. Creating translanguaging spaces for language learning

Exploring translanguaging spaces and "bringing students' languages into productive contact within multilingual classrooms" (Hélo, Frijns, van Gorp, & Sierens, 2018, p. vii) recognises the student as a competent multilingual speaker, drawing on existing competences rather than ignoring them. Critical reflections on translation open up this space for engagement with both languages.

However, the critical understanding of translation requires a high command of both the source language and the target language. Learners in their first year at university are usually working at CEFR[2] proficiency levels ranging from A1 for complete beginners to B2 for students coming in with very good A levels or equivalents. Struggling with basic comprehension difficulties, these learners are not easily able to engage in meaningful reflections on translations. Machine translations in English help them access the source texts in the language they are learning, texts which, in their full length and complexity, would be beyond the comprehensible input necessary for meaningful engagement with the language. Beginners usually work on short extracts in the foreign language, which they can embed in the wider context of the literary texts with the help of machine translations. At B2 level, translations in the learner's first language serve as comprehension aid to help them read the full texts in the source language at relative speed.

2. Common European Framework of Reference for languages

2.3. Teaching and learning activities

Following an introduction into translation difficulties, the students receive literary texts in the target language alongside their Google translations in English. They discuss the translations in class or in small groups in three consecutive seminar sessions, and then annotate the machine translation in their own time after the sessions. Based on these comments, more advanced students are encouraged to provide a better translation of the extracts they found badly translated.

The texts are selected for the translation difficulties they pose, enabling discussions on both form and content in the foreign language texts, as the students search for equivalents in the language they know. The texts include extracts from children's books, a coming-of-age novel, and song lyrics.

Starting with the Google translation, the students are asked to (1) identify poor and wrong translations; and (2) suggest more appropriate translation choices. In class, the students start with a diagnostic reading of the machine translated text, searching for inconsistencies and discordances in the translation. Sections identified as potentially wrong translations are compared to the source text. The in-depth understanding of the source text needed at this point is developed in discussions in class, drawing on previously taught knowledge about language. Based on this the students develop and defend new, better translations.

2.4. The study

The study is based on the experience with several small groups of first year German language learners from the academic year 2016/2017 to the academic year 2019/2020. The students are part of the language-specific seminar group in a linguistics module, applying their newly acquired knowledge about language in general to German in particular. The groups usually include both complete beginners and advanced language learners.

This study focuses on a set of activities around the song 'Currywurst' by Herbert Grönemeyer (1982). The song is a popular sing-along, describing a night-out

with two close friends eating fast food (currywurst) and getting drunk. In this particular activity, the attention is less on the obvious translation challenges implied in the song lyrics, such as rhyme and rhythm, but on the meaning and cultural content of the song and their representation in language. The intended learning outcome is an understanding of the transcultural nature of translation. The classroom discussion focuses on the roles of representation, transmission, and transculturation in the translation of "not only material cultural elements, but also signs, symbols, codes, beliefs, values, ideas, ideals and ideologies" (Tymoczko, 2007, cited in Laviosa, 2014, p. 82).

The effectiveness of the activities, apparent in the quality of the students' reflections, is evaluated based on class discussions and the students' annotated translations. The study aims to answer the following questions.

- Are students able to notice ungrammatical or wrong Google translations?
- Are students able to meaningfully reflect on the discrepancies between the source text and the target text regarding the identified extracts?
- Does the Google translation provide sufficient understanding and context to engage with the literary extracts with a view of the entire text?

3. Discussion of outcomes

The set of activities led to active engagement with the texts and lively discussions throughout. The students seemed eager to find obvious mistakes in the machine translated English texts. Many ungrammatical, nonsensical, or clumsy translations were identified and sparked an in-depth engagement with the German source texts.

Drawing on the example of the song lyrics, all learners found at least some obvious mistakes in the Google translation. In particular, the high number of

untranslated German words in the English text, due to non-standard forms in the original, prompted students to find the passage in the source text, look up the words where necessary, discuss the intended meaning, and attempt a better translation. Wrong prepositions and pronouns, as well as mistranslated words and idioms, were often noticed and corrected.

However, the identification of translation mistakes was almost entirely based on the English translation. Mistakes which were not apparent at surface level in the English text itself were sometimes overlooked. For example, the translation ‘right blue’ for ‘richtig blau’ was corrected as ‘very drunk’ or something similar, by many, but not all learners. Some learners failed to notice this translation mistake, since feeling blue makes at least some sense in the English text.

Based on the close reading of the individual passages, the learners successfully identified defining textual features, such as colloquial dialect forms and words, the use of rhyme and rhythm for humorous purposes, and the comic, light-hearted, and entertaining nature of the song. After watching a performance of the song on video, they noticed its popular appeal in German society, which relies on the audience knowing the lyrics and singing along. The learners appreciated the text as ‘informal’, ‘relatable’, and containing ‘realistic dialogues’, confirming Jones and Oakey’s (2019) finding that literary texts are particularly suitable in the language classroom due to their authentic language use.

The most worthwhile reflections revolved around the cultural context of the song. Although none of the students were able to pinpoint the dialect or its cultural connotations, they nevertheless noted the significance of the use of dialect and colloquialisms in the song. This in relation to the overall meaning of the lyrics, the description of two men eating fast food and getting drunk after a shift, led to rich discussions based on the comparison between British and German cultures. The students identified similarities as well as differences, which resulted in some excellent suggestions for better translations. For example, the line ‘kerl scharf ist die wurst/mensch dat gibt’n durst, die currywurst’ is translated by Google as ‘guy spicy is the sausage/human dat

that's thirst, the currywurst'. All students were able to correct the most obvious mistakes, including the wrong nuance of the translation 'human' for 'Mensch' in this context. However, the deeper understanding of the cultural background of the lyrics enabled them to suggest choices beyond the most obvious 'man', including 'mate', 'pal' and 'lad'. In addition, the students were now able to see the importance of a consistent use of dialect, sparking discussions around British regions comparable to the Ruhr metropolis in which the source text is placed, as well as working class cultures in both countries. This led to some interesting choices for the translation of 'currywurst', a traditional German street food, including 'kebab', 'pie'n peas' or 'cheesy chips'. 'Beer', on the other hand, was considered to be a suitable equivalent for 'Bier' in German. Some particularly innovative translations transposed the song to a British region, for example Yorkshire, Liverpool, or Essex, aiming for consistency in the chosen dialect features, foodstuffs, names etc. 'Hammered' was now defended as a more suitable choice for 'richtig blau'. 'Eddie' was suggested as a name replacement for 'Willi', drawing on the patriotism in both names. Colloquial and short forms were imitated according to the chosen dialect, and 'us' was suggested to replace 'me'.

4. Conclusion

The results of the study suggest that students actively engage with both languages if a machine translation is taken as a starting point rather than the end product in their learning. They seem to enjoy the activities and develop an increasing awareness of mistranslations, based on the ever-closer reading of the text. Considering the proficiency level of the students, which ranges between A1 and B2, they engage with the literary text in the foreign language at a level of analysis that would be difficult to achieve without the scaffold of the parallel text. The shortcomings in the translation seem to be a motivating factor, inspiring the students to attempt better translations. Once they realise that the machine translation is found wanting, their confidence grows to read the foreign language source text more closely and to suggest L1 reformulations of the machine translated text. Comparing different suggestions, they understand

the complexities of translation as a process and develop a critical view of translations as products.

Since this involves a deep understanding of the literary texts, their textual features, purposes, and cultural contents, the suggested activities promote not only an understanding of selected structures, words, and idioms of the language the students are learning, but also of the aesthetic qualities of the texts. The richness and aesthetic nature of the literary texts make these exercises particularly rewarding, offering several levels of analysis and multiple interpretations.

Based on these results, I conclude that imperfect machine translations used as parallel texts inspire students to engage with literary texts, with both their form and meaning. The tasks open space for translanguaging, allowing learners to draw on their familiar language and culture to contrast and compare with the target language. This increases their confidence and results in a creative, inspired engagement with the literary text. However, the fact that all discussions took place in English and that many comments were concerned with the English translation rather than the source text in the target language places the focus on linguistic knowledge and may not leave sufficient room for language practice and meaning making. To adapt these activities for language classes I would therefore recommend more scaffolded exercises, some of which should be conducted in the target language to encourage language practice and meaning making.

References

Almeida, A., Bavendiek, U., & Biasini, R. (2020). (Eds). *Literature in language learning: new approaches*. Research-publishing.net. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2020.43.9782490057696

Hall, G. (2020). Literature, challenge, and mediation in 21st century language learning. In A. Almeida, U. Bavendiek & R. Biasini (Eds), *Literature in language learning: new approaches*. Research-publishing.net. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2020.43.1090

Hélot, C., Frijns, C., van Gorp, K., & Sierens, S. (2018). (Eds). *Language awareness in multilingual classrooms in Europe: from theory to practice*. De Gruyter. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501501326

Jones, C., & Oakey, D. J. (2019). Literary dialogues as models of conversation in English language teaching. *Journal of Second Language Teaching and Research, 7*(1), 107-135.

Kusch, C. (2016). *Literary analysis: the basics.* Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315688374

Laviosa, S. (2014). *Translation and language education: pedagogic approaches explored*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315764542

Naji, J., Ganakumaran, S., & White, G. (2019). *New approaches to literature for language learning*. Springer Nature.

Tymoczko, M. (2007). *Enlarging translation, empowering translators*. St. Jerome.

Véronis, J. (2000). (Ed.). *Parallel text processing: alignment and use of translation corpora.* Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-2535-4

Widdowson, H. G. (1998). Context, community, and authentic language. *TESOL Quarterly, 32*(4), 705-716. https://doi.org/10.2307/3588001

Williams, L. (2006). Web-based machine translation as a tool for promoting electronic literacy and language awareness. *Foreign Language Annals, 39*(4), 565-578. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.2006.tb02276.x

6 Using remote communication tools to facilitate student engagement, language learning, and cross-disciplinary professional development before, during, and after the pandemic: the Newcastle Calls project 2020 as a case study

Barbara Guidarelli[1], Carole Moore[2], and Cristina Peligra[3]

Abstract

Aimed at fostering student engagement using remote communication tools to restructure language teaching, the *Newcastle Calls* project was piloted in early 2020, providing Newcastle University's Italian language students at intermediate level with a chance to be involved in the production of authentic material. Thanks to technology, they crossed space barriers, interviewed Italian researchers in the Antarctic and an Italian theatre actor virtually, discussing the researchers' life, climate change, acting, and the effects of Italy's COVID-19 lockdown. One of these interviews was made into a pilot documentary with Italian and English subtitles with the collaboration of Master of Arts (MA) translation and film students. This chapter explores how students

1. Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom; barbara.guidarelli@ncl.ac.uk

2. Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom; carole.moore@ncl.ac.uk

3. Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom; cristina.peligra@ncl.ac.uk; https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3318-6828

How to cite: Guidarelli, B., Moore, C., & Peligra, C. (2022). Using remote communication tools to facilitate student engagement, language learning, and cross-disciplinary professional development before, during, and after the pandemic: the Newcastle Calls project 2020 as a case study. In C. Hampton & S. Salin (Eds), *Innovative language teaching and learning at university: facilitating transition from and to higher education* (pp. 69-80). Research-publishing.net. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2022.56.1374

© 2022 Barbara Guidarelli, Carole Moore, and Cristina Peligra (CC BY)

benefitted from the experience, evaluates the project's potential to facilitate students' transition to professional life after university, and the facilitators' experience using remote communication tools before and during COVID-19, reflecting on the advantages and challenges of implementing the use of up-to-date technology in language learning.

Keywords: collaboration, interactive listening, student engagement, technology in teaching, virtual interviews.

1. Newcastle Calls: innovation, collaboration

In 2020, Newcastle University staff, intermediate level undergraduate students of Italian, MA English and Italian translation students, and one MA film student jointly created a documentary with bilingual subtitles of an interview with an Italian professional actor conducted as part of the 2019/2020 undergraduate module Intermediate Italian.

This collaboration constituted the pilot stage of the *Newcastle Calls* project, which aims to introduce a new teaching and learning experience. Inspired by the need to make teaching more student-centred, inclusive and interactive, this project used technology to go beyond classroom tasks to better prepare students for post-university life.

This chapter describes the different pilot project's phases (i.e. the organisation of two virtual interviews with Italian professionals, a translation workshop to create multilingual subtitles, and the creation of a first pilot documentary), reflecting on what was successful and on the challenges faced, particularly after the outbreak of COVID-19 and the subsequent move to remote teaching. It also explores how students benefitted from co-creating their teaching and learning material and how the project will move forward.

2. The project

2.1. Aims and objectives

Remote communication tools have been introduced in the Italian language classroom at Newcastle University to revolutionise the traditional listening exercise, boost students' engagement in class, facilitate their progression, and ease their transition from university to working life.

Recent research has highlighted the interconnection of listening and speaking in foreign language learning (e.g. Rost, 2016). In *interactive listening* contexts, listeners actively negotiate meanings and shape conversations beyond the completion of a simple task in which they are passive recipients (Huang, 2019; Rost, 2016). However, students' listening practice in the foreign language classroom is often based on limited receptive, rather than truly holistic, interactive tasks.

In the classroom, students risk being confronted with *artificial* situations, especially when relying on more traditional technology such as recordings. However, more interactive communication tools – like video-conferencing platforms – are available for language teaching and learning. Studies on the use of synchronous computer-mediated communication in particular for in- and out-of-the classroom language learning in various contexts precede the COVID-19 outbreak (Bueno-Alastuey, 2011; Lenkaitis, 2019; Romaña Correa, 2015).

At Newcastle University's School of Modern Languages, the implementation of virtual communication technology in the Italian language classroom allowed students to overcome physical barriers: they were able to connect with the world outside the classroom. They were capable of dealing with the challenge of authentic communicative situations, reducing the gap between life during and after university. As a consequence, the traditional student-teacher relationship was also overturned, as students became co-creators of the material. Furthermore, they were able to evaluate their language skills, becoming accountable for their own learning.

2.2. Virtual interviews

After being introduced to the interviewees via personal contacts, the facilitators were able to start Phase 1 (January to March 2020) of the *Newcastle Calls* pilot. In January, 40 Intermediate Italian language students took part in an interactive Skype interview with the team of Italian researchers at the permanent Antarctic research station *Mario Zucchelli* (Figure 1), one of the two Italian scientific bases in the continent (ENEA, 2020). The interview lasted about 50 minutes, during which the students asked 12 questions.

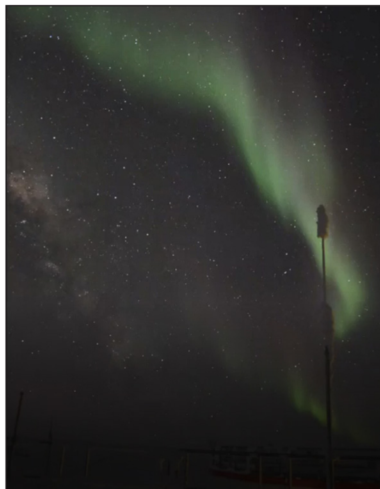
Figure 1. Interviewing the researchers at the Mario Zucchelli station (permission from ENEA, PNRA). Photo by Maria Zubelzu de Brown

The climate crisis and researchers' day-to-day at the station were discussed. The topics of research in Antarctica and climate change were studied in class, prior to the interview. Students were then asked to think about questions they would like to ask the scientists. These were created solely by the students, according to what they wanted to explore and how they hoped to expand upon classroom activities.

An example was “What do you normally eat?”. Thanks to video-conferencing technology, students could also see the place where researchers were gathered, images of the Antarctic sky (Figure 2), and the Aurora Australis (Figure 3), which made the experience extremely exciting and informative.

Figure 2. Time-lapse (permission from ENEA, PNRA). Photo by Simonetta Montaguti PNRA/IPEV

Figure 3. Aurora Australis (permission from ENEA, PNRA)



The conversation was conducted in Italian, challenging the students to take part in real-life communication, testing their ability to use inferencing, or the mental processes of unveiling meaning by connecting pieces of information or by "problem-solving-oriented heuristic procedures involving both logic and real-world knowledge" (Rost, 2016, p. 62).

In March, the same group of students took part in an interview with an Italian theatre actor via Zoom, asking him about life as an actor and the performing arts job market in Italy. About two hours of lecture and seminar time were spent working on this topic prior to the interview, which lasted about 50 minutes, during which the students asked eight questions, including: "What is it like to build a career in the art world?".

This second interview took place on 17th March, the first day of Newcastle University's transition to online teaching as a response to COVID-19. As Italy was already in a very strict lockdown, students were shown the empty streets (Figure 4) and could ask about the effects of the pandemic there.

Figure 4. Empty streets in Italy (permission from Antonio Giuseppe Peligra)

After these live interviews, the recordings were uploaded to the university's virtual learning environment so that students could listen to them again at their own pace. The interview topics formed part of the final examinations, where

students were asked to write an essay based on the interviews. In the future, we aim to expand on this and ask students questions aimed at fostering critical thinking, both in class and during the examinations.

2.3. The subtitled documentary

In phase two of the pilot project, the second interview was made into a documentary[4] to be made available to a wider audience thanks to interdisciplinary collaboration. One MA film student edited the recording, adding scenes from live news from March 2020, photos of Italian cities during lockdown, a short introduction, and credits. Three English and Italian MA students translated the interview into English to create subtitles as part of a one-day student-led translation workshop, overseen by two MA lecturers in translation.

The benefits of this phase were manifold. It enabled the creation of an archive of co-created material that can be used in class or for independent learning, and made available to the public. It also fostered cross-disciplinary and cross-stage collaboration, as this material can be useful for students, lecturers, and researchers of several disciplines, such as film, science, and drama. Finally, it allowed MA students to encounter real-life experiences, to be introduced to the latest technologies in their field, and to have an extra-curricular opportunity for professional development. The MA students involved boosted their CVs by starting to build their own portfolio, and by managing and delivering a commissioned end-product in which they were credited. Furthermore, they enhanced their course experience and understanding of translation as a discipline and profession by putting theory into practice. Thanks to Newcastle University NUTELA[5] Small Grants Fund, they were paid for their work at a standard student rate.

Alongside the difficulties arising from the fact that students were working with a *spoken* text for their first time and the specific limitations – such as character

4. Titled: Un'intervista con Antonio Peligra, attore di teatro. Available on Newcastle University's IPTV and on Canvas at https://iptv.ncl.ac.uk/View.aspx?id=17209~5g~7ONkMSOEdC

5. Newcastle University Technology Enhanced Learning Advocates.

count and reading speed – imposed by subtitling, it became evident to them how the translation *purpose* "determines the choice of translation method and strategy" (Nord, 2006, p. 142) as they faced a rather challenging translation brief. In fact, they were translating for both a mixed audience of English native speakers as well as intermediate level learners of Italian. Particularly thought-provoking were passages where the interviewee, aware of being in front of language learners, explained Italian vocabulary and phonetics, as in the example below. The guest speaker said:

> "in Italian there are some vowels, such as *E* and *O* that can be pronounced both open and closed for example […] **'pésca'**, **fishing**, is what the fisherman does when he goes into the river or the sea to catch fish, **but the same word written in the same way can also be the fruit, peach, 'la pèsca'**…".

Here, students had to agree on strategies to make the language-specific issues discussed clear for both speakers and learners of Italian, and an audience of lay people. In the words of one of the translation students involved:

> "there were certain things we needed to be mindful of; […] the documentary will also be used as a learning tool for future students. Therefore, we had to consider how useful this would be for [students of Italian] as well as general viewers".

To achieve this, they often opted for visual clues (e.g. accents) or repetition of Italian key words in their original form followed by their brief explanation.

3. Students' feedback

We strongly believe all the students involved, both at undergraduate and postgraduate level, enjoyed and benefitted greatly from the experience, as can be seen from the feedback gathered by using a questionnaire and writing essays. One student of Italian said:

> "the video interviews on the Italian course this year have been some of the most interesting parts of the course. This is because we spoke to leaders who were passionate about their field of expertise".

And another one:

> "I really enjoyed both interviews, I felt that they were a fun and engaging way to improve my Italian language skills, whilst the topics of the interviews were really varied and interesting. From science in the Antarctic to theatre work in a pandemic – there was something for everyone!".

Student feedback helped us evaluate the project's delivery and confirmed its overall aims were achieved. Firstly, participating in the interviews seemed to have *the potential to boost* undergraduate students' *language confidence*. One student claimed:

> "despite the vocabulary issue, I was shocked that I could understand at least 70% of the interviews which made me more confident with my Italian".

Furthermore, the project was able to foster students' overall *engagement*, as their interests were valued and they were confronted with appropriate, up-to-date material, to which they could relate.

> "I think the video interview with the Italian researchers in Antarctica was the most fascinating for me. We talked about different topics, like their unbelievable research in geophysics, geology, biology, and even astrobiology! I was so impressed with the videos of the Aurora Australis".

> "It has been good to hear that the lockdown in Italy has united people as a community. I think this is a feeling people all over the world can identify with at the moment".

After the translation task, MA students were given a feedback questionnaire asking them to evaluate the workshop. They were asked why they decided to participate in the project, how they found the task and whether they felt the project was helpful on a professional level. One student responded, identifying the task as an opportunity for professional development:

> "I really enjoyed this project and hope the university is able to continue work like this in the future. […] I have little professional translation experience and I feel as though this will improve my career prospects immensely".

4. Conclusion

4.1. Challenges and opportunities

The main challenge we faced while planning and carrying out the project was the unexpected COVID-19 outbreak and the subsequent need to restructure phase two of the project, which was first delayed because of the lockdown, and then adjusted to the restrictions. Unfortunately, instead of organising a series of student-led subtitling workshops in the computer lab, we had to limit the translation workshop to a one-day online event (held via Zoom) and were able to introduce only briefly our translation students to the chosen subtitling software during a short online session.

The COVID-19 related circumstances caused further delays in the project's delivery and changes in the project's scope. Firstly, they made it harder to secure funding to pay the students involved, as university expenditure was put on hold. Secondly, contacting relevant institutions abroad became extremely difficult due to smart working systems. For this reason, it was not possible to start with a documentary of the first interview, as the relevant permissions took longer to obtain. Similarly, theatre photos could not be attached to the pilot documentary about the actor, as asking for permission was inevitably delayed, due to Italy's lockdown.

However, we feel it is important to state that, while COVID-19 was certainly disruptive, it did not hinder the completion of the project altogether. On the contrary, we feel that the strong focus on the use of remote communication tools helped us to be prepared to move to teaching online. We believe such a project clearly demonstrates the innovative potential of technology in crossing boundaries and that collaboration through technology is an exciting opportunity for the future.

4.2. The next phases

In the future, we would like to focus more on the implementation of new technology in translation teaching and practice. We are planning to further develop the project by creating an online platform with learning tasks based on the interviews and graded by language level, from listening comprehension tasks for *ab initio* students, to critical thinking exercises for intermediate level students. Translation and subtitling tasks for the MA in translation students will also be included in such a platform. All students involved will be able to self-evaluate their skills and learn from real-life situations.

5. Acknowledgements

This project was first presented in Newcastle University's Learning and Teaching Development Service online database of teaching practice (© Newcastle University, used with permission).

Guidarelli, B. (2020). *Newcastle Calls collaborative teaching project*. https://microsites.ncl.ac.uk/casestudies/2020/08/31/the-newcastle-calls-collaborative-teaching-project/

We are grateful to Newcastle University NUTELA Small Grants Fund for making the pilot project possible, the XXXV Italian Antarctica Expedition, and Antonio Giuseppe Peligra for the interviews, the 2019/2020 Intermediate Italian (UG) students for their active participation and interview co-creation,

the 2019/2020 English and Italian translation students (MA) Roberta Destro, Diana Stoica, and Roisin Crossen for the English translation, MA film student Bradley Sampson for editing the documentary, and to Dr Pauline Henry-Tierney for acting as subtitling consultant.

References

Bueno-Alastuey, M. C. (2011). Perceived benefits and drawbacks of synchronous voice-based computer-mediated communication in the foreign language classroom. *Computer Assisted Language Learning, 24*(5), 419-432. https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2011.574639

ENEA. (2020). Italia in Antartide. https://www.italiantartide.it/stazione-mario-zucchelli/

Huang, A. (2019). The dialogical nature of language use in interactive listening: revisiting meaning in context. *Language Awareness, 29*(1), 21-40. https://doi.org/10.1080/09658416.2019.1686509

Lenkaitis, C. A. (2019). Technology as a mediating tool: videoconferencing, L2 learning, and learner autonomy. *Computer Assisted Language Learning, 33*(5-6), 483-509. https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2019.1572018

Nord, C. (2006). Translating as a purposeful activity: a prospective approach. *TEFLIN Journal, 17*(2), 131-143.

Romaña Correa, Y. (2015). Skype conference calls: a way to promote speaking skills in the teaching and learning of English. *PROFILE, Issues in Teachers' Professional Development, 17*(1), 143-156. https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v17n1.41856

Rost, M. (2016). *Teaching and researching: listening* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

7 How Covid-19 has changed language assessments in higher education: a practitioners' view

Elena Polisca[1], Sascha Stollhans[2], Romain Bardot[3], and Cyrille Rollet[4]

Abstract

This chapter examines the responses of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to assessment-related challenges introduced by the Covid-19 pandemic. The sudden move to online teaching and assessments required institutions to re-think their approaches to current practices and provide alternative solutions almost overnight. Our survey aimed to gather the perceptions of language teaching practitioners on how the languages sector dealt with the move to digital assessments, with particular emphasis on the delivery of online assessments, the impact on different language skills, as well as academic integrity. Results show that, whilst different institutions adopted varying practices, they seem to share similar concerns in addressing the fast-changing environment and ensure that academic integrity remains at the forefront in the move to the digital world.

Keywords: digital teaching and learning, computer-assisted language learning, blended learning, plagiarism, university language teaching, language skills.

1. University of Bolton, Bolton, United Kingdom; e.polisca@bolton.ac.uk

2. University of Leeds, Leeds, United Kingdom; s.stollhans@leeds.ac.uk; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9352-174X

3. Lancaster University, Lancaster, United Kingdom; r.bardot@lancaster.ac.uk

4. Lancaster University, Lancaster, United Kingdom; cyrille.rollet@lancaster.ac.uk

How to cite: Polisca, E., Stollhans, S., Bardot, R., & Rollet, C. (2022). How Covid-19 has changed language assessments in higher education: a practitioners' view. In C. Hampton & S. Salin (Eds), *Innovative language teaching and learning at university: facilitating transition from and to higher education* (pp. 81-91). Research-publishing.net. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2022.56.1375

© 2022 Elena Polisca, Sascha Stollhans, Romain Bardot, and Cyrille Rollet (CC BY)

1. Introduction

Since March 2020, HEIs have had to take a number of drastic measures in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent move to online teaching and assessments (Marinoni, van't Land, & Jensen, 2020; Plutino & Polisca, 2021). So, in the 'post-Covid world', what will language assessment practices look like? Has the pandemic set the wheels in motion for a revolution in the field of examination and coursework assessments?

In this small-scale online study (n=27) language practitioners at HEIs were surveyed with the objective of gathering a cross-institutional picture on how the recent changes have impacted the testing of the different language skills. Findings suggest that there are perceived challenges particularly regarding oral assessments, as well as concerns related to plagiarism and academic malpractice on the part of the students.

Drawing on the results of our survey, this chapter offers an overview of how the sector has addressed the delivery of language assessment introduced during lockdown. We shall also discuss the question of whether the time has come for a sector-wide common approach to testing and what such an approach could look like in the future.

2. The move to digital assessments: methodology

We created an online survey for distribution among language teaching professionals at HEIs. Apart from demographic background data (most notably the HEI and language(s) represented), the survey contained six questions, including sub-questions; among these were open-answer and multiple-choice questions as well as an open field to express additional comments. We asked participants about changes made to their assessments in the light of the pandemic, whether/how these changes affected different cohorts of students and different language skills, what software had been used for any online

assessments and how these were facilitated, and lastly how the effect of these changes on academic integrity and malpractice had been perceived.

We gained ethical approval for this study from Lancaster University. The survey was designed and distributed through Google Forms[5] and shared through various language-related Jisc mailing lists. The survey was intentionally designed to catch a snapshot of initial institutional reactions to the fast-moving changes in the modalities of language learning with particular focus on the different language skills. It was circulated twice, once in July and once in August 2020, and 27 responses were collated. Whilst we had hoped for a higher number of responses, both the time frame of distribution and the pandemic-related emergency may have hindered a higher participation rate.

3. Results

Ten languages were represented in the survey: Arabic, Chinese, Dutch, French, English, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, and Russian. Responses came from 19 UK institutions, five European institutions, two from Australia, and one unspecified institution[6].

The survey aimed to collect information on what changes had been made, if any, to assessment practices in response to the pandemic; 45.5% of respondents (n=22) indicated that their institution had cancelled parts of the existing assessments, and 9.1% of HEIs represented in the survey allowed their staff to make *ad-hoc* changes to their practices.

A variety of solutions were implemented, which comprised:

- all or part of the assessment was moved online;

5. Link to the survey: https://forms.gle/rWF7Qmzb5FfjqUTV6

6. It is important to note that not all respondents answered every question. Therefore, the following percentages do not always necessarily add up to the overall number of respondents.

- part of assessment was delayed;
- some of the assessment was cancelled (e.g. low-stake assessment such as oral and/or written examinations in Year 1); and
- alternative forms of assessment were implemented across the board with two emerging trends: grammar tests and writing were transformed into time-limited take-away papers and video submission in lieu of oral examinations/presentation were introduced.

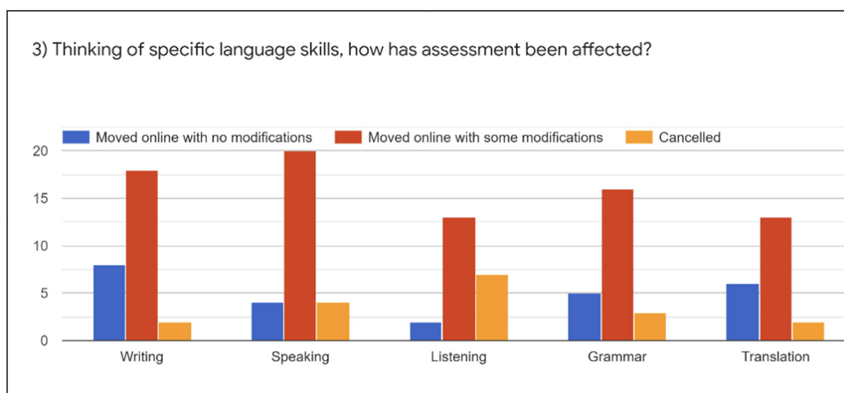
Whereas 57.7% of respondents (n=26) claimed that their institution adopted a blanket approach in addressing assessment for the different year groups, 26.9% stated that year groups were dealt with differently according to modules and courses taken across the years of study. In particular, two of the six institutions that provided additional comments stated that individual tutors had the freedom to adapt assessments as seen fit.

In terms of assessment changes applied to the different year groups, the answers below were recorded (n=8).

- For Year 1, four respondents claimed that all assessments were cancelled.
- For Year 2, where not cancelled, oral exams were held online; two institutions modified the type of exercises for written language papers whereby a shift towards analytical skill was reported.
- For Year 3, which is often the period of residence abroad for most UK HEIs, assessments were held online often through video submission and in one case, one institution cancelled the whole assessment for the year.
- For Year 4, a wider number of practices mentioned for previous year groups was recorded as well as an increased use of open-book tests and examinations.

Question 3 of the survey enquired more specifically about single language skills to establish how specific skills had been addressed across institutions.

Figure 1. Modification of assessments relating to specific language skills



As Figure 1 shows, speaking and writing were the two skills that were moved online (with some modifications) more widely across the board. When moved online, two institutions lamented the loss of face-to-face interactions for oral examinations as students were asked to pre-record their presentation and upload it online. Listening skills assessments were the most frequently cancelled and the least moved online, perhaps suggesting that online modalities may not be suited fully to remote delivery in this area.

Four other institutions reported that the nature of changes was reflected in the re-thinking of assessment moving away from single-skills and embracing wider integrated-skills testing. For example, grammar was assessed within compositions in the target language and, due to the widespread use of take-home examinations (usually 24 or 48 hours against time-limited assessment held in person), two HEIs modified testing to include critical and analytical skills within the assessment of single language skills. At this point in the survey, three institutions also added that where test length was modified, it was due to the fact that students would have access to resources such as the Internet and personal notes to complete tasks.

Question 4 gathered data on the modalities of online assessment to establish whether some types of software were favoured over others (see Table 1).

Table 1. Software used to carry out online assessments

4. If your language assessment has been moved online, what software did you use? (n = 27)	
a. The institution's virtual learning environment	63%
b. An institutional-approved external software	11.1%
c. Any other external software	0%
d. A combination of software and virtual learning environment	25.9%

The majority of HEIs (63%) carried out their assessment through their virtual learning environment with Blackboard being most used; 25.9% of institutions relied on the combination of virtual learning environments and other software such as Zoom, MS Teams, Panopto, and Canvas. Of the latter, no specific piece of software was singled out as most used.

The penultimate question sought to find additional information on issues that may arise following a sudden move to online testing. We had noticed throughout our individual practices that online assessments had brought about new challenges compared to face-to-face examinations, particularly with regard to the freedom online assessments afford students in accessing external help. Our anecdotal finds were reinforced by respondents from the surveyed institutions. Two thirds of HEIs claimed that both plagiarism and academic malpractices had been raised as an issue since the onset of the pandemic:

> Has plagiarism/academic malpractice been raised as being an issue in your department/school since the beginning of the pandemic? (n=27)
> - Yes: 77.8%
> - No: 14.8%
> - N/A: 7.4%

When asked about what steps, if any, had been taken to mitigate the issue, responses were varied but some trends could be identified.

- Some HEIs modified assessments and others introduced ‘controlled’ conditions through live online sessions or using shared Google documents. One institution asked students to take pictures of handwritten work which was immediately uploaded to the virtual learning environment.

- Some HEIs used integrated software such as Turnitin.

- Where plagiarism was suspected, most respondents relied on existing procedures on academic malpractice, with one institution considering the promotion of a ‘positive culture of academic integrity’ for the future (to encourage such integrity, another HEI asked students to sign an honesty pledge). In one institution, students caught cheating were excluded.

- One institution implemented additional moderation strategies comparing online examination results with results based on coursework or face-to-face classwork, whilst another institution redesigned marking schemes.

Responses from this section seem to suggest that, whilst HEIs are aware of the new challenges in digital assessment, additional considerations are needed to develop successful strategies to deal with a common, expanding problem.

The last section of the survey invited additional comments from respondents. Three institutions stated that additional checks were put in place after assessment was completed to ensure that marks were consistent with previous cohorts. One respondent noted their surprise at some students who ‘still made the same mistakes that they would have in a ‘real’ exam, whilst they could have simply looked things up’, whilst another respondent found that marks were higher compared to previous years (‘not necessarily because of cheating, students were often glad to do work whilst in lockdown’).

Three other respondents suggested the possibility of modifying exam-based assessments and moving them towards forms of continuous assessments, whereby either formative tasks become part of summative tasks or the weighting

for continuous assessments such as portfolios are increased. Different practices such as the latter, "would allow for assessment to be more creative, varied, diverse, meaningful, and fair to accommodate different learning styles and preferences. Also, [this would] allow students to discover and develop more ways of learning useful skills", one respondent claimed.

One additional point was also raised in a different comment, which highlighted the need for professional language staff to have "been consulted before these blanket assessment changes were introduced as many issues that we experienced were obvious from the start". Conversely, anecdotal experience of informal chats with colleagues in our department seems to suggest that language assessment equality should continue to be pursued across institutions to the extent that, as one respondent proposed, "[the University Council of Modern Languages] could be involved […], to avoid us re-inventing the wheel, or, worse, end up with different or opposing guidelines in different institutions".

4. Discussion of outcomes and suggestions

The pandemic has brought about significant challenges for the education sector. It is perhaps not surprising that not a single institution represented in our survey chose to proceed without making any alterations to their assessments at all. Whilst practices differ not insignificantly across institutions, some parallels can be observed.

- The number of assessments is often reduced.
- Assessments are moved online and need to be adapted accordingly.
- Digital approaches to assessments bring about particular challenges. One widespread concern is around academic honesty and plagiarism.

The languages sector is at a pivotal point when it comes to its assessments: if anything, the evolution of the situation in recent months has shown that the

pandemic will have a lasting effect on our teaching and assessment practices. Consequently, lockdown-induced changes to online and blended learning environments have enabled both tutors and students to achieve a greater level of IT literacy. This is an opportunity to be embraced.

Going forward, the new experiences could encourage a long-lasting re-thinking process when it comes to assessment practices. The results of the survey have demonstrated that issues of academic malpractice and plagiarism have increased across most institutions. This is a point that has been stressed by distance education providers for many years (see e.g. Rovai, 2000). Online assessments work best when they do not simply replicate traditional offline practices. A move towards methods of assessing that involve higher levels of critical thinking has to be encouraged and fostered. Whereas an in-class test may be perceived to be best suited to assess e.g. knowledge of grammatical forms, a longer, take-home, open-book type of assessment has the potential to assess students on their broader communicative competences in the target language. This could be an opportunity to acknowledge all the resources that can be accessed nowadays, and to devise our assessments accordingly, thereby reproducing situations which, though still as controlled as possible, are closer to real life (such as the job application process, collaborative projects, and hybrid forms of working).

This would also enable a closer integration of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, in particular with regard to the mediation skills that are highlighted in the Companion Volume (Council of Europe, 2018). This competence can be understood on a ‘cross-linguistic’ level – an approach which could present an opportunity to rejuvenate traditional translation tests in an enhanced form, at a time when machine translation tools are becoming more and more accessible and reliable. Similarly, survey results have shown that listening tests in particular have become a challenge in an online environment. This leads us to suggest approaching mediation competence also on a ‘cross-skills’ level, whereby an assessment would integrate various skills, such as a listening component leading to a debate on the topic, for example. This would again reinforce the focus on analytical skills and critical thinking as an integral part of language testing.

As suggested by Rovai (2000), a thoughtful approach to digital assessments can enhance tutors' and students' experiences: "creativity in design and approach to assessment and measurement strategies can assist both the instructor and the learner in the distance education setting" (p. 144). The proposed shift would drastically remove the issues of plagiarism and academic malpractice that were highlighted in our survey responses. It would also allow for more asynchronous testing – a key factor at fluid times, in which students might even find themselves in different time zones. Moreover, integrating skills will enable us to set up fewer assessments, reducing the risk of testing and marking 'fatigue', sometimes felt both towards the end of terms and over the course of the academic year.

5. Conclusion

The changes induced by the pandemic have created many opportunities for the language sector such as the introduction of hybrid forms of learning and assessing. Our survey results offer some insight into different practices at HEIs as well as perceived challenges and opportunities. We argue that it is time to rethink our practices to create a new generation of modern true-to-life assessments which would take the resources at the students' disposal and the progress of society into account, thus helping our students develop more transferable skills whilst learning a language. Rather than a one-off circumstantial change, we call for a structural evolution that will re-shape language assessments in the long-term. However, such a move cannot and should not happen in isolation, as was suggested by one of our respondents who called for a 'national debate in the [modern languages] sector resulting in nationally agreed guidelines'.

References

Council of Europe. (2018). *Common European framework of reference for languages: learning, teaching, assessment. Companion volume with new descriptors.* https://rm.coe.int/cefr-companion-volume-with-new-descriptors-2018/1680787989

Marinoni, G., van't Land, H., & Jensen, T. (2020). *The impact of Covid-19 on higher education around the world. IAU global survey report.* International Association of Universities. https://www.iau-aiu.net/IMG/pdf/iau_covid19_and_he_survey_report_final_may_2020.pdf

Plutino, A., & Polisca, E. (2021). (Eds). *Languages at work, competent multilinguals and the pedagogical challenges of Covid19*. Research-publishing.net. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2021.49.9782490057832

Rovai, A. (2000). Online and traditional assessments: what is the difference? *The Internet and Higher Education, 3*(3), 141-151. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1096-7516(01)00028-8

8 Student-centred learning and formative assessment: a possible answer to online language and literature teaching and learning

Miao Li[1]

Abstract

The University of Calgary transitioned to online teaching in March 2020. Subsequent months saw instructors working to overcome the personal, technological, and pedagogical challenges involved in this. Central to those discussions was the need to increase student engagement and develop effective assessment formats. Based on student feedback and personal reflection, the adoption of a synchronous learning environment fostering student-centred learning and formative assessment was considered appropriate in the context of online language teaching and learning. It responded to students' increased stress levels due to the lack of face-to-face communication and tackled the issues of student attention span and engagement, as well as academic integrity. This paper starts with a brief discussion of factors that affect students' behavioural patterns and academic performances during online teaching and learning. It then presents five activities and assessments used in language teaching and examines the effectiveness of these activities in improving student engagement and their retention of course material.

Keywords: online, academic integrity, student-centred, formative assessment, synchronous learning.

1. University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada; miao.li@ucalgary.ca; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8486-2892

How to cite: Li, M. (2022). Student-centred learning and formative assessment: a possible answer to online language and literature teaching and learning. In C. Hampton & S. Salin (Eds), *Innovative language teaching and learning at university: facilitating transition from and to higher education* (pp. 93-102). Research-publishing.net. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2022.56.1376

© 2022 Miao Li (CC BY)

1. Introduction

Under the circumstances of COVID-19, the University of Calgary transitioned to online teaching in mid-March 2020. The following months saw instructors working individually and collectively to overcome various pedagogical challenges. Central to these discussions was the need to increase student engagement and develop effective assessment formats.

I taught three French language courses and one literature course from January to June, with class sizes of 30-40 students. Following student feedback, my personal reflection, and a literature review, I adopted synchronous student-centred learning and formative assessment for my 2020 fall term teaching. This approach aimed at responding to the increased stress levels that students reported experiencing due to the lack of face-to-face communication, and tackled issues of student attention span and engagement as well as academic integrity. My paper starts with a brief discussion of factors affecting students' behavioural patterns and academic performances in online learning. It then presents five activities and assessments: quizzes, skit, oral assessment, team-teaching, and forum discussion, followed by a discussion on their effectiveness in student engagement and retention of course material.

2. Presentation of the project

2.1. Factors affecting students' behavioural patterns and academic performances

During the spring 2020 term, I taught an accelerated French intermediate course over a period of six weeks via Zoom. The long contact hours, two hours per lesson and three times per week, caused Zoom fatigue to both me and the students, according to my observation and their feedback. I also became aware that certain traditional forms of language assessment, such as dictation, verb conjugation, listening comprehension, and grammar drilling, were no longer as valid when students completed assessments online, on their own, and with

an extension of 50% of test duration suggested by the university, in order to respond to any technical issues that may arise. Not only was it possible for students to collaborate or seek help from family and friends in completing these assessments, but they could also rely on online tools such as Microsoft Word 'dictate', Google Docs 'voice typing', Google Translate, and contract cheating (Eaton & Dressler, 2019).

According to Eaton (2020), a specialist in academic integrity and student learning in synchronous online classes, several factors affect academic misconduct. On the individual level, it is related to students' maturity levels, stress levels, unfamiliarity with or lack of awareness of expectations, personality, and self-regulation/self-control (time management). On the contextual level, students' academic misconduct can be explained by the pressure to perform (from instructor and family, etc.), the competitive learning environment, their perception of peers (they think others are cheating too), instructional expectations not communicated clearly, as well as instructor attitudes such as their care about students' success and academic integrity. Eaton (2020) concluded that it is impossible to completely avoid academic dishonesty, and proposed the following ideas for moving forward with integrity:

- model ethical behaviour: it is important to talk about academic integrity as early as possible;
- focus on compassion: ensure we provide enough support for students' learning, and ensure assessment expectations are clear;
- keep the focus on improving learning, rather than preventing cheating;
- create opportunities for formative assessment.

2.2. Activities and assessments

Based on Eaton's (2020) research findings and my personal experience, I gradually developed the following five activities and assessments, which

I used in my fall 2020 teaching. As indicated later in this paper, some activities were used in the two beginner-level language classes (FREN209), and some in a third-year course on 18th century French literature (FREN457). The principles behind these activities were to incorporate small-scale assessments in class, to increase in-class participation, and to promote students' engagement, interaction, and critical thinking. Finally, they also allowed the instructor to provide frequent and timely feedback.

The first activity I introduced was the quiz. Instead of creating high-stakes comprehensive exams (each worth more than 25%) that contained listening, reading, and writing, I introduced four low-stakes unit quizzes (each 5%) to the FREN209. Students could complete them at their own pace throughout the semester, using our online platform D2L[2]. Each quiz contained 80 questions and was automatically graded. Students could have unlimited attempts and the highest-scoring attempt by the deadline (the last day of class) was used for their final grades. For the FREN457, I designed three D2L home reading quizzes, each worth 3%, on the understanding of literary theories or appreciation of selected excerpts.

The second kind of activity was composition and skit, both used in FREN209. I explained to students the objectives of the assignment, proposed a list of words, expressions, and grammatical structures that students needed to include in their writing, and provided a detailed grading rubric. For the composition, I added a checklist for students to self-evaluate, and asked them to use different colours to highlight the required elements in their composition. For the skit, students were given the choice to perform it via Zoom or recorded video, depending on their preferences and comfort level[3]. FREN457 had a similar activity to the skit: students were asked to perform a group presentation on a literary excerpt from the reading list that I created at the beginning of the semester. To facilitate the participation of other students, in all my three classes, the presenter needed

2. Design to learn, a platform for instructors to post learning materials, and for students to submit online assignments, to complete online tests, and to communicate in forum discussions.

3. Students who experience speech anxiety may choose to submit their presentation in the video form. The marking criteria of the video format was slightly more severe since students could rehearse and edit their work.

to prepare a couple of comprehension questions to ask the audience afterward. I also asked the rest of the class to note down two things they had learned from the presenter and two things that the presenter could improve, etc.

The third activity was an oral interview used in FREN209. I provided students with a list of questions at the beginning of the semester so that they could have a concrete idea of the learning outcomes of the course and focus on important content during their online learning experience. These questions were related to the themes and grammatical concepts to be learned throughout the semester. Different colours were used to represent the units that the questions were related to. Students needed to pick one question from each colour, and then had to prepare for their answers and respond to these questions one by one. During their interview via Zoom, students were not allowed to read from a script and were asked to answer one to two additional questions related to their answers.

The fourth activity was team-teaching used in both FREN209 and FREN457. This activity was particularly effective for classes that lasted more than one hour. At the beginning of the semester, I proposed a list of teaching topics and dates. The students formed groups of two to three, signed up for their teaching slots, and could contact me at any time during their preparation. Each team-teaching slot lasted five to ten minutes. Throughout the semester, everyone had the opportunity to play the role of the teacher. This activity aimed not only to encourage students to be active learners, but also to add to the diversity of the class activities.

The last activity was the D2L forum discussion. In remote teaching, students may not have the same level of interaction with each other as in a regular classroom. I used the D2L online forum discussion to tackle this issue for my literature class. Throughout the semester, I asked students to complete three pre-class readings by themselves. They each needed to ask an original question regarding the interpretation and analysis of the text and provide original answers to two questions from their classmates. The forum discussion aimed at complementing their lack of face-to-face communication, allowing all students to contribute evenly to the discussion, which was hard to achieve in the Zoom lectures, and

preparing students for a more in-depth Zoom discussion afterward. D2L allowed students' participation in the forum to be counted, so I could easily use these statistics as an element to grade students' participation in this course.

3. Discussion of outcomes

Although these activities and assessments addressed my concerns about students' learning experience and academic integrity, their addition to the regular assignments and assessments could potentially increase students' workload. Also, their effectiveness depended partly on student motivation. To assess their effectiveness and make any necessary adjustments, I invited students from all three classes to participate in an optional anonymous survey three weeks before the end of the semester; 22 out of the 76 students from the two FREN209 courses and five out of the 18 FREN457 students took part in the survey. The response rate was quite similar, at approximately 27-28%.

The surveys each contained eight questions. They asked students to reflect on the effectiveness of Zoom lectures compared to in-class learning, the number, format, and fairness of the assessments and assignments, and the fairness of the grading (see the supplementary materials).

In the FREN209 survey, six out of the 22 students found Zoom lectures to be less effective than regular classroom lectures. In the FREN457 survey, three out of the five shared the same impression. They expressed concerns with the lack of face-to-face communication, unstable internet connection, possible distraction in this learning environment, and the decreased quality of the discussions with classmates.

As for the number of assessments and assignments, 19 out of the 22 FREN209 students found them to be reasonable, while two out of the five FREN457 disagreed. The FREN209 students appreciated the variety of assignments to test their knowledge, practise what they had learned in class, and identify their mistakes. They also felt these assignments and assessments aligned with

the course content. Two of my FREN457 students found there were too many reading components. One explained that they were taking four third-year courses which required a large amount of reading and writing. The difference in reaction to the amount of assessment and assignments between the two levels seems to reflect the difference in workload, with the higher-level course having a heavier workload.

When reviewing the assessment and assignments formats, 21 out of 22 FREN209 students found them to be fair, while one found the typing to be not as easy as writing, partly due to their unfamiliarity with the typing of French accents. All the five FREN457 respondents agreed with the fairness of the assessment format, saying that the content was based on their learning and the formats were well thought through and carried out by the instructor. All the 22 FREN209 students felt the grades accurately reflected their effort. Four out of the five FREN457 students shared this opinion while one thought they might receive better grades if the course were taught in class.

It can be seen from Figure 1 and Figure 2 showing FREN209 students' evaluation of the effectiveness of the activities offered, that they still highly appreciated the traditional lectures and homework included in the Workbook. They found the lectures to be effective in helping them to correct mistakes as soon as possible. They also greatly appreciated the added assignments such as the D2L unit quizzes, with their unlimited and untimed attempts allowing for frequent reviews, and the compositions, which took some time to complete but forced them to apply what they had learned in class. Those who liked the skit and the oral interview found them a good way to deliver longer sentences. The Zoom breakout room and the team-teaching were among the least favourite activities. Students found that their breakout room experience was largely dependent on their fellow participants, and it was hard to interact if no one put the camera on. They also had little confidence in their classmates' knowledge and competence in teaching a new concept since everyone was at a beginner-level. As the instructor, I also found that I had to occasionally correct students' mistakes during their teaching, since they did not fully understand the concept and had not sought help or advice from me during their preparation.

Figure 1. FREN209 Students' choices of assignments and activities that best facilitated their learning[4]

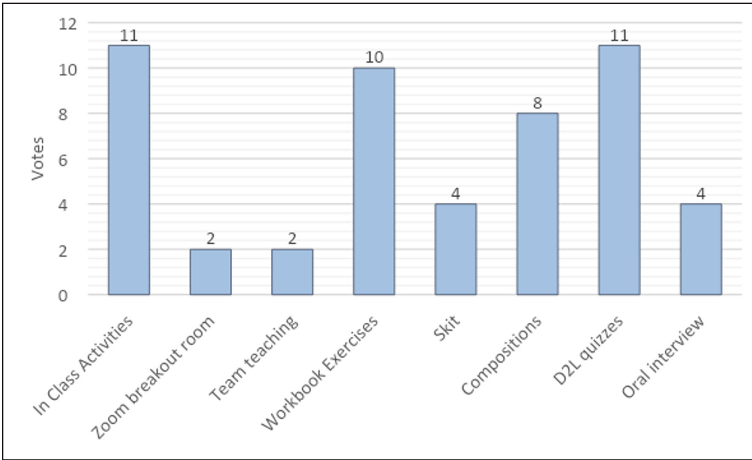
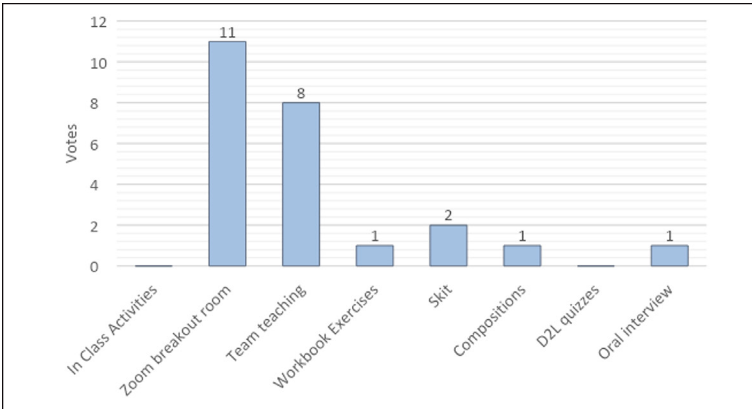


Figure 2. FREN209 Students' choices of assignments and activities that least facilitated their learning[5]



4. Students could check all the options that applied.

5. Students could check all the options that applied.

As for FREN457, due to the limited responses received, students' feedback was quite diverse. Overall, they found all the assessments and assignments to be effective. They did not comment specifically on team-teaching, however, two out of five students selected it as the activity that facilitated their learning the most. Both the pre-class reading and the D2L forums helped them to have a better understanding of the readings. The D2L forums helped them to reflect actively, integrate course material in their answers, and expand their knowledge and ideas since classmates provided different perspectives on the text. Group presentations and discussions allowed them to put into practice everything learned in class: they were an effective way to discuss findings and work together to analyse a specific topic. However, one student did report that their team members did not contribute evenly during the preparation of their group presentation. In their comments on the ineffectiveness of certain activities, they mentioned that the group discussions in Zoom were not always deep enough and not everyone had the same level of engagement.

4. Conclusion

Due to the number of responses received, the study may not accurately represent students' overall opinions on the effectiveness of these activities and assessments. However, the detailed responses I received allowed me to reflect on the effectiveness of the five activities and assessments in creating a student-centred learning environment and addressing academic integrity issues that arose during online teaching and learning. Based on the above interpretations, I came to the following conclusions.

- The instructor needs to carefully consider the workload when designing activities and assessments, especially for higher-level courses in which each assessment is more time-consuming.

- The effectiveness of group projects is largely based on student motivation. Although it creates the opportunity for students to interact and learn from each other, the instructor should anticipate the

possibility of uneven contribution and provide guidelines for planning group projects that ensure the division of labour and the progress of the preparation.

- Team-teaching may not be suitable for beginner-level language students due to their limited knowledge of the course material. To address the problem, the instructor could consider asking students to review the concept learned previously and correct homework at the beginning of the class instead of teaching a new concept.

I will incorporate the above considerations in future online teaching and continue to collect feedback from students.

5. Supplementary materials

https://research-publishing.box.com/s/dt7lyugodxdo8b3iuhla1sihwd2c6aio

References

Eaton, S. (2020). Academic integrity in online language teaching. http://languageworkinggroup.ucalgaryblogs.ca/summer-workshops/academic-integrity-in-online-language-learning/

Eaton, S. E., & Dressler, R. (2019). Multilingual essay mills: implications for second language teaching and learning. *Notos, 14*(2), 4-14. http://hdl.handle.net/1880/110695

9 Metacognitive awareness in L2 listening: a transition from doing listening to teaching it

Jesús Toapanta[1]

Abstract

Second language listening (L2 listening) is taken for granted in the language classroom. The time allocated to it is often minimal, and it does not always aim at developing listening skills. It serves other purposes, such as testing comprehension and/or introducing a different activity. Graham (2017) noted that L2 listening is done in the language classroom, but it is not always taught. This paper shows that it is relatively uncomplicated to teach learners how to listen in the language classroom. It presents the results of an intervention study that incorporated guided discussions and reflections into an activity that consisted of playing an audio recording and answering comprehension questions. The results support previous findings regarding the effectiveness of guided discussions and reflections in developing listening skills (Goh & Taib, 2006) and show that it is possible to help learners address L2 listening more strategically.

Keywords: listening comprehension, L2 listening, metacognitive awareness, instruction in L2 listening, teaching listening, learning to listen.

1. Introduction

L2 listening is regarded as the Cinderella of language skills (Nunan, 2002). The amount of time allocated to developing this skill is minimal in comparison to the

1. University of Alberta and Okanagan College, Edmonton, Canada; toapanta@ualberta.ca; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5575-7524

How to cite: Toapanta, J. (2022). Metacognitive awareness in L2 listening: a transition from doing listening to teaching it. In C. Hampton & S. Salin (Eds), *Innovative language teaching and learning at university: facilitating transition from and to higher education* (pp. 103-111). Research-publishing.net. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2022.56.1377

© 2022 Jesús Toapanta (CC BY)

amount of time assigned to other class activities. L2 listening does occur in the language classroom, but it often serves purposes such as testing comprehension, introducing vocabulary, or providing input for another language skill, rather than developing L2 listening skills. In this regard, Graham (2017) noted that instructors do listening in the language classroom, but rarely teach it.

Over the years, instruction in L2 listening has followed standard procedures such as pre-listening activities, intensive and extensive listening, and post listening activities. These procedures provide guidance to instructors on how to develop their listening lessons. However, when looking at L2 listening from the learners' perspective, these procedures do not necessarily provide learners with guidance on how to tackle L2 listening more effectively. This paper presents the results of an intervention study that incorporated guided discussions and reflections to a listening exercise that consisted of playing an audio recording and answering comprehension questions. This paper shows that it is possible to help learners address L2 listening in a more strategic way and to actually teach learners how to listen in the language classroom.

2. The study

2.1. Overview

Recent findings in L2 listening instruction indicate that teaching individual and isolated strategies does not impact L2 listening as positively and substantially as instruction that focuses on clusters of cognitive and metacognitive strategies (Graham & Macaro, 2008). Furthermore, listening instruction that fosters metacognitive knowledge and regulatory skills has been found to improve listening performance significantly (Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010). Similarly, metacognitive awareness has been found to impact L2 listening positively. In this regard, it has been observed that discussions and reflections are effective ways to develop L2 listening skills in the language classroom. In fact, Goh and Taib (2006) observed that combining guided discussions and reflections proves to be beneficial to learners. This study brings empirical evidence regarding the

effectiveness of incorporating guided discussions and reflections in listening activities. It supports the notion that metacognitive awareness impacts L2 listening positively (Goh, 1997) and adds to the few intervention studies in the field (Macaro, Graham, & Vanderplank, 2007).

The learners in this study participated in several listening sessions which systematically implemented small group discussions of metacognitive factors associated with successful L2 listening (Vandergrift, Goh, Mareschal, & Tafaghodtari, 2006), as well as individual reflection about the listening experience.

2.2. Details of the study

This intervention study was conducted throughout a semester in two classes of Spanish as a foreign language at a large university in North America. There were 44 undergraduate students in these two beginner classes; however only 32 learners were included in the analysis. This was because some participants missed one or more intervention sessions and/or did not consent to participate.

Data for this study was collected before the intervention at pre-test and after the intervention at post-test. The test employed at pre-test and post-test was the same. This was the listening section of a DELE (Diploma de Español como Lengua Extranjera – Diploma of Spanish as a Foreign Language) practice test designed to measure proficiency at the A1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference. There were 30 questions in this test but after conducting an item difficulty analysis with a different cohort of participants, the number of questions went down to 25 as some items were found to be either too difficult or too easy. To analyze this data, a paired samples t-test was run.

Also, a final reflection was collected at the end of the study. This final reflection was a summary of all the individual reflections written at the end of every listening session (see more details below). That is, participants were asked to read all the reflections written during the intervention and summarize them into one final reflection.

As for the intervention, this consisted of eight listening sessions. They were carried out once a week throughout the semester and were delivered in the classroom during regular classes. These short listening sessions lasted for approximately 23 minutes and followed the procedure described below.

- At the beginning of every listening session, participants were given a slip of paper with discussion questions. These discussion questions were in the native language of the learners (i.e. English) and were taken from the Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ) (Vandergrift et al., 2006). This questionnaire has 21 items and all of them are statements. For the purpose of this study, these statements were transformed into questions and regrouped into the five factors of the questionnaire (i.e. direct attention, mental translation, problem-solving, planning and evaluation, and person knowledge). After handing out the slips of paper with the discussion questions, participants were asked to form groups and generate a discussion around these questions.

- After this group discussion, the topic of the audio was written on the board and a brief explanation of the topic was given.

- Then, the audio was played for the first time.

- After this first exposure to the audio, the learners received a set of five comprehension questions. They were given time to get familiar with these multiple-choice questions, and they were encouraged to ask for clarifications if the comprehension questions were not clear enough.

- Subsequently, the audio was played for the second time. This time the learners were asked to provide answers to the comprehension questions. They could write their answers during the audio play or at the end of it.

- Once the learners had finished answering the comprehension questions, the answers were written on the board and the instructor clarified any doubt concerning the answers to the comprehension questions.

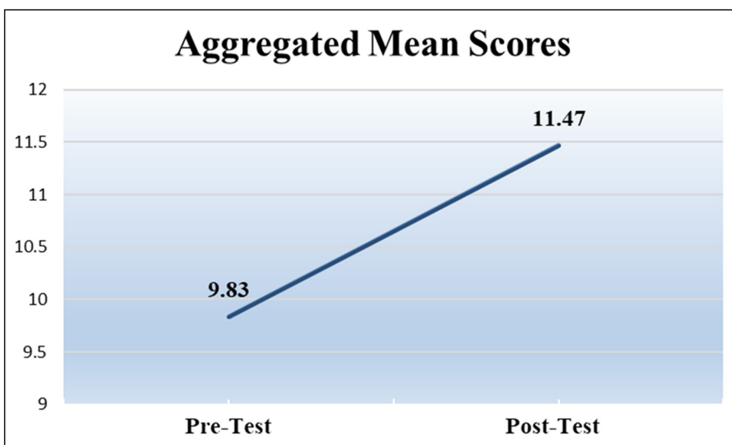
- Then, at the end of the listening session, the learners were asked to reflect on their listening experience. The learners could reflect on any aspect of the listening session or could simply respond to the question: *what could you do differently the next time you listen to an audio text in class? If there is nothing you can do differently, describe what you do when listening*.

This procedure was conducted consistently throughout the eight listening sessions. The instructor did not participate in the discussions and/or reflections. The instructor mainly guided the listening sessions and used a checklist to make sure every session followed the same procedure.

3. Results and discussion

An examination of the learners' scores indicated an increase in L2 listening performance. The learners in the two intact classes improved from pre-test (*M*=9.83, *SD*=2.56) to post-test (*M*=11.47, *SD*=3.87), as can be observed in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Aggregated mean scores of pre-test and post-test



This improvement indicates that the intervention had a positive impact on L2 listening. After confirming statistical assumptions, removing two outliers (N=30), and running a paired samples t-test, the results showed a statistically significant increase in L2 listening performance (i.e. $t(29)=2.66$, $p<0.05$). These statistically significant results suggest that the guided discussions and reflections had a substantial effect on L2 listening such that listening performance improved significantly.

Although the absence of a control group poses a limitation to this intervention study, the results do provide empirical support to instruction that fosters metacognitive awareness (Goh & Taib, 2006). Providing opportunities to reflect on and talk about aspects associated with L2 listening (MALQ factor) helps learners to engage in thought and find ways to address L2 listening more effectively. As Goh (2008) noted, reflections "draw out learners' implicit knowledge about L2 listening and at the same time encourage them to construct new knowledge as they make sense of their own listening experiences" (p. 200). By discussing and reflecting on aspects associated with L2 listening, these learners constructed knowledge about themselves, the task, and the challenges of L2 listening, and ultimately learned to tackle L2 listening in a more effective manner. It is indeed remarkable how the learners in this study constructed knowledge to help them address L2 listening more effectively. This was observed consistently in the reflections of the participants, as can be seen below.

> "Don't listen for each word. Listen for main ideas, key words and ignore words you don't know so you don't get stumped. Read the questions beforehand [comprehension questions in the task/test]. Pay attention to which questions the audio is for. Necesito relajarme. Listen diligently. Don't zone out or get distracted easily. Be careful. Go with your gut. You need to listen for the significance, the overall significance, don't need to understand the significance of all the words. Pay attention! Watch for sarcasm. Don't focus on certain words for too long".

The activities carried out during the intervention provided regular opportunities for learners to experience the challenges and demands of L2 listening. From the

first listening session to the last one, learners were exposed to different audio texts which posed different challenges. While it is difficult to tease apart which audio text presented more challenges, it is clear that by the end of the intervention, the learners felt satisfied with their progress. This was also observed consistently in their final reflections, as can be seen below.

> "For me listening remains as one of the hardest aspects of learning a new language. After reading my reflections I have concluded that although the listening portions got harder I improved significantly. In my opinion, I believe that one learning a new language cannot capture everything being said in an audio clip. You hear words here and there and through practice you may put these words together. However, learning a new language is not easy for most. But I believe that with struggle comes growth. I struggled a lot in the beginning from the first audio but I learned from my mistakes. Also Spanish speakers speak very fast, sometimes too fast".

Giving learners opportunities to experience the challenges and demands of L2 listening is an important aspect in developing listening skills in the language classroom. This exposure, however, needs to be guided and process-oriented so that learners can build on their experiences and generate ways to help themselves cope with the challenging aspects of L2 listening.

4. Conclusion

This intervention study incorporated guided discussions and reflections into a listening activity that had essentially consisted of playing an audio recording and answering comprehension questions. This activity is perhaps an example of doing listening in the language classroom but not teaching it (Graham, 2017). However, by incorporating guided discussions and reflections within the activity, it offered a more meaningful cognitive experience to the learners. The guided discussions, for instance, promoted learners' involvement in and awareness of factors that affect L2 listening, such as attention, translation,

planning, context, and so forth. Also, the reflections provided learners with an opportunity to talk to themselves and to find the best ways to tackle L2 listening in a particular way that aligned with their personalities, linguistic and background knowledge, and with the type of task.

The main implication of this study is that for instruction in L2 listening to be more effective, it needs to give learners opportunities to interact with their peers and to reflect on their listening experience. It also needs to be regular and systematic so that learners can construct and connect knowledge about L2 listening. Finally, as shown in this study, developing listening skills in the language classroom is uncomplicated and does not take more than 25 minutes a week.

5. Acknowledgments

I want to thank J. Nickolas T. and two anonymous reviewers for reading previous drafts and providing useful feedback.

References

Goh, C. (1997). Metacognitive awareness and second language listeners. *ELT Journal*, *51*(4), 361-369. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/51.4.361

Goh, C. (2008). Metacognitive instruction for second language listening development: theory, practice and research implications. *RELC Journal: A Journal of Language Teaching and Research, 39*(2), 188-213. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688208092184

Goh, C., & Taib, Y. (2006). Metacognitive instruction in listening for young learners. *ELT Journal, 60*(3), 222-232. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccl002

Graham, S. (2017). Research into practice: listening strategies in an instructed classroom setting. *Language Teaching, 50*(1), 107-119. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444816000306

Graham, S., & Macaro, E. (2008). Strategy instruction in listening for lower-intermediate learners of French. *Language Learning*, *58*(4), 747-783. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9922.2008.00478.x

Macaro, E., Graham, S., & Vanderplank, R. (2007). A review of listening strategies: focus on sources of knowledge and on success. In A. D. Cohen & E. Macaro (Eds), *Language learner strategies: thirty years of research and practice* (pp. 165-185). Oxford University Press.

Nunan, D. (2002). Listening in language learning. In J. Richards & W. Renandya (Eds), *Methodology in language teaching: an anthology of current practice* (pp. 238-241). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667190.032

Vandergrift, L., Goh, C., Mareschal, C., & Tafaghodtari, M. (2006). The metacognitive awareness listening questionnaire: development and validation. *Language Learning*, *56*(3), 431-462. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9922.2006.00373.x

Vandergrift, L., & Tafaghodtari, M. (2010). Teaching L2 learners how to listen does make a difference: an empirical study. *Language Learning*, *60*(2), 470-497. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9922.2009.00559.x

10 From face-to-face to online in foreign language teaching: an outstanding experience

Cristina Rodríguez Oitavén[1]

Abstract

In December 2019, the University of Oxford Language Centre started to offer online courses in French, Spanish, and German at an advanced level. This not only enabled the Language Centre to pilot a new way of Modern Foreign Language (MFL) teaching ahead of the unprecedented 2020 health crisis, but also to open and expand 'Oxford to the world'. The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of this innovative online teaching project based on the implementation of a two-hour weekly asynchronous teaching schedule through carefully designed 'learning pathways'. These focused on an interactive multimodal learning environment, which included discussions, grammar quizzes, and videos. This project confirmed the initial hypothesis that asynchronous teaching was the best method for students with different language competencies and learning styles as they were not time-bound and were able to work at their own pace.

Keywords: multimodal, asynchronous/asynchrony, learning pathways, discussions, quizzes.

1. The University of Oxford, Oxford, United Kingdom; cristina.rodriguezoitaven@lang.ox.ac.uk

How to cite: Rodríguez Oitavén, C. (2022). From face-to-face to online in foreign language teaching: an outstanding experience. In C. Hampton & S. Salin (Eds), *Innovative language teaching and learning at university: facilitating transition from and to higher education* (pp. 113-120). Research-publishing.net. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2022.56.1378

© 2022 Cristina Rodríguez Oitavén (CC BY)

1. Introduction

It is clear that in this new global society, multilingualism has become a real asset in overcoming linguistic and cultural barriers. A progressive internationalisation of both the worlds of education and work has contributed to the growing importance of individuals' linguistic abilities in MFLs. There has been a significant decline in higher education institutions offering MFLs at degree level in the UK since 2008 (Polisca, Wright, Álvarez, & Montoro, 2019). However, recent trends show a substantial rise in credit and 'non-credit' bearing modules offered by what has become known as university Wide Language Programmes (WLPs) (Polisca et al., 2019) which provide students from all disciplines with the opportunity to be part of this multilingual turn. In December 2019, an online language teaching project was launched by the University of Oxford Language Centre as part of their WLP. It piloted an innovative method of delivering MFL lessons ahead of the unprecedented health crisis and expanded 'Oxford to the world'. This chapter presents the B2 Spanish as a foreign language learning pathway of this project, which followed a communicative and plurilingual approach[2].

2. Presentation of the project

2.1. Considerations about online teaching and learning

Traditionally, the MFL teaching and learning process is commonly conceived as a dynamic relationship between the teacher, preferably a native speaker, and the students, in a face-to-face environment such as a classroom or an immersion setting in the target language. In this relationship, educators become the principal source of knowledge (Dewey, 1929), acting as facilitators of the learning process and providing modulating structures, interaction patterns, and feedback. MFL teachers themselves have subscribed to this belief and their experiences as

2. A distinction between multilingualism and plurilingualism is made following the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL, Council of Europe, 2001). Multilingualism refers to the knowledge of several languages, or the co-existence of different languages in a given society, whereas plurilingualism refers to individuals who speak several languages: https://rm.coe.int/1680459f97

learners have become a key factor in their cognitions as prospective instructors (Borg, 2006). McQuiggan (2012) maintains that teachers' "initial teaching model is typically born from that of their teachers, and they teach as they were taught" (p. 27), something Lortie (1975) considers the 'apprenticeship of observation'.

Teaching is intrinsically connected to market demands (Salavati, 2016) and the global trend of moving from analogue to digital has had an enormous effect on the modern education system. Even before the COVID-19 outbreak, it was evident that the establishment of online teaching and learning was a matter of 'when' and not 'if'. With the pandemic, educational institutions were forced to act on their prospective plans and to quickly adapt their teaching materials as learning could no longer be held in the classroom. Teachers have had to move from the familiar to the unfamiliar (Gregory & Salmon, 2013), and myths contrasting "the 'theatre of the classroom' and the rich social tapestry of the campus with a barren, solitary, inhuman online experience consisting of no more than downloading texts and submitting assignments" (Felix, 2003, p. 27) must be questioned, if not dispelled. This does not mean that educators will be left as supporting actors. In online learning and teaching, a symbiosis between teachers and technology is created as "without the intervention [of] a creative teacher, the Web, and the Internet can at best function as a convenient materials resource and communication vehicle" (Felix, 2003, p. 118).

2.2. Implementation of the project

Advanced online French, German, and Spanish courses were offered during Trinity Term 2019 at the University of Oxford Language Centre as a project led by the Head of Modern Languages. Classrooms were left behind and time and location constraints were abandoned. Planning to instruct online necessitated reconsidering our views and beliefs about MFL teaching and learning. This venture proved to be the catalyst for establishing our remote teaching courses during Trinity Term 2020 and currently remains in place.

Supported by the institutional Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), a two-hour weekly asynchronous teaching schedule was implemented through carefully

designed units of learning known as learning pathways. These focused on an interactive multimodal learning environment including discussions, grammar quizzes, and videos. This enabled students to interact with the learning content with time to reflect on their responses. Scaffolding strategies to promote interaction between students were implemented by actively engaging tutors in the process. The latter participated in personal introductions and presentations, engaged in discussions, encouraged students to pose questions, shared learning strategies and experiences, and provided timely feedback. Students were also offered a weekly 30-minute live session to further engage with their tutors and peers.

These courses were organised in a hybrid flexible model to give learners as much control over their learning process as possible and to enable them to work at their own pace and in their own time. The learning pathways focused on the activities that are normally undertaken in a face-to-face class, such as eliciting responses, reading, writing, listening, and speaking. They were normally uploaded on the VLE a week in advance. Intercultural, pluricultural, and plurilingual components were incorporated thanks to the multilingual and multicultural nature of our virtual classrooms and their alignment with the European MFL teaching and learning policies. Students were encouraged to reflect on their own cultures and to compare their mother tongues or any other language they knew, with the target language. Discussion forums and questions are included in all learning pathways to encourage students to interact with their peers and tutor. Students were asked to pose questions at the end of every lesson to be answered by their tutor or, as was observed in some cases, by their peers.

3. Discussion of findings

A selection of students agreed, in writing, that their work could be reviewed over the entire process. Feedback was collected via an online survey using onlinesurveys.ac.uk, where participants were asked a variety of questions about the layout, content, and delivery of the course. Excellent feedback and results were obtained, which contributed to the expansion of the course offer, both face-

to-face and online. The quotations from students A, B, C, and D below are taken from the feedback questionnaires.

> "I liked the materials and tasks quite a lot. The grammar provided a useful reminder of the use of the past tenses. The chosen media file (from RTVE) was actually quite interesting and the speaking and writing sections provided very good platform to train my language skills" (Student B).

> "The modules are a good mix of short grammar lessons, quizzes, and application of the language – listening, reading, writing, responding somehow" (Student C).

This project confirmed the initial hypothesis that asynchronous teaching was a preferable method for students with different language competencies and learning styles as they were not time-bound and were able to work at their own pace. Learners had the opportunity to interact and reflect upon the authentic and contextualised input, to manipulate their output in a creative and sophisticated way without the pressure of being in an face-to-face lesson, to correct themselves, expand their lexical repertoire, and pose questions.

The analysis of the content of the learning pathways revealed the disinhibition of 'silent learners' in face-to-face environments. This was a rather remarkable outcome as these students felt prompted by their peers' and tutor's replies to contribute to discussion forums, reply with questions, and upload recordings requested in speaking activities, as attested by one participant:

> "I actually like the online format because it actually required me to practice [sic] speaking much more than in the physical classroom" (Student A).

Inductive grammar exercises were praised as they encouraged students to reflect on the specific use and context of a particular grammar point before having access to the explanatory video filmed with screencast-O-matic. This approach

also contributed to the exchange of ideas and study techniques applied when learning a language in a communicative and meaningful manner.

These findings concur with those of Felix (2003) who argues that online environments facilitate a plethora of activities difficult to achieve in a physical classroom, such as:

> "interpersonal communication in authentic settings, sustaining meaningful information gap activities and involving students in creating problem-based and project-based learning with a native speaker" (p. 133).

Live sessions and webinars were considered useful by the students as they gave them the opportunity to interact with peers and tutors in real-time. The topics were uploaded in advance so that the students could be prepared. The learners were also encouraged to share study techniques and tips for learning grammar and to exchange ideas about how to improve their Spanish independently.

Another relevant factor was the presence of plurilingual and pluricultural components in the lessons. Plurilingualism and pluriculturalism are considered to be effective techniques for incorporating learners' linguistic and cultural diversity given the usual multilingual and pluricultural environment that characterises the anglophone within the higher education sector. In this case, students' native languages and cultures were not seen as obstacles, but rather as assets in the learning process. The fact that languages other than Spanish (the target language) were given a space in the lessons was welcomed. Sharing aspects of different native or learned languages and cultures became a common practice in this virtual community.

It is also interesting to note the successful implementation of the multimodal ways of providing collective and individual feedback to students depending on the type of activity and the students' needs. In this technology-driven teaching environment, immediate feedback was chosen for the interactive quizzes on the VLE, whereas timely feedback was used for the oral and writing activities. For

both skills, feedback was provided with a video recorded with screencast-O-matic This allowed the tutor not only to formulate constructive feedback and refer learners to different resources but also to build more personalised guidance according to learners' styles and needs:

> "Cristina makes so much time to give everybody individual feedback, and I've improved incredibly rapidly in the past year because of this" (Student D).

4. Conclusions

Overall, this project supported the theory that online teaching and learning offers to both learners and language instructors a wide scope of possibilities and teaching techniques not always possible or available in in-person lessons. The VLE proved to be a useful resource where students could find all the information and resources in one place. Live sessions and webinars became the communicative microcosmos where learners could implement their MFL skills and create a virtual community with their tutor and peers. The communicative plurilingual approach contributed to the development of 'social actors', i.e. learners who acquire an MFL to perform in societies and cultures which differ from their own, and to develop their plurilingual awareness. Excellent results and student feedback proved to be the catalyst for establishing remote teaching during the first COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020.

This chapter has only examined the case of Spanish as a foreign language at B2, but the University of Oxford Language Centre built on this experience and offered a Spanish beginners' course in Hilary Term 2021 (January-March) to provide learners with a maximal exposure to the target language and consider all the linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Spanish was not taught in isolation as learners were invited to look for links between all the languages and cultures in the class (Auger, 2010; Byram, 2008) and to develop an awareness of how languages operate (Piccardo, 2013). English was only used as a support in the learning process instead of a medium of instruction. As Galindo Merino

(2013) asserts, if English is made the lingua franca in a multilingual classroom, especially at lower levels, students whose first language is not English could face discrimination.

References

Auger, N. (2010). *Elèves nouvellement arrivés en France : réalités et perspectives pratiques en classe*. Éditions des archives contemporaines.

Borg, S. (2006). *Teacher cognition and language education: research and practice*. Continuum.

Byram, M. (2008). *From foreign language education to education for intercultural citizenship: essays and reflections*. Multilingual Matters. https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847690807

Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European framework of reference for languages: learning, teaching, assessment*. Cambridge University Press.

Dewey, J. (1929). *The sources of a science of education*. Horace Liveright.

Felix, U. (2003). Teaching languages online: deconstructing the myths. *Australian Journal of Educational Technology, 19*(1), 118-138. https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.1705

Galindo Merino, M. M. (2013). El eterno dilema: la lengua materna en la clase de español. *Mosaico: Revista para la Promoción y Enseñanza del Español, 31*, 17-23.

Gregory, J., & Salmon, G. (2013). Professional development for online university teaching. *Distance Education, 34*(3), 256-270. https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2013.835771

Lortie, D. C. (1975). *Schoolteacher: a sociological study*. University of Chicago Press.

McQuiggan, C. A. (2012). Faculty development for online teaching as a catalyst for change. *Online Learning, 16*(2), 27. https://doi.org/10.24059/olj.v16i2.258

Piccardo, E. (2013). Plurilingualism and curriculum design: toward a synergic vision. *TESOL Quarterly, 47*(3), 600-614. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.110

Polisca, E., Wright, V., Álvarez, I., & Montoro, C. (2019). *Language provision in UK MFL departments 2019 survey. report no. 2*, December. https://university-council-modern-languages.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/LanguageProvisionMFLsSurvey2019.pdf

Salavati, S. (2016). *Use of digital technologies in education*. Linnaeus University Press Växjö. http://libris.kb.se/resource/bib/19785345

11 Task-based projects for transition from university to placements abroad: development of academic, sociocultural, and employability skills for students of Spanish as a foreign language

Nazaret Pérez-Nieto[1] and Ares Llop Naya[2]

Abstract

This paper shows how Task-Based Learning (TBL) is used to equip second-year Spanish students at Cardiff University for their placements during their year abroad. We present a set of task-based projects embedded within the curriculum to enhance both (1) the competences students have to acquire throughout their degree, and (2) the skills to overcome the challenges involved in tasks of similar nature when studying or working abroad. These activities (including translations, presentations, essay writing and the production of a vlog) put all the knowledge acquired into practice in real-life situations. The impact of these tasks on the learning process, academic, sociocultural, and employability skills, and the students' perceptions of the transition to placements abroad have been assessed through a survey. The sequences designed, the results and feedback collected are presented as evidence in favour of TBL as a suitable approach to qualify Higher Education (HE) students as proficient users of the target language during their time abroad.

Keywords: task-based learning, higher education, placements abroad, transition.

1. Cardiff University, Cardiff, Wales; perez-nieton@cardiff.ac.uk; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0650-3181

2. University of Cambridge, Cambridge, United Kingdom; al2027@cam.ac.uk; http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4365-4947

How to cite: Pérez-Nieto, N., & Llop Naya, A. (2022). Task-based projects for transition from university to placements abroad: development of academic, sociocultural, and employability skills for students of Spanish as a foreign language. In C. Hampton & S. Salin (Eds), *Innovative language teaching and learning at university: facilitating transition from and to higher education* (pp. 121-132). Research-publishing.net. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2022.56.1379

© 2022 Nazaret Pérez-Nieto and Ares Llop Naya (CC BY)

1. Introduction

The year abroad can be the most life-changing experience for HE language students during their learning journey. However, it should not be taken for granted that students will automatically benefit from studying or working abroad; hence the importance of preparing them fully for this mobility period, as the better prepared they are before their placement, the more beneficial this experience will be (Byram & Dervin, 2008). The aim of this chapter is to present a proposal on how to apply the TBL theoretical framework (Ellis, 2003; Long, 1985, 2014) to second-year Spanish students embarking on study and work placements for a single semester or the whole academic year in 2019-2020. The project focuses on the academic, sociocultural, and employability skills they need to develop to fulfil the learning outcomes of their language course, as well as to overcome the challenges of the year abroad (DeKeyser, 2010; Gutiérrez, Durán, & Beltrán, 2015). This project was developed within the Innovative Curriculum Programme promoted by Cardiff University. In order to maximise the student's experience, this initiative took as a starting point the need to align pre-departure language module objectives to the learning objectives applicable to a period of residence in the foreign country, in order to ensure the students' enhancement of the three main competences – academic, sociocultural, and employability – while abroad.

Section 2 presents the theoretical framework of TBL, the sequence of the preparatory activities, and the final tasks designed. Section 3 is dedicated to the discussion of the outcomes, via a survey created to measure the impact of the project on students' learning process and engagement in preparation for the year abroad.

2. Presentation of the project

2.1. Theoretical framework

The project consists of designing the syllabus of a language course for second-year Spanish students at Cardiff University, using an approach that features

prominently in the existing literature on foreign language teaching: TBL (Ellis, 2003; Long, 1985, 2014). According to this approach, learners are language users who achieve communicative goals related to real-world activities after a sequence involving cognitive and communicative processes. Thus, according to Ellis (2003) as:

> "[a] workplan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed. To this end, it requires them to give primary attention to meaning and to make use of their own linguistic resources, although the design of the task may predispose them to choose particular forms" (p. 16).

Our main concern was to present a TBL approach-based syllabus which could contribute to the acquisition and the development of the skills students need for their year abroad within the context of a Spanish language course at HE level. We wanted to explore not only the final tasks that could contribute to this purpose, but also the adequate connection and coherence between the components of the course, the sequencing, the materials, and the strategies to assess student's performance on the designed final tasks. The proposal was designed following Oxford's (2006) task planning factors (see Table 1).

Table 1. Task planning of the sequence

Task planning factors	The context of the experience with second-year students from Cardiff University
(Final) Task type	Representative of students' future academic and employability tasks
Importance (and stakes) of the task	Progressive tasks (from low to high difficulty) to provide students with formative feedback to prepare high-stakes assignments (final tasks)
Assessment	Both formative (grammar exercises, aural comprehensions, translations, grammar tests) and summative (portfolio of final tasks, aural comprehension, oral exam, written exam)
Timing	Structure of the course per week: 1h Grammar + 1h Conversation + 1h Translation

Input genre and modality	Representative of different genres and diversity of both written and audio-visual resources
Linguistic complexity	B2 to C1 level
Cognitive load / complexity	Complexity of the tasks regulated according to the cognitive load of the contents addressed. Highly complex tasks are accompanied by germane cognitive load to help students probe into contents
Interaction and output demands	High presence of interaction and output production as a subsequent activity to input flooding and processing tasks

Source: Created by the authors based on Oxford 2006 and the context of the experience with second-year students from Cardiff University.

2.2. Task-based activities

The proposed tasks required students to be active 'language users', employing the same type of communicative processes as those involved in real-world activities. Thus, adopting a TBL approach to teaching required assigning the learners communicative goals that were achieved after the completion of guided sequencing activities, involving both cognitive and communicative processes. The tasks presented to our students not only included pragmatic, phonetic, functional, and notional grammar and text, but also cultural and mediation cultural activities.

The designed syllabus included a series of tasks to be developed throughout the academic year. The proposed final tasks enabled students to put all the knowledge acquired into practice in real-life situations, these being as below.

- **Vlog**. Students were asked to create and submit a summative structured video production where they were given the choice to discuss stereotypes in the Spanish-speaking world or the presence of 'machismo' in the music industry. Audio-visual material analysis, class discussions, and video production workshops contributed to the preparation of the final task.

- **Translation brief-orientated tasks**. Students were requested to submit a series of formative and summative translation pieces throughout the

year. The selected translation documents involved mainly the use of movie trailers and TV series clips transcriptions. Each translation was accompanied by a brief containing guidelines and the purpose of the translation.

- **Essay writing activities**. Students were invited to write and reflect on different topics that were directly associated with their year abroad experience, such as working and studying abroad, the consequences of Brexit for language students, and the differences found amongst Spanish-speaking countries.

- **CV and motivation letter writing**. The purpose of these activities was to aid students in drafting their own CV and motivation letter in the target language, making them aware of the linguistic and cultural differences involved in the process. Class discussions, workshops, and target-specific activities played a critical role in the performance of this final task.

- **Oral presentation**. For this final task, students were asked to work in pairs to create a presentation in the target language on a current affairs topic of their choice, but necessarily related to their year abroad in a Spanish-speaking country.

These final tasks were linked to specific subtasks and activities that were developed during the corresponding language components of the module: conversation, grammar, and translation.

It is important to highlight that the selected subtasks and activities were designed to prepare students for the performance and presentation of the proposed final tasks, and that these were closely associated to the development of academic, sociocultural, and employability skills target that we set ourselves at the beginning of the project. In terms of the teaching sequencing, this was split by semesters, Semester 1 and Semester 2 activities. Although students developed

Table 2. Syllabus and description of guided sequencing activities

Teaching Sequence	Skills	Final tasks	Subtasks	Components	Specific activities	Assessment
1st Sem	• Academic • **Sociocultural** • Professional	VLOG • Stereotypes • 'Machismo' present in the music industry	• Movie Analysis and class discussions • Music analysis and class discussions • Translation of movie trailers • Listening exercises	• **Conversation** • Grammar • Translation	• Activities related to the movie Spanish Affair • Activities related to music analysis (Rosalía, Aitana & Ana Guerra) • Translation of movie trailer Off Course. • Listening exercises related to interviews to actors/ actresses and musicians	• **Assessed Vlog**
1st Sem 2nd Sem	• **Academic** • Sociocultural • Professional	Translation into Spanish	• Translation of movie trailers • Translation of TV Series trailers	• **Translation** • Grammar • Conversation	• Translation of Cable Girls trailer • Translation of TV series clip: Friends	• **Assessed Translation** • **Written Exam** • Formative Translation Submissions
1st Sem 2nd Sem	• **Academic** • Sociocultural • Professional	Essay writing in Spanish	• Class discussions • Essay writing activities • Translation activities	• **Grammar** • Translation • Conversation	• Activities related to studying or working abroad: ERASMUS • Brexit • Differences between Spanish speaking countries • Studying languages in the UK	• **Assessed Essay** • **Written Exam** • Formative Essay Submissions
2nd Sem	• Academic • Sociocultural • **Professional**	CV/Motivation Letter	• Class discussions • Workshops	• **Conversation** • Grammar • Translation	• Creation of CV for YA placements • Creation of motivation letters for potential jobs	• Continuous Assessment
2nd Sem	• **Academic** • Sociocultural • Professional	Presentations on any topic related to their YA receiving country	• Class discussions	• **Conversation** • Grammar • Translation	• Current topics in Spanish speaking countries (literature, music, society, etc)	• **Oral presentation** • Formative exercises: class discussions in conversation classes

these three main competences throughout the year, there was an emphasis on the development of academic skills during the first semester and employability skills in the second. In relation to assessment, all the tasks, subtasks, and specific activities were assessed either in a formative or summative manner, or were included as part of the continuous assessment of the module. Table 2 provides a full description of the syllabus and guided sequencing activities.

3. Survey and discussion of outcomes

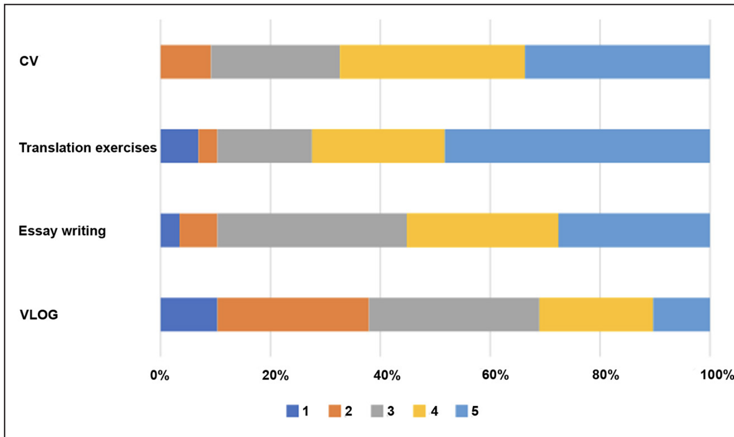
In order to measure the suitability of the tasks, all participants were asked to respond to an online survey (see supplementary materials). The survey had 21 questions and was circulated to students during the second half of their year abroad. There was an initial section for personal information, followed by two sections serving a dual purpose: firstly, to measure the impact the designed activities had on the learning process and engagement of our second-year students preparing for their year abroad; secondly, to assess the overall impression students had of this teaching and learning approach, and whether they considered the tasks as useful for and relevant to their experience abroad.

Bearing in mind these two goals, students were asked about the usefulness of the final tasks proposed by means of one to five rating scales questions (one being not useful and five being extremely useful). Each question was complemented with a multiple-choice question to assess the impact of the activities on students' sociocultural, academic, or employability skills. In all the questions about the tasks, there were also open-ended questions, allowing participants to enter additional comments about their experience.

A total of 30 students responded to the survey. Responses to the multiple-choice questions in the online survey were analysed quantitatively (a feature conveniently provided by the Google Forms tool). The comments on the open questions were analysed qualitatively.

As for the final tasks, participants were asked about how valuable the vlog, the essay writing in Spanish on cultural and current topics, and the CV and motivation letter exercises were in preparing them for their work placements (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Final tasks rated by participants (one being not useful and five being extremely useful)



With regard to the vlog, this activity was created to expose students to different registers of the target language, as well as to improve their command of non-academic registers. Some qualitative comments made by students confirm the appropriateness of this activity.

> "For me, the best part about compiling the vlog was having to speak, as this is by far my weakest point, and I found that channelling my creativity allowed me to express myself in ways I never knew I could. [...] The vlog definitely prepared me for the year abroad by boosting my confidence [...]. It pushed me out of my comfort zone which you have to do continually whilst living abroad, and it is massively rewarding" (Cardiff University School of Modern Languages student, study placement).

However, according to the qualitative comments, while some participants appreciated the creative part of the assignment (recording and editing the video), as well as the need to freshen their vocabulary to address the very latest topics, others stated they felt it sometimes detracted from the objective of learning.

Regarding essay writing in Spanish on cultural current topics, a wide majority of students considered these were highly useful for their preparation for the year abroad. The target aim of this task was to enhance students' mastery of essay writing in the target language. This task stands out from the rest as it requires students' command of a genre whose linguistic and discursive characteristics are fundamental for a good performance on their year abroad study placements. At the same time, according to the survey, the topics addressed achieved the goal of preparing students to overcome the 'culture shock' and to have more in-depth knowledge about current affairs debates; 80% of the respondents praised the usefulness of this task, rating it between three and five in the scale, and suggested extending it further and on more in-depth topics to prepare for target university assignments.

Regarding the CV and motivation letter exercises in preparation for work placements, students who chose the work placement (20%) as their year abroad experience highly valued the usefulness of this task (82.8% of them gave it a five out of five in the rating scale). Students who decided to study at university during their year abroad (72%) considered the task as enriching, but not as much as the ones who used the CV and motivation letter in real life to apply for their work placements.

Finally, the feasibility of the task-based approach is confirmed by the high rating of translation into Spanish projects by students. These were valued as significant opportunities to enhance linguistic skills by means of straightforward applied and employability-orientated assignments, as well as to be exposed to a wide range of resources (films, TV series) from the target countries (89.7%).

As mentioned above, the syllabus and the content sequencing were designed according to the final communicative goals students were expected to achieve.

Students' insights reflect that tasks have been valued as wide ranging and representative of all social, academic, and work skills students were expected to acquire during the course. Participants of the survey highlighted the value of final tasks as training opportunities to undertake similar tasks in their work and study placements in the target country (75.9%).

The survey does also provide evidence of the suitability of the middle preparatory tasks, created as a scaffolding for students to achieve the final communicative goals. Among the most highly regarded activities, oral and aural practices linked to current affairs in the target countries stood out in the qualitative comments gathered.

> "I felt that the topics we discussed in Year 2 featured across the news during my year abroad, and as a result a lot of the topics we discussed were part of daily conversations I had, so having a base understanding of these topics was invaluable" (Cardiff University School of Modern Languages student, work placement).

Students mentioned the progressive introduction of both linguistic input, by means of different teaching strategies and multimodal channels (Pérez-Nieto & Llop, in press), and cultural contents, by means of a wide range of topics and sources, as the reason for this positive reception. Specifically, the input presented was highly valued by students, who agreed teaching sequence contents were presented in a sequenced and coherent way according to the target final task. This statement proves the success of the project: the linguistic input turned out to be meaningful for students. Thus, it could be converted into enriching intake, which in turn resulted in improved output (VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993).

Finally, the relevance of the cultural content covered was rated as positive by almost 75% of the participants, as seen in the following statement by a student undertaking a work placement:

> "I worked in a newspaper, so some current topics were useful as when I had to write articles on them I already had background knowledge" (Cardiff University School of Modern Languages student, work placement).

Both the qualitative and quantitative results commented on back our balanced approach aiming to attract both students' generational and academic interests.

4. Conclusion

After having analysed the results of the survey and the feedback provided by the students involved in this project, we can conclude that there is strong evidence in favour of monitored TBL activities as a suitable approach to qualify HE students as proficient users of the target language. The resulting detailed description and analysis of the results not only constitute an informed contribution to the way the curriculum of pre-departure language modules can be designed and implemented, but they also confirm that the activities proposed aid students in preparing them fully for their year abroad experience.

We are aware that the current university climate and constraints due to the COVID19 pandemic require a redesigned approach to teaching and learning in HE. This also highlights the crucial need to adapt the proposed activities to the new COVID 19 scenario, following the university guidelines on developing a blended learning approach, combining face-to-face, synchronous, and asynchronous activities. Another aspect to consider at present is the impact that Brexit will have on mobility programmes for our language students in the near future and how we, as language teachers, can assist them in overcoming the new challenges that may arise.

As for the further development of this project, we aim to expand our research and concentrate on the reentry process of our students abroad. Studying this

process will provide us with a more holistic and integrated view of our language programmes, and will help us assess the best way to integrate the study abroad experience within the student's language journey.

5. Supplementary materials

https://research-publishing.box.com/s/n6h8mjtwfewx56rzb6xtykpy111oeqfk

References

Byram, M., & Dervin, F. (2008). (Eds). *Student, staff and academic mobility in higher education*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

DeKeyser, R. (2010). Monitoring processes in Spanish as a second language during a study abroad program. *Foreign Language Annals, 43*(1), 80-92.

Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based teaching and learning*. Oxford University Press.

Gutiérrez, G., Durán, R., & Beltrán, F. (2015). Identifying students' intercultural communicative competence at the beginning of their placement: towards the enhancement of study abroad programmes. *Intercultural Education, 26*(1), 73-85.

Long, M. (1985). A role for instruction in second language acquisition: task-based language teaching. In K. Hystelstam & M. Pienemann (Eds), *Modeling and accessing second language acquisition* (pp. 77-99). Multilingual Matters.

Long, M. H. (2014). *Second language acquisition and task-based language teaching*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Oxford, R. (2006). Task-based language teaching and learning: an overview. *Asian EFL Journal, 8*(3), Article 5.

Pérez-Nieto, N., & Llop, A. (in press). Teaching languages to Generation Z students: the impact of the use of audio-visual materials in the Spanish classroom. In M. F. Suárez (Ed.), *Screen media and language*. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

VanPatten, B., & Cadierno, T. (1993). Explicit instruction and input processing. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 15*(2), 225-241. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263100011979

12 Real-world translating: learning through engagement

Angela Uribe de Kellett[1]

Abstract

In an effort to motivate language students and to promote real engagement, a long-running project has taken root at Newcastle University. For over 12 years, the Real Translation Project (RTP), an extracurricular initiative in the School of Modern Languages, has been offering opportunities to language students to use their linguistic skills to support community and charity organisations. Through participating in the project, the students develop professional as well as translation skills. This paper examines how the project facilitates the transition of students to post-graduation life – equipping them with work skills and increasing their awareness of the specific skills required in translation whilst linking them with external organisations and giving them opportunities to contribute to society. Drawing on empirical data from participants, this paper analyses the immediate and long-term outcomes derived from working on meaningful, authentic projects, using problem-based learning and a collaborative approach.

Keywords: real-world translation, collaborative approach, social impact, employability.

1. Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom; angelauribekellett@gmail.com

How to cite: Uribe de Kellett, A. (2022). Real-world translating: learning through engagement. In C. Hampton & S. Salin (Eds), *Innovative language teaching and learning at university: facilitating transition from and to higher education* (pp. 133-142). Research-publishing.net. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2022.56.1380

© 2022 Angela Uribe de Kellett (CC BY-NC-ND)

1. Introduction

The RTP is an initiative which provides opportunities to language students in the School of Modern Languages (SML) at Newcastle University to engage with the community via the translation of real documents for a variety of organisations.

This initiative came into being in an effort to increase motivation among final-year language students and promote a sense of ownership of their work, through working on real and purposeful translations for charity and community organisations. In the process, the project has become a vehicle for preparing students for the world of work, by adopting a collaborative approach to teaching and learning, where students are confronted with real clients, a real readership, and real deadlines. Over time, the RTP has established close links with external organisations by supporting their work for several years running. It has also provided an opportunity for teaching staff in SML to engage in the projects, encouraging integration of the various language departments.

2. Aims and theory

The RTP started out of a need for translation services from charitable organisations with limited resources. Whilst teaching a translation module for an undergraduate Spanish course, I found several local community organisations dealing with international families. This situation presented potential in two ways: we could support these organisations by translating documents to ease communication with their clients and also motivate and inspire our students via their participation in these real-world translation projects.

The main aims of the RTP are to increase *student motivation* using purposeful tasks, support charitable organisations, and inspire and raise the *social awareness* of the students. The project's objectives are to link Newcastle University language students with the wider community and enable them to support the work of community and charitable organisations through their language skills. The rationale is to use texts which these organisations need translating as

project work for the students and via this process to impact on their learning experience and motivation, enhance their employability and forge links between the university and the community (Uribe de Kellett, 2020).

According to research into pedagogy and psychology, motivation is the most important factor to improve learning (Olson, 1997, as cited in Williams & Williams, 2011, p. 2). It is also argued that increased motivation and participation among students leads to enhanced student performance and competence (González Davies, 2004, p. 2). From a social-constructivist view, which conceives learning as being co-constructed by individuals interacting in authentic situations, Kiraly (2000) has argued for an 'empowerment' approach using 'authentic project-work'. He explains this approach as "the collaborative undertaking of complete translation projects for real clients" (Kiraly, 2005, p. 1102). The goal is "'to empower' students by making them proactive agents of their own learning through authentic, collaborative work leading to autonomy and expertise" (Kiraly, 2005, p. 1104).

Within a collaborative approach to teaching and learning, collaboration is understood as the exchange of differing views which are then evaluated and developed into new perspectives (Bednar, Cunningham, Duffy, & Perry, 1992, as cited in Kiraly, 2000, p. 35). In collaborative work, the participants are "simultaneously creating meanings among themselves and are also internalising meanings individually" and each group member acquires "cultural and professional knowledge" (Kiraly, 2000, p. 36).

Working on authentic translation tasks is believed to develop translator competence and its benefits are wide ranging: "along with autonomy, responsibility and emotional involvement, motivation increases as well as the willingness to initiate action oneself instead of simply completing assignments" (Risku, 1998, as cited in Kiraly, 2005, p. 1104). Furthermore, as part of a holistic and an empowering approach to education, students should be encouraged to reflect on the learning process, which is understood as "the ability to reflect upon, understand and control one's learning" (Schraw & Dennison, 1994, as cited in Pietrzak, 2019, n.p.). By (self) reflecting, students' learning is maximised, and

its practice leads to the development of lifelong learning skills which will serve them in the world of work (Kiraly, 2000; Pietrzak, 2019).

Therefore, by undertaking real translation assignments, the RTP set out to encourage student participation and engagement. The project adopted specific practices in line with the social-constructivist model advocated by Kiraly: use of authentic tasks, a collaborative approach, student-centred and problem-based learning, a process-oriented approach, and reflection (Fernández Prieto & Sempere Linares, 2010; Uribe de Kellett, 2010). However, the guiding principle underpinning all the projects is cooperative learning which González Davies (2004) defines as: "positive teamwork… It is about creating a working atmosphere where each student feels actively involved in, and responsible for, the process and the end product" (p. 13).

3. The RTP

The initial projects were carried out as in-class project work within a Spanish translation module for final-year students. However, working with large cohorts made them difficult to implement and after some trials, it was found that running them as extracurricular activities was more appropriate. The RTP has now been taken up in most of the school's language departments – Spanish, French, German, Portuguese, Chinese, and Japanese.

Although all projects vary, they share the following principles: the students work in teams, including Erasmus students where possible, as this is an important element in terms of peer teaching and learning, social integration, and cultural exchange. The teams manage themselves – when to meet, deciding on different roles, how to tackle the work, etc. The lecturer acts as a guide and facilitator.

For each project, a representative of the 'client' organisation is invited to speak to the students about their work, why the translations are needed, and to answer queries. Where relevant, there is a site visit as in the case of heritage sites.

Regular meetings with the lecturer take place to discuss progress, difficulties encountered, etc. For some projects, additional workshops enable students to gain or hone the necessary skills – e.g. learning to use subtitling software for audio-translation; or to provide context – for example, a talk on the recent political history of Peru when preparing to subtitle a video on Peruvian youth movements. The student teams carry out peer reviews and receive feedback from the lecturer. The translations are finally edited by the lecturer for quality assurance. Students then submit a report, reflecting on their learning, strategies, and processes. At the end, the organisations are invited again, and the students hand over their final translations personally, thereby reinforcing the relevance of their work. At the end of each project, individual students complete a questionnaire.

During the course of the RTP, the projects have varied in scope and nature just as the type of organisations involved. For example, the RTP has collaborated with a local primary school with a high proportion of children from migrant or refugee families. The language students translated letters and forms into four languages to help ease communication between parents and the school. In another project, the RTP worked with an organisation monitoring the situation of human rights' defenders in Colombia. The students translated a comprehensive dossier on the Colombian legal system and human rights law, and then a small group of students travelled to Colombia with the lecturer to interpret for a delegation of international lawyers. Other projects have included websites for non-governmental organisations , guides for heritage sites, bilingual booklets for vocational students and a book on alternative community projects. The work has branched out to interpreting, audio-visual translation, and recording audio-guides. So far, well over 500 language students have participated.

4. Analysis and discussion

The feedback questionnaires and individual reports of 98 students from three different years (2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2018-2019) have been analysed and key issues identified.

Responding to the following question from the questionnaire – *What impact did the fact that the text was a 'real text' have on your motivation?* – 93% of the students indicated that it had a great impact. In response to another question – *What impact did the fact that the text was for a charity organisation have on your motivation?* – 77% replied that it was a high motivating factor. Therefore, the value of real-life projects and translating for charity and community organisations was recognised by the students as key motivators. In fact, according to the students, these two elements – 'real tasks' and supporting 'good causes', had the effect of motivating them to perform to the highest standard possible. This in turn increased their engagement with the work and raised their level of performance, all of which would corroborate research findings by González Davies (2004) on how greater student performance and competence results from an increase in motivation and participation.

In addition, when asked to name five things gained through the project, two items topped the students' lists: gaining understanding, experience, and skills in translation (67%), and teamwork skills (48%). When asked to further specify the professional skills developed, collaborating (82%), communication (78%), and independent learning skills (76%) were singled out most frequently. These results validate one of the main goals of collaborative work as the assimilation of 'cultural and professional knowledge' by individual members of the teams (Kiraly, 2000, p. 36). They also point to the development of lifelong learning skills (Kiraly, 2000; Pietrzak, 2019).

Other gains reported by students, along with improved linguistic ability, experience, and acquisition of technical skills, were friendships, and engagement with the local community. This indicates that participation in the projects led to forming and strengthening friendships, which derives from positive teamwork in cooperative learning (González Davies, 2004). This also shows that students valued their engagement with the community, which is one of the main aims of the RTP.

Some students self-reported that having the opportunity to try out their translation skills in a collaborative way changed their career path towards translation and

interpreting. It led a number to follow MA courses in these fields and/or to get jobs as translators and interpreters after finishing their studies. Some individual reports described their experience with the RTP as their first professional assignment, and one participant even set up her own translation company.

These findings confirm the hypothesised benefits deriving from working with authentic translation projects of motivation, responsibility, emotional involvement, and initiative as well as autonomy (Risku, 1998, as cited in Kiraly, 2005). They also confirm the achievement of all the aims and goals set out for the RTP. From the above findings as well as from observation the positive effects from the RTP can be summarised as follows: linking students with community organisations enhances the student experience and their sense of personal fulfilment. Moreover, it enables them to see themselves as capable of making a difference within society. Additionally, providing opportunities for students to practise their linguistic and translation skills purposefully and enabling them to gain professional skills and strengthen their CVs, the RTP contributes to facilitating their transition to post-degree life (Uribe de Kellett, 2020).

Tangible societal benefits can be identified at different levels: collaborating with local organisations and schools working in deprived areas and providing support to migrant families and refugees; cooperating with international humanitarian and indigenous organisations; and working with heritage organisations as well as the academic community.

5. Conclusion

Although various ‘authentic translation projects’ can be found in the literature, here are some distinctive features of this RTP: firstly, the engagement with local communities beyond the university is a dimension which broadens students’ education – it raises their social awareness, provides the means to have a social impact and contributes to the broader recognition of the civic role of universities and students within society. Secondly, despite its limitations, the extracurricular format of the RTP gives greater flexibility in terms of timing and input

requirements. Projects can run over semesters or even partly into the summer and do not have to comply with modular prescriptions (number of content hours, etc). Thirdly, besides facilitating the integration of exchange students, the RTP allows a real cultural exchange to take place by giving students the opportunity to interact and work together in multicultural groups. Fourthly, the voluntary nature of the projects promotes positive values apart from avoiding any potential competition with local translators as the work done is for organisations who do not have the means to pay professional fees.

It must be added that even after over 12 years there continues to be a high take-up from students because they can recognise the benefits. The RTP has also proved there is a need for such collaborations with the community.

However, there are challenges as well as opportunities. Although the project has run as an extracurricular activity for most of its existence, some thought has been given to turn it into a credit-bearing module, but both approaches have their drawbacks. In our experience, real-world translation projects with large cohorts of students are difficult to manage, whereas the extracurricular context affords greater flexibility. Yet, the greatest difficulty inherent in this type of real-life project work in the long-term is the continuous uncertainty of the availability of projects each year.

In summary, there are significant benefits of real-life, collaborative projects in that they empower students, enabling them to take control of their learning and equipping them for life post-graduation. These projects also add extra dimensions to their educational experience. Despite the constraints and limitations, there is great value in taking the students out of the classroom and enabling them to learn through experience. But how can this potential be harnessed in a viable way? One possibility is through a 'Project-module' which would give much greater flexibility than standard modules as well as ensuring that the students' work and staff time are formally recognised.

In conclusion, this paper has demonstrated that there is great value in collaborative and socially engaged real-world translation projects which allow

students to contribute to society whilst empowering and preparing them in their transition to life beyond the university. Such projects are worth pursuing as an integral part of courses that can motivate both students and staff and add real value to the university experience.

6. Acknowledgements

The achievements of the RTP have only been possible with the support of the SML language lecturers, particularly Sandra Salin and Pauline Henry-Tierney and participating organisations.

References

Bednar, A. K., Cunningham, D., Duffy, T. M., & Perry, J. D. (1992). Theory into practice: how do we link? In T. M. Duffy & D. H. Jonassen (Eds), *Constructivism and the technology of instruction: a conversation* (pp. 17-34). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Fernández Prieto, C., & Sempere Linares, F. (2010). Shifting from translation competence to translator competence, can constructivism help? In V. Pellatt, K. Griffiths & S.-C. Wu (Eds), *Teaching and testing interpreting and translating* (pp. 131-147). Peter Lang.

González Davies, M. (2004). *Multiple voices in the translation classroom*. John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/btl.54

Kiraly, D. (2000). *A social constructivist approach to translator education*: *empowerment from theory to practice.* St Jerome.

Kiraly, D. (2005). Project-based learning: a case for situated translation. *Meta, 50*(4), 1098-1111. https://doi.org/10.7202/012063ar

Olson, G. (1997). *Motivation, motivation, motivation - secondary school educators*.

Pietrzak, P. (2019). The potential of reflective translator training. *inTRAlinea Special Issue: New Insights into Translator Training*. http://www.intralinea.org/archive/article/2431

Risku, H. (1998). *Translatorische Kompetenz*. Stauffenburg Verlag.

Schraw, G., & Dennison, R. S. (1994). Assessing metacognitive awareness. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 19*, 460-475.

Uribe de Kellett, A. (2010). Graingertoon: from translation to pedagogy. In V. Pellatt, K. Griffiths & S.-C. Wu (Eds), *Teaching and testing interpreting and translating* (pp. 63-80). Peter Lang.

Uribe de Kellett, A. (2020). *10 years of the real translation project 2009-2019*. Newcastle University (unpublished).

Williams, K., & Williams, C. (2011). Five key ingredients for improving motivation. *Research in Higher Education Journal*, *11*. http://aabri.com/manuscripts/11834.pdf

Author index

B

Bardot, Romain v, 81
Bavendiek, Ulrike v, 57

G

Guidarelli, Barbara vi, 69

H

Hampton, Cathy v, 1

J

Jochum-Critchley, Thomas vi, 45

K

Kassem, Niveen vi, 35
Koglbauer, René vi, 11

L

Li, Miao vi, 93
Llop Naya, Ares vii, 121

M

Moore, Carole vii, 69
Morel-Lab, Anne vii, 23

P

Peligra, Cristina vii, 69
Pérez-Nieto, Nazaret viii, 121
Polisca, Elena viii, 81

R

Rodríguez Oitavén, Cristina viii, 113
Rollet, Cyrille viii, 81

S

Salin, Sandra v
Stollhans, Sascha viii, 81

T

Toapanta, Jesús ix, 103

U

Uribe de Kellett, Angela ix, 133

Z

Zaher, Aziza ix, 35

Modern languages have always been about transition –
as practitioners, we challenge our students constantly
to move between their own cultural and linguistic
reference points and those of others.

Our dynamic, interactive teaching methodologies
have had to adapt to the pandemic context,
necessitating the interrogation of past practice
and transition to new approaches.

This volume presents case studies showcasing
practical initiatives to promote creative,
dialogic learning in the fluid contexts
that modern foreign language students
are currently experiencing as they transition
to higher education post-Covid and to residence
abroad post-Brexit, between online
and face-to-face learning spaces
and between machine- and person-centred learning.

Research-publishing.net