Using Moodle Quiz to respond to emergency:
a case study with a tertiary L2 French teacher

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Abstract. This short paper reports on the case of a tertiary level French language practitioner self-training in using Moodle Quiz during the Covid-19 pandemic online emergency remote teaching (Hodges et al., 2020). As no teacher training program included a topic such as 'how to deal with the pandemic', switching to online teaching was done under emergency conditions (MacIntyre, Gregersen, & Mercer, 2020). The practitioner had taken advantage of the situation and explored ways of self-training. She took advantage of Moodle Quiz (MQ) affordances. She experimented with different ways MQ could be used to construct a diverse number of quiz activities, embedded with audio and video, infused with elements of constructivism, and aiming at catering for the aims and expected outcomes of the specific students and course. Self-training helped the practitioner face the challenges of online emergency teaching as she developed knowledge, skills, and experiences necessary for creating online interactive activities.

Keywords: tertiary level French, self-teacher training, online emergency teaching, Moodle Quiz.

1.   Introduction

Since the beginning of the pandemic, many researchers have tried to record the shifting from classroom to emergency online teaching (Al-Maskari, Al-Riyami, & Kunjumuhammed, 2021; Plutino & Polisca, 2021; Reich et al., 2020). This case study describes the experience of a French language instructor who followed a 'do-it-yourself' method (Kessler, 2006) to train herself in the use of MQ during

the emergency remote teaching as defined by Hodges et al. (2020). This case study aims to shed light into emergency self-training practices, applied during the pandemic emergency online language teaching by an individual language instructor.

1.1. Before the pandemic

Before Covid-19, at the Cyprus University of Technology (CUT), French was taught face-to-face, in class, supported by technologically enhanced activities. Moodle Learning Management System (LMS), the CUT official e-platform, was used to deliver the course and share teaching materials. Many consolidating activities were provided in printed form while others were online ready-made activities retrieved from websites and available via Moodle. Other online materials such as YouTube videos and songs were also available via Moodle.

Learning French onsite was based on constructivism; a student-centered method, where students construct new knowledge from their own experience (Piaget, 1968). French language learning and assessment were enhanced by contextualized scenarios depicting real-life communicative situations.

1.2. During the pandemic

Because of the emergency situation created by the pandemic, the onsite French course had to be redesigned and turned into a full online one. The instructor searched the web to find ways to create online activities for the specific needs of the CUT French students and complement the teaching material delivered and shared on the Moodle platform. However, she discovered that most tutorials were generic; hardly any of them focused on languages.

2. Method

2.1. Participant

The study involved the case of a language instructor with 16 years of experience in French language teaching, and a very limited experience in Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) at the beginning of this study. In particular, she had no experience in online teaching, and no experience in creating online activities.

2.2. Data collection

In this paper, a case study descriptive design was adopted. The study was conducted in Spring 2020 during the pandemic outbreak. Following the particular research design, data were collected qualitatively in two forms: (1) the French instructor's reflective field notes (unstructured form) during the self-training and teaching process; these included in-action (during the activity) and on-action (after the activity) reflection (Schön, 1983); and (2) a semi-constructed interview, for a more in-depth view.

3. Results and discussion

Analysis of data revealed four aspects of self-training. The first was the types of self-training methods and techniques the French instructor came up with during the online emergency teaching. According to the data from both sources, the instructor first reviewed several online 'how-to' videos, then she explored different online software. Her findings led her to focus on exploring the affordances of the MQ on Moodle LMS, which seemed to be promising, and experiment constructing activities tailored to the course with that particular tool. The practitioner was learning by doing during her self-training: she adapted existing paper-based language activities and she created new interactive ones, making good use of the MQ features. She then tried them in class and refined them. She also received student feedback. Furthermore, she learned from others; sharing her MQ activities with a colleague provided her with valuable feedback and ideas concerning the pedagogical aspects of the activities.

The second aspect of this self-training examined was the knowledge, skills, and experiences the instructor felt she gained through her self-training. Her interview data supported in more depth the results of the analysis of her reflective notes and offered a more focused point of view of the instructor's self-training process. Initially, the practitioner had only basic knowledge of the Moodle platform. Through self-training, she moved beyond that and trained herself further, in other features of the platform. She experienced self-training in course redesign and MQ activities creation; in doing so, she became more aware of how to infiltrate elements of constructivism in her activities with the use of scenarios and roles from real-life communicative contexts. She practiced reflection and improvement. Her self-training included receiving feedback from the students as part of the process of course improvement. It also included collaboration, sharing, and receiving input

from other colleagues, elements that she found valuable in her emergency self-training process.

The third was about course redesign involvement and the reflective comparison of similarities and differences of the onsite and online courses version. According to the field notes and the interview, the course redesign firstly involved mainly the activities. Pre-pandemic activities used onsite were mainly in print form and were used for learning, consolidation, and formative and summative assessment. They covered a large part of the course; the redesign was primarily concerned with their transformation into online interactive activities. However, in the process of creating new activities that would be online, other changes needed to take place as well. The course structure was also modified, making it more coherent, neater, and easier to navigate, by restructuring the content and deleting any unnecessary items.

The fourth aspect dealt with the measurement of the practitioner's growth of confidence in creating online activities. The activities created were successful when implemented during the course, as expressed informally to the instructor by the students. They also formed a valuable resource for future use. The new knowledge, skills, and experiences acquired during the online activities' construction led to the collaborative sharing and dissemination to other colleagues, through the French instructor's collaboration with another colleague who taught Greek and went through a similar process of turning their classroom courses online for the emergency needs of teaching during Covid-19. Both courses were A1 CEFR level, they covered similar topics and contextualized situations, and were based on constructivism. This was in the form of an online in-service session, during which they shared their steps in creating different types of activities, in both French and Greek, and the learning theories and language teaching methods they were based on. The in-service participants gave positive feedback and expressed interest in putting into practice the knowledge they acquired during the in-service. All these contributed to her growth of confidence in online teaching, online course design and activity construction, and in collaborating and sharing with other colleagues. From a totally inexperienced instructor in online teaching and online activity development, the French teacher started becoming a trainer and researcher in the area.

4.   Conclusions

The French instructor self-training case during the emergency online teaching indicated its many possibilities. She came up with a number of methods and

techniques that enabled her to transform her onsite course, redesign it, and turn it into an online one, developing knowledge, skills, and experiences in creating MQ constructivist and contextualized activities, and eventually developing the ability to train others.

The findings of this case study may prove useful to both practitioners and researchers, who may want to further explore the potential of online teaching tools.

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