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# The Effect of Reflexive Feedback on Teacher-Trainer Performance in a Distance-Learning Context

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*As part of a language teacher-training course in a French university, a team of teacher-researchers, in collaboration with a partner university in the United States, put into place a novel virtual classroom activity led by teacher-training students. The goal of this on-going project was to improve teaching in an international context while managing the challenges and specificities of distance learning. In this paper, we report on the objectives, stages, results and perspectives of the project, focusing on how reflexive feedback on online teaching influences performance in teacher training.*

*Keywords: Virtual classroom, Peer interaction, Reflexive feedback, Distance learning*

## Introduction

Teachers often perceive the virtual learning environment encountered in distance learning (DL) as more difficult to manage compared to classroom teaching and not without reason. As part of a language teacher-training course at the University of Rennes 2, a team of teacher-researchers, in collaboration with a partner university in the United States, put into place a novel virtual classroom practicum for teacher-trainees (RTT). The goal of this on-going project was for the trainees to apply pedagogies of language teaching in the context of the technical and communicational constraints of online classes.

In this paper, we report on the objectives, stages, results, and perspectives of the project, focusing on how the trainees' reflexive feedback during online teaching affects their performance. We will first explain how reflexive feedback mechanisms were included at every stage of the project, indicate the support systems set up by the teacher-researchers of the different institutions, and outline the collaborative dimension of the reflexive feedback systems. We will then focus on trainee feedback relative to performance. The systematic recording of online teaching provides a unique opportunity for the implementation of a reflexive feedback system. In the theoretical development, we will outline the nature of online teaching and online presence including a definition of reflexive feedback and the approaches to setting up reflexive feedback systems through self-assessment and reflexive feedback conversations (Communities of Practice or CoP). Finally, the most appropriate language teaching methodologies for a reflexive feedback approach will be discussed (project-based pedagogy, peer learning, and informal online learning) including means for the sharing, analysis and transfer of academic expertise.

This project is undertaken in an action-research perspective as it seeks to improve teaching and learning through a methodology of critical reflection on teaching performance. Our results are based on direct measurements: the class videos produced during the project, questionnaires,

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and focus group sessions of the feedback of the teacher-trainees. We also interviewed the teacher-trainers and the teacher-trainees who participated in the experiment, and worked, within our research team, to improve future editions of the project.

## **Theoretical framework**

### *Distance teaching and online presence*

In any distance learning system, the balance between synchronic and a-synchronic mediatized content is crucial. In a synchronous or partially synchronous perspective (Sidir, Baron and Bruillard 2012), the virtual classroom is defined as “a technical-pedagogical distance learning modality that allows people to establish synchronous exchanges including the use of image, sound and text” (Ferone and Lavenka 2015). Teachers who are reluctant to embrace online learning stress an inherent disadvantage of such systems: DL deprives teachers of face-to-face contacts, they cannot reliably see their group’s response to their pedagogical strategies, and thus they cannot immediately adjust their strategies accordingly.

Jézégou (2014), however, argues that online teaching succeeds in achieving a model of presence in the virtual classroom, which takes on three forms: socio-cognitive presence, socio-affective presence, pedagogical presence. While the purpose of socio-cognitive and socio-affective presence is to transmit knowledge and provide emotional support to the teacher and peers, pedagogical presence is the means to animate, moderate, and coordinate interactions. The specificities of synchronous communication and class management make it possible to optimize this pedagogical presence through adjustments, which are generally thought through when preparing for an online class.

It is interesting to link the different forms of online presence proposed by Jézégou to other concepts that have recently appeared in research. For example, recent research has stressed the role that the emotions play in learning or “emo-learning”. Emo-learning makes it possible to conceptualize and synthesize “factors such as the weaving of bonds, the emotions (positive and negative) linked to the acquisition process or put in place during it, as well as the boldness, letting go and creativity that go hand in hand” (Vorger 2019, 11). Though this concept of emo-learning is relatively recent (Berdal-Masuy and Arnold 2018), it is no secret that innovative pedagogies such as project-based pedagogies, informal online learning, and peer learning/teaching are founded upon the principle of placing learner needs (including emotional needs) at the center of the pedagogy.

### *The Process of Reflective Feedback Conversations*

There are different approaches to setting up reflexive feedback systems. Whether these systems involve self-assessment or assessments and conversations within a community of experts or Community of Practice (CoP), what all reflexive feedback systems have in common is their ultimate goal: to assist learners to independently improve their knowledge, skills, attitudes or behaviors in line with their performance and the educational program objectives. The feedback process should offer the learner an opportunity to reflect on both performance and the learning process (Argyris and Schön 1999). Nonetheless, effective and constructive feedback must be both reliable and valid input on which the learner can act to improve performance. For example, “Reflective Feedback Conversations” (Cantillon and Sargeant 2008) offers a strategic approach for promoting the learner’s critical reflection, self-assessment and a fact-based process to improvement.

RF is not only a personal activity. It can be extended to a group, mainly a community who share practices. A Community of Practice (CoP) is defined as an organized group of professional people who share the same interests in resolving an issue, improving skills, and

learning from each other's experiences. In the case of our project, the RTT are a community of future teachers who are practicing teaching skills. Communities of Practice have been an efficient way of leveraging businesses over the past decades (Basque 2013). It is now used in educational contexts to invite students to reflect collaboratively on their practices. The CoP model includes three stages: invite self-assessment; provide actionable guidance; describe relevant, observable behaviors and include constructive compliments and correction.

Feedback, rather than being a one-way transmission, is a dialogue and a collaborative construction, which includes constructive description of specific, relevant, and observable behaviors. Framing feedback as a non-threatening 'conversation' communicates to the learner that they are responsible for the self-assessment input in a context of a plan for improvement.

### *Project-based pedagogy, informal online and peer learning*

Much like reflexive feedback, a project-based pedagogy is also based on self-regulation, empowerment, and self-evaluation implicit in learners taking responsibility for their work. In the case of language teaching, a project-based pedagogy is justified by the communicative function of language "because learners [...] need it in order to be able to do the things they need to do" (Hamez 2012, 87). Indeed, the international partners behind this project stressed learner contact with native speakers in order to give meaning and purpose to language learning.

As far as the teacher-trainees are concerned, the virtual classroom project is only possible in a collaborative framework. It would be impossible for the students of the Master in Language Didactics to teach a class every week. On the other hand, they can take charge of one class over the semester, by registering on a collaborative board. As a good number of research studies show (Perrenoud 1999, 2002, Viau 1994, Beacco, 2013, Huver, 2011, Kozanitis, 2010), project-based teaching encourages cooperation within the group and through the contributions and strengths of each member of the group, a project that would have been impossible individually becomes feasible collectively. Project pedagogy emphasizes that which "[...] is oriented towards concrete production; it induces a set of tasks in which all pupils can become involved and play an active role [...]" (Perrenoud 2002, 7).

Reflecting on formal and informal learning is also part of the reflexive feedback approach. The RTT project creates a context for learning in a less formal, relaxed environment. In this project, peer language teaching in virtual classrooms has an informal, playful and attractive aspect that allows both learners and teacher-trainees to be more relaxed. This project is analogous to Sockett's (2011) online informal learning model with numerous online resources suggested by peers or student tutors allowing the synchronous session to be extended in an asynchronous mode.

The aim of project-based learning is learner autonomy and empowerment. Self-regulated learning dates back to the 1970s with the aim of involving students more strongly in their learning (Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons 1986). This concept was later condensed in the catchphrase "learning to learn" (Viau 1994, 86) which changed perceptions in the 1990s. Self-regulated learning intervenes at every stage of our reflexive feedback project (virtual class preparation, animation, and analysis) and is articulated around helping the RTT students to learn by doing, i.e., analyzing their own practice of teaching.

### **Online teaching project and research question**

## JOURNAL TITLE

The project participants were French as a Foreign Language learners from the University of Rhode Island in the United States (FFLL) and French Rennes 2 Teacher-Trainees (RTT), doing a teaching practicum. The RTT are Master students who have previously completed a degree in social sciences and whose professional goal is to become teachers of French as a foreign language. Forty percent of the students are international students who come mainly (but not exclusively) from French-speaking countries. The FFLL are American students in their early or mid-twenties completing a Bachelor degree in the humanities.

## Tools

The online virtual classroom platform used for the project is the VIA platform. VIA offers the advantages of a webinar platform with extra functionalities such as a survey, a whiteboard, a filing system, a chatbox, and the possibility for all participants to use the tools of the platform to share their material. The main virtual class management functionalities for the online teacher to use are the following.

- the teacher and student cameras and microphones (16 cameras can be switched on simultaneously),
- multimedia documents,
- the whiteboard, digital pen or highlighter,
- management of student speaking time (inviting students to raise their “digital hand”).

The screenshot displays the VIA virtual classroom interface. At the top, the URL is <https://e-learning.u-bretagne.fr/Application/AppPlayback.aspx>. The main area is a whiteboard titled "R2 URI2" containing a diagram with the following text: "anabe du futur", "periode", "Madame Livingtone", "Archie Comics", "Tin Tin", "ibéassine", "Marvel", "Tintin", "pennacolle assisté et oiseau aye de yopongo", "Charlie Hebdo", "lucky kit", "Watchmen", and "largo winch". On the left, a "Caméras" panel shows video feeds for Anthony Guiguen, Mariwenn Bernard, Vincent Jacques, and Chris Parisella. Below this is a "Utilisateurs (12)" list with "Animateurs (3)" and a "Chat" window. On the right, a "Visionnement" panel shows recording details for "Jeudi 28 février 2019" and connection statistics. Below it are "Options de visionnement" (Assistance, Affichage des caméras, Fichiers à télécharger) and a "Signets" list with timestamps and actions like "Début de l'enregistrement", "riadsattouf", "Partage d'écran: Anthony Guiguen", and "Tableau blanc: #3". The bottom control bar includes navigation arrows, a "Tableau blanc #3" label, a "72%" zoom level, and a "19/46" page indicator.

Figure 1: Teacher-Trainees Teaching French to American Students on VIA  
Source: C. Evain 2020

## Methodology

Twelve teaching sessions were organized in partnership with the University of Rhode Island (URI) and each session was led by a different pair of RTT. Each trainee was responsible for producing a pedagogical activity based on URI objectives. Their syllabus required the

reading of two complete novels in French (Ben Jelloun and Riad Sattouf) and the RTT were asked to follow the reading rhythm of one or two chapters per session established by the URI faculty member in charge of the class. The activities of the virtual peer class were designed to encourage the active participation of the American students in line with the syllabus objectives by exploiting all the possibilities of VIA and multimedia available in relation to the novels of Ben Jelloun and Riad Sattouf (movie adaptations, author interviews, etc.). While the focus was on oral participation, several tools on the platform also allowed for simple written activities (writing on the whiteboard, underlining words, putting comments or questions in the chat, etc.), which, in turn, led to oral participation.

The RTT pedagogical approach was informal characterized by the absence of a university teacher replaced by peer interaction with the RTT and by the use of attractive material such as film excerpts and games. As Socket (2011, 2014), Boulton, and Ciekanski (2016) indicate, an informal approach to foreign language learning is an effective and productive means to maximize learning and, in this specific project, this is true for both the RTT and the American students.

The Rennes 2 University teacher added further guidelines to support those of the URI faculty partner as well as some methodological and organizational details. For example, to ensure continuity from one session to the next and to better define the objectives for their own session, it was a requirement for each pair of teacher-training students taking responsibility for one session to view all previous sessions to analyze the progress of the session and the participation of each student. To guide this reflexive feedback process, one workshop was organized in class to introduce the methodology described in the next section. The methodology focused on the technical particularities and the specifics of online pedagogy of the VIA platform.

The RTT were evaluated by the same grid used for both self-evaluation and peer evaluation. The grid included sections on language didactics, preparation and use of the session facilitation tool, class facilitation.

Language didactics:

- pertinence of the objectives in relation to the level of the students;
- relevance of the exercises;
- variety of language skills;
- layout of the student worksheets;
- coherence in relation to the announced objectives;
- variety of supports and of teaching method;
- precision of the work.

Preparation and use of the tool:

- mastery of different functionalities (configuration assistant, upstream hardware test, rights management (micro + webcam));
- management of the reading mode of the documents;
- use of chat and adapted supports;
- use of various media (whiteboard, survey tool, annotations, etc).

Class facilitation:

- time management and distribution of work;
- feedback sheet,
- ease and mode of speech adapted to a FLE audience (nominative),
- relevant feedback during the activity (nominative).
- relevance of the chosen video sequence,

- the quality of the analysis of the interaction and the contribution to the collective experience.

The reflexive feedback methodology was done in connection with the project stages that included a preparation stage, the actual online teaching stage (RTT took turns to teach the FLL on the VIA platform), and the post-teaching phase (the RTT analyzed their own performance). The objective of the first reflexive feedback system that was put into place at the beginning of the semester was to prepare students for their distance teaching session. This dynamic was continued throughout the semester, as the RTT took turns in practicing language teaching in a distance-learning environment. It was further enhanced during the semester through the video club activity, in which the tool “VideoAnt” was used. The video club was designed as a discussion forum focusing on analyzing teaching video clips. The RTT uploaded extracts of their teaching session on the VideoAnt platform in order to analyze and comment on their own performance and also to allow their peers to comment on those extracts. As Matthieu Petit (2016) observed, students generate more reflexive notes after watching clips of their own teaching. Petit’s research shows that this activity exposes future teachers to a range of diverse teaching methods and leads them to a higher reflective level. , the use of video in training is linked to the concept of “vicarious learning” (Karsenti and Collin 2013) which replaces another form of learning such as the top-down approach. The observation of significant peer successes and failures is a source of self-improvement (Bandura 1986).

VideoAnt Video (developed by the University of Minnesota) is a free annotation software, which can be used, collaboratively by any online learning community such as the RTT community. It thus provides a space for members of a learning community to reflect on each other’s practices, and to develop their professional skills through feedback from the trainer and peers.

While there are other online annotation software packages (such as VideoNot, which allows sharing an annotated video via Google Drive), VideoAnT was chosen by the team of teachers of this project because is an effective way to bring the community together around teaching clips. Multiple users can annotate (or rate) the video accurately and easily, for reflection-on-action, and this can be done on a computer or smartphone. It is also possible to share videos directly among VideoAnt members. All the links to the VideoAnt videos were placed in a collaborative doc.

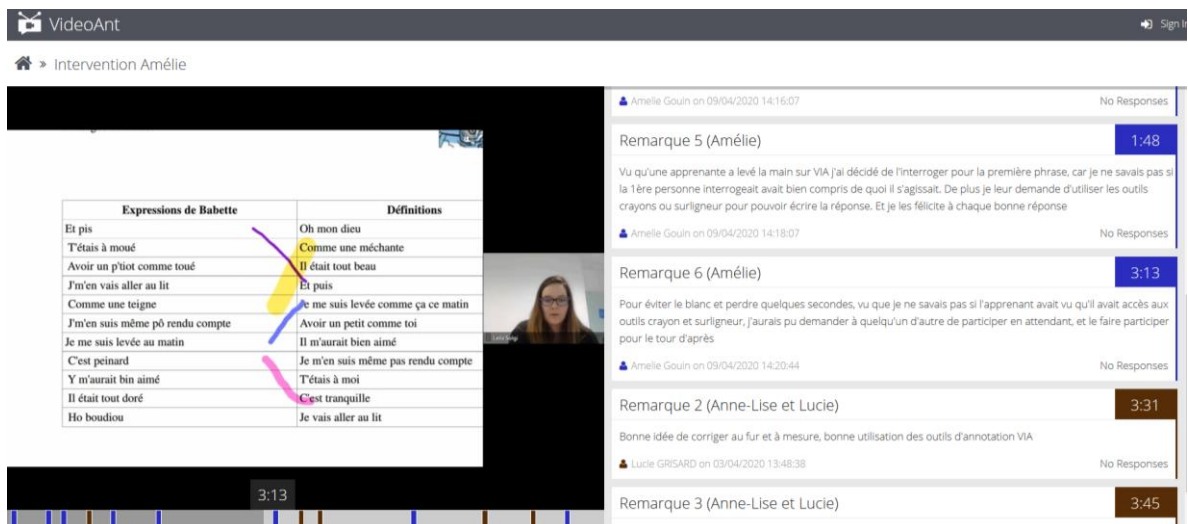


Figure 2: Peer Comments on VideoAnt on Teacher-Trainee’s performance

*Source: C. Evain 2020*

At the end of the semester, a final reflexive feedback session was led online by M. Petit. M. Petit guided the students who took part in the project using Kolb's cycle of experiential learning (Kolb 1984). In practical terms, basing his strategy on Kolb's, M. Petit articulated his online session with the RTT as follows

One person in the group was invited to play the role of "client; the others played the role of "consultants". The role of the consultants was to be of service to the client. The client would therefore make a request to the consultants in the form of a question. The request was about a problematic situation (modalities, tools, etc.) and the RTT student in the role of the client specified whether he/she was looking for (1) new ideas, (2) advice or (3) others. The session included the following steps.

- Presentation of the situation by the client,
- Questioning by the consultants to better understand,
- Reformulation of the situation and clarifications,
- Sharing of ideas, good practices
- Client's action plan,
- Take-away points formulated by all, including the trainer(s).

## **Results and discussion**

### *Surveys and interviews*

Two surveys were carried out with teacher-trainees on the one hand and learners on the other. Although our research focus on the responses of the RTT students, it is interesting to note that the satisfaction rate of the FFL was extremely high (100% very satisfied or satisfied) and indicated that the RTT had fully met the learners' expectations.

Interviews with the teacher-trainees gave us the opportunity to explore a number of issues in greater depth, ranging from their general impressions, the precise analysis of situations of interaction with learners, and the effect of reflexive feedback on each stage of the project.

The results of the questionnaire allow us to take stock of what was appreciated and what should be improved in a future edition of the project. Among the positive points are the following: the teacher-trainees find the experience enriching, allowing them to put theoretical concepts into practice. They appreciate the opportunity to be trained on an online teaching platform (VIA) and to combine technical and pedagogical skills. The initial reflexive feedback based on the videos of the students of the previous year, allowed them to appreciate the main differences between classroom teaching and online teaching.

The main criticisms of the project were technical and organizational. The teacher-trainees would like the training on the VIA platform to be followed by training sessions that allow them to learn under real conditions (with role-playing so that the RTT can practice with volunteer learners). On an organizational level, the teacher-trainees would like to have all the information related to the project at the beginning of the semester.

During the group interview, the research team returned to the open-ended questions of the questionnaire in order to encourage reflective feedback. Some examples follow. What did you do well / less well? What surprised you when launching an activity? If you had to redo a VIA class, what would you do differently? What did you learn from this experience? Do you think it will be useful in your career? Do you think you have evolved because of this experience (about ICT, distancing, classroom practices, etc.)? Can the VIA tool be used from an action-oriented perspective? From this perspective, what do you think are the drawbacks/additions of this type of device? Expand freely on the relevance of the tool in the context of modern language



teaching, with a didactic reflection in mind (action-oriented perspective, interactions, collaboration between teachers, format of resources, preparation time, etc.). These questions, which had also been included in the guidelines for the VideoAnt reflexive feedback, led to more questions and discussions.

The students' feedback in the survey, discussions, and various stages of the reflexive feedback converge in showing their ability at the end of the project to understand the conditions necessary for its success. Several components are mentioned that can be linked to our theoretical framework. The teacher-trainees, in reference to the presence model of Jézégou (2014) express the difficulty of bonding with the learners. Bonding with the learners is not easy in an online environment (Charlier, Cosnefroy, Jézégou and Lameul 2015, Deaudelin, Petit and Brouillette 2016) and even less so in the context of "collaborative mentoring" (Lafleur, Grenon and Samson 2019) where, as in the case of the present project, teacher-trainees are part of a "expertise sharing" community (Basque 2013) and take turns to lead the class. In addition, teacher-trainees have difficulty reading learners' faces, which poses a problem, especially at the beginning of the session. As one of the teacher-trainees expressed, "starting the session was difficult because there are several minutes at first where there is no feedback." Another added, "You have to be able to deal with the fact that you can't see the reaction of the learners. Those who don't understand and who are not questioned (so the camera is turned off) may be lost, without our knowledge." Finally, a third teacher-trainee mentions a practical tip, given during the platform training: "Switching on several cameras at the beginning is indeed a good tip, even if the images of the 16 participants appear very small."

The advantages of the project are clearly felt. "It opens up great prospects! For example, we can give courses to those who want them almost anywhere in the world, avoid people having to travel and therefore have fewer people on public transport, but also make people more autonomous, etc." "We can reach more students than if we stayed in the classroom, and expand the range of courses on offer". Some mentioned "the possibility of teaching even when the university premises are inaccessible" and also "the possibility for the teacher to give a lecture while travelling". While the possibility of viewing the sessions carried out by the previous pairs was particularly appreciated, the set of tasks required to carry out the project seems "very time-consuming, especially if one intends to exploit all the possibilities of the tool". Moreover, if "the tool is very relevant in the format of the resources and if it is possible to disseminate many supports of all types, it is however complicated to download a video that takes up too much space on the platform. It can be just as relevant from an action perspective, to teach participants to ask for directions to identify a resource, and to ask questions, make hypotheses, etc."

The RTT are able to discuss in detail the advantages and disadvantages of both the project and the proposed tool, and they are also aware of the work done by their teacher upstream of the project and the difficulties encountered. One of them, particularly interested in the international dimension of the project, mentions "the problem of finding a common time-slot, with the time differences and other parameters that need to be anticipated". In order to improve future editions of the project, the RTT' suggestions include ideas such as asking each pair of RTT "to leave the content of their session on the VIA platform, so that the next RTT can go into greater depth or come back to certain points".

The possibility of viewing the sessions carried out by the previous pairs was particularly appreciated. It was said to be essential at the start of the project when the analysis of sequences by previous students served the purpose of training. The video bank of all the recorded sessions of the previous year's RTT was a resource that the students turned to over and over again, in order to analyze "different elements of the video, such as the beginning of the sequence, question formulation and various language activities". When asked about the VideoAnt club activity, the RTT said that both self-viewing (someone from the group) or alter-viewing

(someone outside the group) were a source of motivation, during the semester, for the preparation and animation of the sessions.

Finally, although the set of tasks required to complete the project seems “very time-consuming, especially if one intends to exploit all the possibilities of the tool”, the students felt they were “different teachers” as a result of the project. “You learn to accept the constraints of the tool and find the compensating factors.” Several RTT student who had prior classroom teaching experience said they missed the classroom bonding, but learned to find compensating factors. “In the end, after practicing the digital management of a class on the VIA platform, I got used to the electronic hand-raising mechanism and the activation of 1-4 cameras at a time, in order give the students speaking time. When the activities are well designed for this environment, it leads to a rich class.” When the constraints of the online environment and tool are well identified, they can be exploited. One of the opportunities of a virtual classroom tool such as VIA, is the recording functionality, which means that both students and teachers can go back to the video and learn something from it. As for the disadvantages of the virtual environment (less warmth, less physical movement, less simultaneous perception etc.), these are constraints that need to be accepted because they cannot be changed.

### *Teacher-trainer observations and feedback*

Teacher-trainers’ feedback is based on discussions between the different project partners on the one hand, and on the evaluation of the work and motivation of the students on the other hand. Like the students, the URI partner teachers appreciated the authentic situation, the conviviality of the session, the challenge of communicating with a "French person", and the motivation of their students for the project. For the evaluation of the work of the teacher-trainees, the following elements were taken into account.

- video recordings of the VIA classes;
- the students’ final presentations;
- the students’ self-evaluation sheets on their own session (listening, reformulation, encouragement to take notes, additional input – enriched reformulation, proposal of vocabulary words)
- technical-pedagogical use of the platform,
- results of a group discussion and feedback session led by Matthieu Petit.

When viewing the videos of the virtual classes, the research team was influenced by the methodology proposed by the “Agir Professoral” (“Act of Teaching”) movement based on the work of Laura Nicolas (2019). The proposed methodology makes it possible to compare class interactions and verbalizations of the post-class teacher-trainee. Thus, the study of the teacher’s action and decision-making processes is combined with the study of classroom results. These two types of data are obtained respectively through the collection of teacher-trainee verbalizations (during the presentations of each of the binomials carrying out a return on experience) and through the observation of didactic interactions on recorded class videos. The VIA platform facilitates the observation of didactic interactions because the recording of the sequence is systematic, and the request for image rights is integrated into the device. This cross-analysis, presented in the form of a table (see table 1), provides feedback which is all the more interesting as the background logic of the teacher-trainees sometimes remains invisible in the course of the class. In their comments on class interaction, the RTT paid special attention to the way they worded their instructions, they listened to the learner, gave encouraging feedback and used the platform’s functionalities in a relevant way.

Table 1: Transcript of VIA Class Sequence and RTT Verbalisation

**JOURNAL TITLE**

<i>Speaking Turn</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Interactions</i>	<i>Verbalisations</i>
1	RTT	<p>I'm going to ask someone + if someone wants to put things back in order ++ I'll give you time to read ++ I'll ask someone to put things back in order by writing down the numbers ++ if you want, I'll leave you + we'll all read together [...]</p> <p>I'll read the summaries for you, and then we'll try to put them in order...</p> <p>[... Reading summary... pause]</p>	<p>Objective: This activity aims to encourage oral expression and to familiarize students with the text by putting the passages in order.</p> <p>I changed the instructions along the way to relieve the students from having to make the effort to read the passages. I should have persisted and tried to get them to read the passages using other strategies. For example, I could have prepared for the reading with a vocabulary marker and then I could have assigned a student to read the first passage. I'll try pushing them harder next time.</p>
2	RTT	I'll activate your camera. Hello!	
3	FFLL	I think we'll start with the third passage, then with the first passage +++ then with the fourth?	
	RTT	Yes that's it.	<p>Another note: next time, I will rephrase the student's response because he wasn't sure whether the word he used was correct, instead of saying, "Yes, that's it."</p>

*Source: C. Evain 2020*

The analysis of the videos in the methodological light of the act of teaching allowed us to appreciate the work of the students in the role of teachers, both in their intentions and in the effective animation of the session. Our conclusions largely overlap with the students' feedback, particularly on the following points.

Negative points:

- While the majority of the students show a good mastery of the tool, some of them have difficulties in the handling of several functionalities;
- Despite the support offered, the activities proposed included some language mistakes that the RTT explain by "lack of time" or "the impossibility of being able to take care of everything".
- The analysis of the interactions and the reflective feedback are crucial elements to the system. Both highlight the particularly difficult points in the class animation: the launching of the session (with the technical questions), the exposition of the instructions, the enriched reformulation, the passage from one activity to another.

Positive points:

- Teaching by a teacher-trainee considered as a peer generates a climate of trust and closeness between teacher-trainees and learners;
- Teacher-trainees make resource choices that seem to match the learners' tastes;
- The teacher-trainees perfectly integrate the "collaborative project" dimension and keep their commitment to the session facilitation schedule;
- In spite of their initial reluctance in taking part in this project, all teacher-trainees report that their motivation for teaching increased after taking part in this project (see Argyris and Schön 1999).

The positive observations confirm the interest of such a project in teacher training. Learners who initially expressed a preference for having to deal with one and the same teacher-trainee throughout the semester understood the associated practical constraints and were able to adapt to the "collective mentoring" system that we proposed to them. The reflexive feedback system not only helped the students at the various stages of the project but it also made the "collective mentoring" easier.

## Conclusion

The results of this project were discussed in the context of the COVID pandemic. The incentive to build into an online teaching project that would allow for reflective feedback seemed all the more appropriate because of the national and international confinement constraints. Online teaching projects suddenly became the norm and it became essential to monitor their effectiveness. It was thus decided that the project would be further expanded, transferring this academic expertise to other departments such as the continuous education department. The project was also selected as one of the key programs to be developed to comply with the new expectations of the French Minister of Education<sup>2</sup>.

From an action-research perspective, the first editions of the virtual classes enabled us to draw conclusions for the improvement of the system and the implementation of new projects.

In this RTT-driven project, the students were presented with the double challenge of practicing language teaching and managing a distance environment. This led them to reflect on how to exploit and accept the constraints of the DL environment and how to develop a pedagogical presence. The advantages of the DL system became obvious to them during their participation in the project and as they reflected on the three stages.

Preparation:

- More material is available to prepare for the session, mainly all the videos of the previous sessions, including the ones of last year.
- The RTT are given the opportunity to practice their session with other trainees to avoid technical problems

Teaching:

- The "online factor" leads to better time-management;
- The platform has a built-in recording tool which then allows self-assessment and peer-assessment.

Feedback:

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/cid132650/resultats-du-second-appel-a-projets-nouveaux-cursus-a-l-universite-du-p.i.a.-3.html>

- The RTT are given an opportunity for self-assessment and peer-assessment, using the VideoAnt tool.

Reflexive feedback allows the RTT students to make valuable contributions concerning their own performance and the performance of their peers. At the beginning of the semester, the reflexive feedback sessions allowed the students to better prepare for their distance teaching session. This dynamic is further enhanced during the semester through the VideoAnt club activity. At the end of the semester, a final reflexive feedback session allowed all RTT to come together, focus on specific virtual classroom situations, and act as “experts” in the process of analyzing these sequences. These various methods of reflexive feedback provided the RTT with the opportunity to analyze their role and pedagogical strategies as online teachers at the different stages of the project, from the preparation stage to the post-class analysis stage, and, according to their own comments and conclusion, the project enhanced their online teaching performance.

Further research would need to be carried out in order to determine whether the project has given the RTT the means to improve their teaching performance in the years to come, and to show how reflexive feedback can be useful for them for self-improvement throughout their career. It would also be of interest to show how the methodology is transferrable to other groups by testing this approach with experienced teachers who want to improve their teaching skills.

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