

3 Dynamic and complex system approach to needs analysis, course development and evaluation of LANSOD courses in a French musicology undergraduate programme

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Abstract

When trying to analyse a LANSOD (LANGuage for Specialists of Other Disciplines) training course, the elements that have to be taken into account are numerous and complex, and many questions are raised. For example, in the case of the English course in the undergraduate programme of musicology at the University of Lille SHS (France), how can high absenteeism be accounted for? What about the students' lack of motivation, or teachers' dissatisfaction at teaching the course? The purpose of the action-research project reported on is to understand and articulate these various elements so as to conceive, set up and evaluate a coherent language course, adapted to a specific context. We decided to adopt a dynamic and complex system approach as it was believed to be helpful in apprehending the complexity of a LANSOD context, guiding a needs analysis, and designing and evaluating a training course. We favoured the triangulation of sources, methods, and qualitative analyses in order to identify the main problems of the existing training course and to set the objectives of a new course. These results led us to conclude that a blended course with relatively highly specialised content was the most suitable option for this learning environment.

Keywords: systemics, needs analysis, course development, LANSOD, musicology, blended learning.

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1. Introduction

Most of the questions and topics which have dominated English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching and learning research – objectives of ESP programmes, task-based language teaching, computer-assisted language learning, needs analysis, materials development, etc. (Sarré & Whyte, 2016) – should all be taken into consideration when designing a LANSOD² course in a university context. Yet, despite scientific progress, the practitioner is still left struggling with an intimidating number of questions. For example, how can students' lack of motivation, or teachers' dissatisfaction with the course, be dealt with? How to cope with high absenteeism?

The purpose of the action-research project presented in this chapter is to understand and articulate these various elements so as to conceive, set up, and evaluate a coherent language course – in the specific context of the LANSOD English course of the undergraduate programme of musicology at the University of Lille SHS (France). We set up and evaluated the course over three cycles corresponding to three semesters. The analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data gathered when evaluating Cycle 1 will be presented in this chapter.

2. Framework of the action-research: the dynamic and complex system approach

2.1. Theoretical framework

Our attempt to conceive a useful tool for the analysis of a LANSOD course is based on research conducted in epistemology (Durand, 2013; Le Moigne, 2012; Morin, 1999, amongst others) and language learning and acquisition (Bertin, Gravé, & Narcy-Combes, 2010; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008; Waninge, Dörnyei, & De Bot, 2014). We selected seven key concepts to

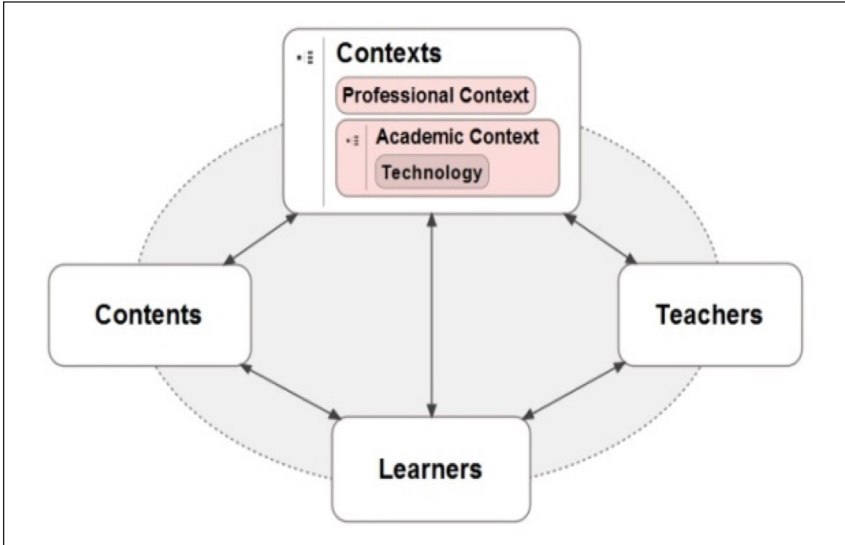
2. The English acronym was coined by van der Yeught (2016) to translate the French acronym (LANSAD) originally coined by Michel Perrin. LANSOD refers to language classes destined to students whose major is not languages, but other disciplines such as medicine, chemistry, etc.

articulate what has been termed the “dynamic and complex system approach”. The LANSOD course is considered a system in the sense that it is made up of elements which interact with one another to form a whole. These elements may be discrete, such as students, teachers, materials, input, etc., or more abstract, such as objectives or evaluation guidelines. The system is complex because its components (learners, input, etc.) and their interactions are complex. For example, what are the various interactions at play which account for learner motivation? A system is dynamic when it consists of processes that evolve over time, such as the language learning process. Because we are focusing on learning environments, the purpose of the LANSOD course is language learning, and it is assumed that there are several ways to reach this objective. The course is open in that it constantly interacts with a wider environment, for example the institutional context in which the class takes place. Lastly, this approach forces us to accept that a learning situation is so complex that ultimately we cannot understand it fully.

This approach is regularly adopted in language didactics (Mompean, 2013; Montandon, 2002; Waninge et al, 2014). One of its most accomplished interpretations is didactic ergonomics as developed in Bertin et al., 2010. Schematically, while fully acknowledging the dynamism, complexity and incertitude at play, the authors propose a five-pole model of the learning situation (learner, teacher, language, context, and technology), an in-depth analysis of the possible relationships between these poles, as well as possible pedagogical implications.

The model used in this study is an adapted and simplified version of the original model (Figure 1). The contexts include a professional context (depending on the students’ future occupations) and an academic context divided into three levels – the macro (policies at the European and French levels), the meso (policies of the University of Lille SHS), and the micro (the musicology undergraduate programme). The learners’ pole refers to all the students studying English in this programme, the teachers’ pole refers to the teachers who have been teaching these students, and the contents’ pole to what has been taught. The technology pole was integrated in the original context pole.

Figure 1. Simplified version of the didactic ergonomics model



This conception of a LANSOD course has epistemological and practical implications. While it may seem relevant to have a general understanding of a language learning situation, it can quickly prove problematical when this raises more questions than it answers. Which elements should we take into account in the analysis of the course? How can we take its dynamic dimension into consideration? How can we design a new, appropriate course when we cannot understand everything of the general context? Ultimately however, it is precisely one of the strengths of this approach, because it helps reveal key, underlying, epistemological questions and thus encourages us to explicitly state our theoretical stance before undertaking the actual action-research. This process is all the more important as we are participants in the study. Therefore, we argue that it is crucial for us to deconstruct and report on every step³ with “epistemic distancing” (Narcy-Combes, 2002). Efficiency is the main gauge of scientific validity; we try to devise appropriate actions which are the results of

3. In this respect, a more thoroughly detailed analysis of the study will be available at the end of the three-cycle research [2018/2019]

constructed (and deconstructible), informed choices. From a more didactic and pedagogical point of view, the structuring of the learning situation into poles and interactions also enables us to structure our future analyses, identify research questions, and interpret results; as will be seen later on, it also helps us organise the construction and the evaluation of the language course.

2.2. Methodological framework

The action-research project reported on consisted of five steps, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The five steps of the action-research project

Sept. 2015-Aug. 2016	Sept. 2016-Dec. 2017
1. pre-analysis of the existing learning environment to select our research questions for the needs analysis;	4. implementation of the course over three cycles;
2. needs analysis to identify the objectives of the new course and the means to reach our goals;	5. final evaluation (at the end of the study).
3. conception of the new course;	

As far as the needs analysis is concerned, our methodology was based on recent reviews of language needs analyses and procedures of data collection (COWLING, 2007; LONG, 2005; SERAFINI, LAKE, & LONG, 2015). In keeping with our theoretical framework, we favoured an exploratory approach “so as not to preclude the possibility of discovering needs the needs analyst might not have considered” (SERAFINI *et al.*, 2015, p. 13) with the use of open-ended questionnaires and interviews⁴.

Triangulation of the data was done “to increase reliability and validity, [as] data should ideally be collected from two or more sources using two or more methods” (SERAFINI *et al.*, 2015, p.12). We obtained data from five groups of participants (Table 2).

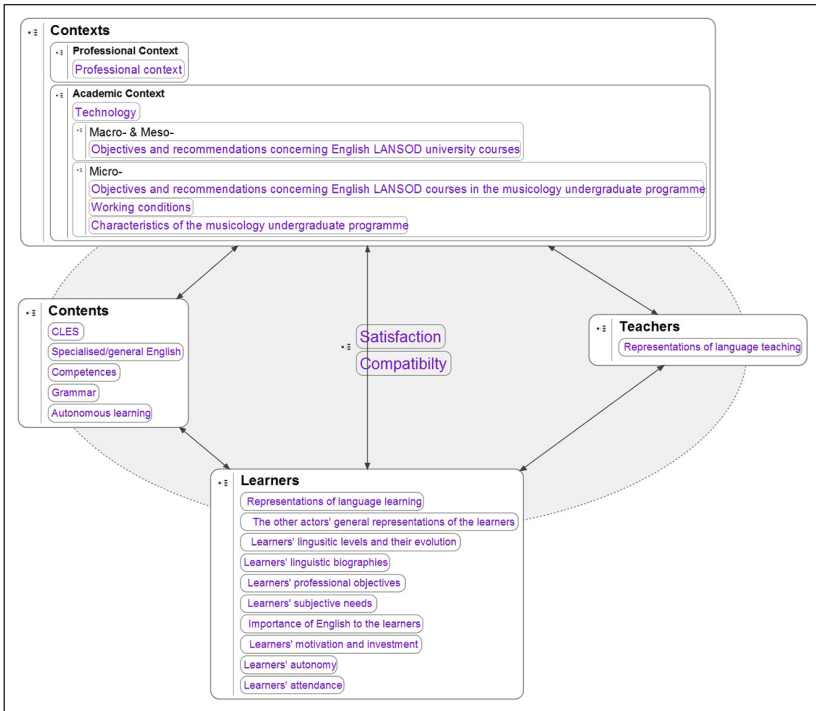
4. Learner questionnaire for the Needs Analysis (“Questionnaire – Music and Musicology Undergraduate Students”); translated from French to English; available at <https://research-publishing.box.com/s/13oba7fd01ff83naoui792tabgoh92gs>

Table 2. Participants in the needs analysis

Informants	Data collection methods
2 language supervisors	Questionnaires + interviews (recorded and transcribed)
2 content supervisors	
4 English teachers	
41 current students	Questionnaires
6 former students of the undergraduate programme	
Published literature (official publications from the Council of Europe, evaluation reports of the university, etc.)	

Data analysis then consisted in filtering our corpus thematically around each of the four poles, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Thematic analysis of the corpus



We used Excel (version 14.0.7177.5000, Microsoft) and Sonal (version 2.0.77, Alber) to filter and analyse our quantitative and qualitative data. The characterisation of the poles then enabled us to identify the main problems of the existing course the researcher could hope to address and the objectives of a re-designed course.

2.3. Evaluative framework

We implemented both continuous and final assessments. Formative assessment of the re-designed course was used to orient possible changes in the course, based on the feedback of the various participants during the cycle. Summative assessment, of which the data will be presented in this chapter, was aimed at evaluating the language course in relation to the objectives we had set. It took place at the end of each of the three research cycles via questionnaires completed by the learners and the English teachers⁵. The questionnaires yielded both quantitative data (with the use of Likert scales) and qualitative data (with the possibility of commenting on one's ratings).

3. Results from the needs analysis

3.1. General presentation of the undergraduate musicology programme

For all the musicology students attending the LANSOD English classes, it was compulsory to take a second language and the course was worth three credits, just like any other course. There were 12 two hour language classes in each of the six semesters of the undergraduate degree programme. Eight teachers taught two groups of first-year students (Y1) with 37 and 25 students, one group of 42 second-year (Y2) students, and one group of 46 third-year students (Y3). When asked whether they were satisfied with the classes, the learners rated their English classes 2.3 (out of 5) on average, with clear differences

5. Teacher questionnaire for the Evaluation of Cycle 1 ("Questionnaire – Cycle 1 Teachers"); translated from French to English; available at <https://research-publishing.box.com/s/wm1l12dgirwxpiq7rvc0xd1uqu6wsp>

between Y1 (3.3) and Y2 (1.5), while Y3 students gave the course an average rating of 2.5. These results echoed those of the former undergraduate musicology students among whom five out of six respondents declared being “rather unsatisfied” with their LANSOD classes. Teachers’ satisfaction with their work varied greatly, with ratings ranging from 1 to 5 (out of 5). Two teachers considered not teaching these courses again because they disliked the experience. While more than half of the students believed they had reached the expected level at the end of the academic year (B1 in Y1 and B2 in Y3), even more students (22/38) declared that they felt they had stagnated or regressed since starting university.

3.2. Explanatory factors

We identified ten main factors, related to the four poles, which could account for low satisfaction rates and students’ low sense of progress.

3.2.1. *The ‘context’ pole*

At a contextual level, we argue the objectives of the LANSOD courses were not sufficiently clear to all actors, mostly because of contextual restructuring. At the macro-level, “European language policy could [...] be proactive and explicit on the basis of precise criteria [...]. However, its application in schools is not automatic and requires a rethinking of the methods of language learning/teaching in universities”⁶ (Mompean, 2013, p.32). The credit system changed our perception of personal investment as credits are “no longer calculated in relation to one hour of face-to-face class, but in relation to the student’s personal workload which is thus given more importance than before” (Mompean, 2013, p. 25). In the meso-context, restructuring was underway at several levels. The impact on LANSOD classes of the upcoming merger of Lille SHS with two other universities (2018) was still to be determined. In 2012, the creation of a ‘LANSOD department’ was aimed at defining common objectives and promoting a better overall coherence; in 2015-2016, numerous

6. Author’s translation

debates were still going on about grouping students by ability or proficiency level (known as ‘tracking’), innovation and administrative restrictions, ‘liberté pédagogique’ (pedagogical freedom), and certifications. At the micro-level, the decision-making structure was not completely clear. The structuring of LANSOD courses within the arts department, of which the undergraduate musicology programme is part, was still ‘ongoing’; someone was appointed but their role (supervisor? coordinator?) was not clearly defined as of June 2016. Because all actors put forward the principle of ‘liberté pédagogique’, it was hard to tell what was solely a ‘recommendation’ or a ‘rule’ when it came to the content supervisors’ and language coordinators’ instructions. This ambiguity was well encapsulated in the terse description of the language courses in the musicology undergraduate programme guide of studies: ‘UE 9, Languages’. As far as working conditions go, they were rated 2.5 (out of 5) on average by teachers, the most negative elements being the number of students per group, absenteeism, lack of technological equipment in classrooms, mixed language proficiency levels, and sometimes challenging collaborative work with the administration.

3.2.2. *The ‘teacher’ pole*

The teaching team was also being put together. Seven out of the eight English teachers had not previously taught this class and only two eventually continued teaching the following year, which makes a high turnover rate. They had various backgrounds and experiences. Out of the two teachers with tenure, the two contract teachers, and the four teaching assistants, five had little or no prior experience of teaching at university level. Their majors included ESP, literature, translation, and French, in France or abroad. They were generally interested in music, but very few (1/8) were familiar with the domain of musicology, let alone ESP in this area. Collaborative work was encouraged by the coordinator but the attempts were seen as timid and not always successful, because of teaching methods deemed too different, and the lack of time and will to communicate. As far as information and communications technology is concerned, teachers were quite positive about its use in the classroom, but some underlined that they did not really take advantage of all its possibilities.

3.2.3. *The 'learner' pole*

Students' language levels ranged from A1/A2 to C2 and the degree of importance they attributed to English varied depending on the context. If 59.5% of students considered it important or very important in general, 59.4% considered English for their studies and their professional lives unimportant or not very important. The tasks they mentioned concerning English in their studies and in their personal lives were overall the same (reading specialised articles and talking with artists, understanding lyrics of a song, traveling, watching movies and series, playing videogames, and using the Internet). However, the examples varied considerably as regards English for their professional lives. These results came to little surprise, as their professional objectives were quite diverse, and therefore so were their needs as regards English. Music teaching stood out, but as it is carried out in varied contexts, we could infer the needs of the students would not be the same (e.g. music teachers in conservatories as opposed to primary school teachers). It all confirmed data obtained from the former undergraduate musicology students. All respondents underlined English was important, but to various degrees and depending on the domain; the needs of a music teacher in a French middle school were quite different from those of an instrumentalist working abroad.

Half of the teachers declared that absenteeism and the lack of investment were some of the main causes for their dissatisfaction at teaching the course, as it made it difficult to know what to expect and virtually impossible to create a coherent programme with a progression. Attendance at university is not compulsory, except for evaluations. On average, students declared that they had been in class more often than not (55%), but most teachers indicated hardly ever having more than half of the students in Y2 and Y3, sometimes even just one or two students. The students rarely in class (19/41) stated that the two main reasons for not attending the courses were disinterest in the course (11) and timetable constraints (3). The content supervisors added that some students needed to work on their instruments several times a day, while language teachers also blamed the working conditions (large groups and no projectors). If for a class which counts for three credits students are expected to do 60-75 hours of

work outside class time, students declared on average having spent 80 hours on English in total, but their answers varied greatly (from 20 to 450 hours) and only 23.3% of them answered the question, when the other 76.6 % stated they had no idea, did not answer the question, or indicated they had only worked just prior to the evaluations. In total, 59% of students declared the amount of work they had provided was unsatisfactory. Sixty-one percent said they never (25%) or rarely/sometimes (36.1%) used English out of the classroom.

Paradoxically, all students acknowledged that personal work is very important in language learning, and when asked how much time per week they should spend on it, they responded about 2 hours on average. We argue that two key elements accounting for their lack of investment were their level of autonomy, half of them declaring not to be autonomous learners (11/22), and lack of motivation. Their motivation levels in the English classroom either dropped (16/36), depended on the semester (8/36), were stable (7/36), or even increased (5/36) over time.

The most important motivating factors were the marks, according to the content supervisor, as well as the use of content linked to music. The learners specified what would motivate them more, but their answers were so varied that no real consensus emerged. Their suggestions included more content linked to music, same proficiency groupings, more grammar, less homework, smaller groups, and better timetables. The quality of student-teacher relations was also important to students; when asked whether the teachers had met their expectations, 40% of respondents said they had not, 40% were satisfied and 20% said it depended on the semester.

3.2.4. *The 'content' pole*

The various actors of the learning environment had sometimes different views of what the objectives of the LANSOD courses should be. Our analysis showed there was a weak consensus about the importance of language learning, the professional dimension of university classes, the notions of threshold levels, communicative competences, and tasks. Working on all language skills,

autonomous learning, and the need to adapt to the diversity of the public were not objectives shared by all. Most teachers were not opposed to coordinating methods and content as long as pedagogical freedom remained paramount. There was no consensus concerning tracking (i.e. grouping students by proficiency level) or about the content of the LANSOD undergraduate musicology classes: how much importance should be given to specialised content linked to music? To the CLES⁷? And to the notion of “getting by abroad” frequently mentioned by learners?

3.3. Conclusion of the needs analysis

The needs analysis was complex to carry out and we obtained limited data. The response rates were rather low, especially among the learners (learners: 41/150; language teachers: 4/8; language supervisors: 2/3; content supervisors: 3/3; former musicology students: 6/110). Because we had to resort to limited convenience samples rather than stratified random samples (Long, 2005, pp. 34-35), the representability of the samples is questionable. Our methodology could also have been more rigorous (as illustrated in Serafini et al., 2015 for example): there was no sufficient pilot testing of the questionnaires, they were submitted to the participants late and there were too many open-ended questions, which made the analysis more complicated.

Overall, however, the difficulties we encountered seem to be quite common in needs analysis (Serafini et al., 2015, p. 24) and these limitations were put into perspective if we bear in mind that our purpose was to obtain a general understanding of the learning situation adequate enough to enable relevant decision making. Indeed, the needs analysis helped us identify some inconsistencies between the various contextual levels as well as a lack of horizontal coherence at a micro-level, all this impacting satisfaction levels and students’ perceptions of progress in language proficiency. When designing the new courses, these are problems we will have to try to solve.

7. Certificat de Compétences en Langues de l’Enseignement Supérieur, a language certificate at university level based on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for languages, created in 2000

4. Design of the new course

4.1. General objectives and evaluation

We were then able to infer potential objectives, means to reach these objectives, indicators, and assessment tools of the new course⁸. We decided to focus on Y1 and Y3 for Cycle 1 of the research, as we lacked the time to coordinate with several teachers before term started. Even though we could not change the contexts, the teachers, nor the learners directly, we could have a direct impact on the content of the courses as well as the general teaching methods. From the results of the needs analysis, we inferred that a blended course with relatively highly specialised content would be the most suitable option.

4.2. Contents

The syllabus mainly focused on disciplinary components, with a gradual transition towards more specialised English from Y1 to Y3. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, we could not carry out a proper discourse analysis of English for Music, but our choices were however informed by data collected from content specialists, former students of the programme, as well as the learners. Based on how frequently some communication situations were mentioned and the feasibility of transforming them into language learning objectives, we organised the syllabus around tasks.

In Y1, the semester was organised around the topic of music festivals. In groups, learners had to present a project of a music festival to sponsors and write its programme. In Y3, the main theme was one's instrument; learners had to write an ad to sell their instrument, improvise when asked about their instrument and their practice, as well as read part of a score in English. Enabling the students to take the CLES exam also became one of the explicit objectives of the course, and all five language skills were therefore focussed on. Deciding to aim for the CLES, as well as taking into account the diversity of the learners' needs, led us to

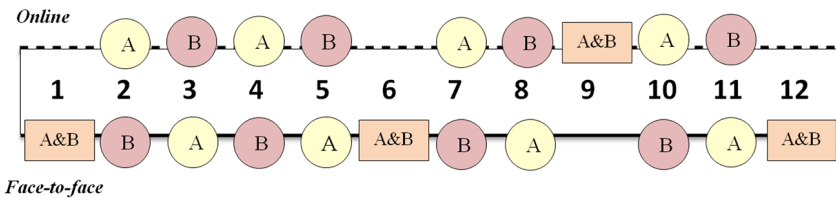
8. For an overview of the objectives and the indicators, see the first two columns in [Table 2](#).

add general topics to the syllabus: each class started with students summarising the news of the week, and we developed activities focussing on the American presidential elections. In order to address the individual needs of learners and to encourage autonomous learning, we introduced Personal Projects. They consisted in learners individually choosing which competence they wanted to work on, devising a plan to work on that competence, submitting their work regularly to the teacher for feedback during the semester, and presenting the work to the class at the end of the semester.

4.3. Methods

We decided to work on this content in a blended environment. The face-to-face classes and the online modules were organised around tasks. To try to make the best use of each mode, face-to-face classes were focussed on production (both oral and written), whereas online modules were devoted to receptive skills. In all, there were five online modules and seven face-to-face classes.

Figure 3. Organisation of the blended course



The learners of each class were therefore divided in two smaller groups (groups A and B) based on language proficiency as assessed after a placement test at the beginning of the academic year. The online modules (top line in Figure 3) were made available on a Moodle platform and all online activities were marked to encourage learners to be exposed to English at least once every two weeks if they did not come to face-to-face classes (bottom line in Figure 3), and to enable teachers to create a real progression in their course, regardless of how many and which students came to class. The courses (comprising 12 sessions in

total – both face-to-face and online – as represented in Figure 3) in this respect were quite restrictive, but the students had 14 days to cover the online content. Online modules typically consisted of auto-corrective activities including a vocabulary test, an oral and/or written comprehension activity with preparation exercises, and a grammar lesson with exercises. Teacher support was considered paramount, so each module ended on a feedback activity which was discussed in face-to-face classes. The face-to-face classes were also described on Moodle and students who had missed a class could download all the materials used in class. The evaluation was in keeping with the instructions of the language coordinator, the learners' preferences and our objectives:

- Y1: In-class written exam (35%) + oral presentation and written group exercise (25%) + online sessions (25%) + personal project (15%)
- Y3: Two in-class exams (55%) + online sessions (25%) + personal project (20%).

5. Results of the evaluation of the re-designed LANSOD course (Cycle 1)

5.1. Results

Table 3. Findings from Cycle 1

Poles	Objectives of the new course	Assessment indicators	Results
All poles	Obtain a higher satisfaction level from learners and teachers	Learners' and teachers' satisfaction and motivation levels	Learners = ✓ Teachers = ✓
	Foster linguistic development and obtain better results from students' self-assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' self-assessment of linguistic progression • Teachers' assessment of linguistic progression 	Self-evaluation from learners = ✓ Teachers = ! (room for improvement)

Chapter 3

All poles	Propose a clearer definition of the objectives to all actors based on the needs analysis	Adequacy of the perceived objectives by learners, teachers and direct supervisors	Adequacy learners/ teachers = ! Content supervisors = ✓
Teachers	Reduce teachers' workload and propose a coherent and flexible three-year syllabus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers' workload • Degree of collaboration • Reduced workload and re-use of teaching materials 	X & ✓
Context	Improve working conditions for learners and teachers	Learners' and teachers' satisfaction levels concerning the number of students per group and same proficiency grouping	✓
Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Propose learning and teaching conditions which foster qualitative relationships between learners and teachers • Take into consideration the diversity of learners' needs in the design of the syllabus 	Adequacy of learners' needs with the syllabus	Learners = ✓ Teachers = ! & ✓
	Encourage personal work outside the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time spent by students doing English outside of the classroom • Regularity of learners' work • Learners' satisfaction as regards personal investment 	✓
	Guide the learners towards more autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More autonomous learners • Changes in learners' use of tools (e.g. using dictionaries more sensibly) and learning strategies 	✓
	Motivate learners	Levels of motivation	✓
	Obtain an attendance rate which is satisfactory to teachers	Attendance rate	✓

Two teachers (Teacher A with one group in Y1 and the group in Y3, and Teacher B with the other group in Y1) and 98 students were involved in Cycle 1. An overview of our findings from Cycle 1, in which the methodology described in 2.3 was used, is provided in [Table 3](#) above.

The results concerning the two main objectives of the new course were rather positive. Learners gave an average rating of 3.7 out of 5 on a Likert scale to describe their satisfaction, a clear improvement compared to the previous rating (2.3). Teachers' ratings were more homogenous than before and also improved, with an average of 3.3. This time, 73% of learners considered themselves as having progressed or progressed a lot. Teacher A was in charge of designing the class and materials, and considered their workload excessive as they estimated they had worked an average of 15 hours a week to prepare four hours of class. However, they took a long term view, knowing that the materials would be re-used. Teacher B only provided occasional support and considered their workload satisfactory. The teachers were frequently in contact: 66 emails were exchanged and four short informal meetings were held. The learners were overwhelmingly positive about some proficiency grouping, rating this aspect 4.4 out of 5. Teacher B gave it a rating of 5, and Teacher A a 5 in Y3 but only 3.5 in Y1, considering it was sometimes difficult to teach a group with no class leaders. When asked whether they believed the courses were adapted to their needs, 71% of learners rated it 3.5 or above, 78% rated the content of the syllabus 4 and above, and 80% 4 and above as regards the competences included in the syllabus. The learners with lower scores had generally had problems accessing the online content⁹. The teachers rated the course 3.6 when assessing the appropriateness of the course to their students' needs; they shared the concern that there had been too much content and that, for the lower proficiency Y1 group, the objectives were slightly too demanding. For Y3, Teacher A also feared some learners might have found the workload and the system too demanding and restrictive. Concerning learners' investment and motivation, the results were also positive. On average, learners said they had worked 32 hours, including both face-to-face and online sessions. We are short of what could have been expected, but 56% of them were satisfied

9. About one fourth of students in Y1 only enrolled officially in the university one month after the beginning of the school year due to administrative problems and could therefore not have access to the Moodle platform over that period of time.

with their involvement. There was also marked improvement in the regularity of the learners' work: 60% declared that they had worked regularly, as opposed to only 22% previously, and 83% of the learners rated their motivation 3 and above. As for autonomy, 67% considered they were more autonomous than before. The teachers agreed that learners seemed more autonomous thanks to the personal project and the blended learning system. Concerning absenteeism, 69% declared they had come to all or all but one class. To finish, the learners indicated that the teachers had met their expectations (97%).

5.2. Consequences for Cycle 2

Based on these results, the course in Cycle 2 will offer the same balance between general and specialised English. More attention will be paid to grammar in face-to-face classes with the lower-proficiency Y1 group, as the learners indicated dissatisfaction in this area. We will attempt to encourage more production in face-to-face classes as the activities of Cycle 1 were too ambitious and left little time for student production. More choice will be given in Y3 with the selection of some content of the syllabus by students. Particular attention will be devoted to the online modules, considered as the weak point of the new course as they were rated 2.7 on average by learners. It can be accounted for by the difficulty for Y1 students to access the modules and some technical problems and human errors (e.g. spelling mistakes in auto-corrective exercises). We will shorten the classes and make the structure of the course clearer to learners as in the feedback sections the majority of learners found the online modules too long and some learners were sometimes confused as to when to come to class. To finish, more collaborative work will be introduced by Y2 teachers, at least when it comes to the definition of the objectives of the course.

6. Conclusion

The results indicate the new course helped us reach the majority of our objectives. Even though this action-research project is not over, we can already state that the framework and the methodology we adopted to re-design and evaluate the

LANSOD course were highly instrumental in its success. The needs analysis, which was structured around the theoretical and methodological guidelines of the dynamic and complex system approach, helped us characterise the existing learning environment, identify the main problems, and then make appropriate decisions. It led us to conceive a course whose key aspects were specialised content, the articulation between face-to-face classes and online modules, and the personal project. At the end of the action-research cycle, we hope to assess the transferability of our theoretical and methodological framework, as well as establish which pedagogical components could be easily transferable to other LANSOD courses (such as the blended system and the personal project).

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