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# How does integrating students' informal practices into a formal context foster mediation and the role of expert learners?

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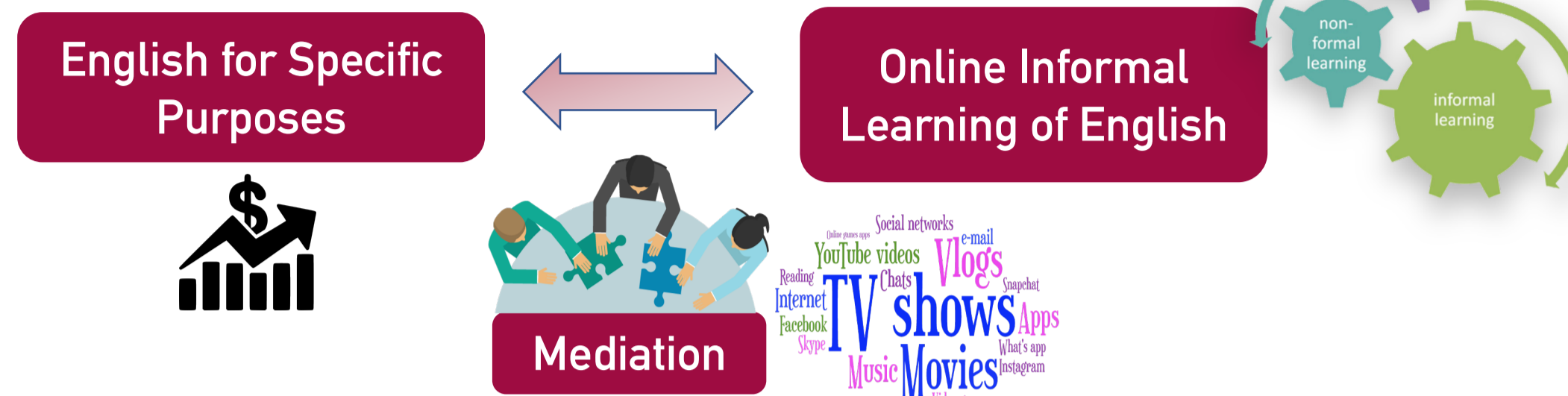


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# How does integrating students' informal practices into a formal context foster mediation and the role of expert learners?

The aim of our research is to observe whether creating tasks which encourage mediation, according to the CEFR's Companion Volume's descriptors, can allow students to reduce the distance between their informal practices and the course's content, between their prior knowledge and new ESP concepts, and between events shown in these informal resources and their personal experience. Our hypothesis is that valuing students' out-of-class activities will allow them to take on the role of expert learners or knowledge holders, whilst developing critical thinking and digital literacy skills relevant to the world of work.

## Theoretical framework



- ❖ How is relying on students' informal practices compatible with the CEFR/CV's mediation competence?
- ❖ Can encouraging mediation in task design give students the role of knowledge holder and expert learner?

## Course design

### Profession-based fiction as a resource

- ❖ The main chosen resource is profession-based fiction, which presents several affordances :
  - Close to students' informal practices in university context in France (Toffoli & Sockett, 2015)
  - Linguistic and cultural representation & specialised discourses and behaviour → relevant in ESP (Chapon, 2015)



### Tasks which encourage mediation

- ❖ Tasks are designed according to "mediating a text" and mediation strategies descriptors from the CEFR/CV (2018). This refers to:

**Mediating a text**

- Relaying specific information in speech/writing
- Explaining data in speech/writing
- Processing text in speech/writing
- Expressing a personal response to creative texts
- Analysis and criticism of creative texts

**Mediation strategies**

- Strategies to explain a new concept
- Linking to previous knowledge
- Breaking down complicated information
- Adapting language
- Strategies to simplify a text
- Amplifying
- Streamlining

- ❖ By taking such descriptors into account in task design, we intend to make students feel more competent and able to accomplish tasks, as resources are closer to what they do and know already and tasks encourage them to create a link between the new content and their prior knowledge y (e.g. linking to previous knowledge, identifying with characters)
- ❖ Our hypothesis is that valuing students' out-of-class practices is facilitates by designing tasks according to mediation descriptors, and that, in turn, this will allow students to take on the role of expert learners or holders of knowledge, but also develop their critical thinking on their studies' professional field (e.g. compare two works, considering themes, characters and scenes, exploring similarities and contrasts and explaining the relevance of the connections between them) & practice digital literacy skills (e.g. collating information and arguments from different sources)

Ethically acute questions (Rézeau, 2013) linked to the professional field but also applicable to their own life → Reduces the distance between professional field and students' lives

As we've seen so far in our extracts from *The Wizard of Lies*, Madoff is seen as a figure of authority, and he has created a persona who speaks to people in a way which shows off his "superiority". Anything that he says can be considered as a "lie", because his entire life is based on fraud. In this scene from the movie, Madoff is hosting a party and he is unhappy with the organisers and waiters, with the way they are setting up the event and serving food.

If you were organising such an event at work, for a company you were in charge of, and were dissatisfied with the organisation, what would you say? Put yourself in the shoes of an authoritative figure like Madoff and record yourself speaking!

Examples of questions include:

- ❖ Who suffered the worst consequences of Madoff's Ponzi scheme?
- ❖ Is it easier or more difficult to get conned in 2020 than it used to be?

### Students' informal practices and personal experience as both resources and task content (e.g. relaying information, linking to previous knowledge)

Lying isn't limited to telling someone a false fact. Existing research in psychology distinguishes 7 or 8 "ways of lying".

- 1) **Quiz:** Select the correct name for each "way of lying", based on the definition. You will need to do some research online to find the answers. You can post any interesting links or any information in the "Useful links" forum discussion.
- 2) **Forum:** Find a concrete example of one of these ways of lying in an outside source. This doesn't have to be related to the course and can be an example from social media, a YouTube you watch, something you saw on Twitter, a famous person lying publicly... the list goes on! Post a screenshot or link to this lie on your group's forum, describe the situation and explain which type of lie you think it is. Don't be embarrassed to share an example from what you read or watch online – the idea is to post something different to everyone else!

Students explicitly link the course's concepts to their own practices & illustrate examples and arguments with life experiences and contents they already know

## Methodology & data collection

- | Questionnaires | Semi-directed interviews | Forum interactions and productions |
|----------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 85 students    | 17 students              |                                    |
- ❖ Mixed-method research
  - ❖ Deductive and inductive : main categories from research questions & subthemes from interviews and forum posts
  - ❖ 8 students in the version where mediation is not encouraged via task design vs. 9 students in the version where mediation is explicitly encouraged

## Results

### Tasks which encourage mediation allow students to refer to their informal practices and personal experience...

Some bad deeds and lies may ultimately come from a good deed.

In the series, Prison Break, Mickael persuades Sara to leave the infirmary door open so he can escape. At the end, even if it was an illegal act, it allows them to be together.

SOME BAD DEEDS ARE NECESSARY.

IT WAS A GOOD DECISION.

Re: Week 5 - Share your example of lying with us!  
by [User] - Thursday, 2 April 2020, 7:15 PM

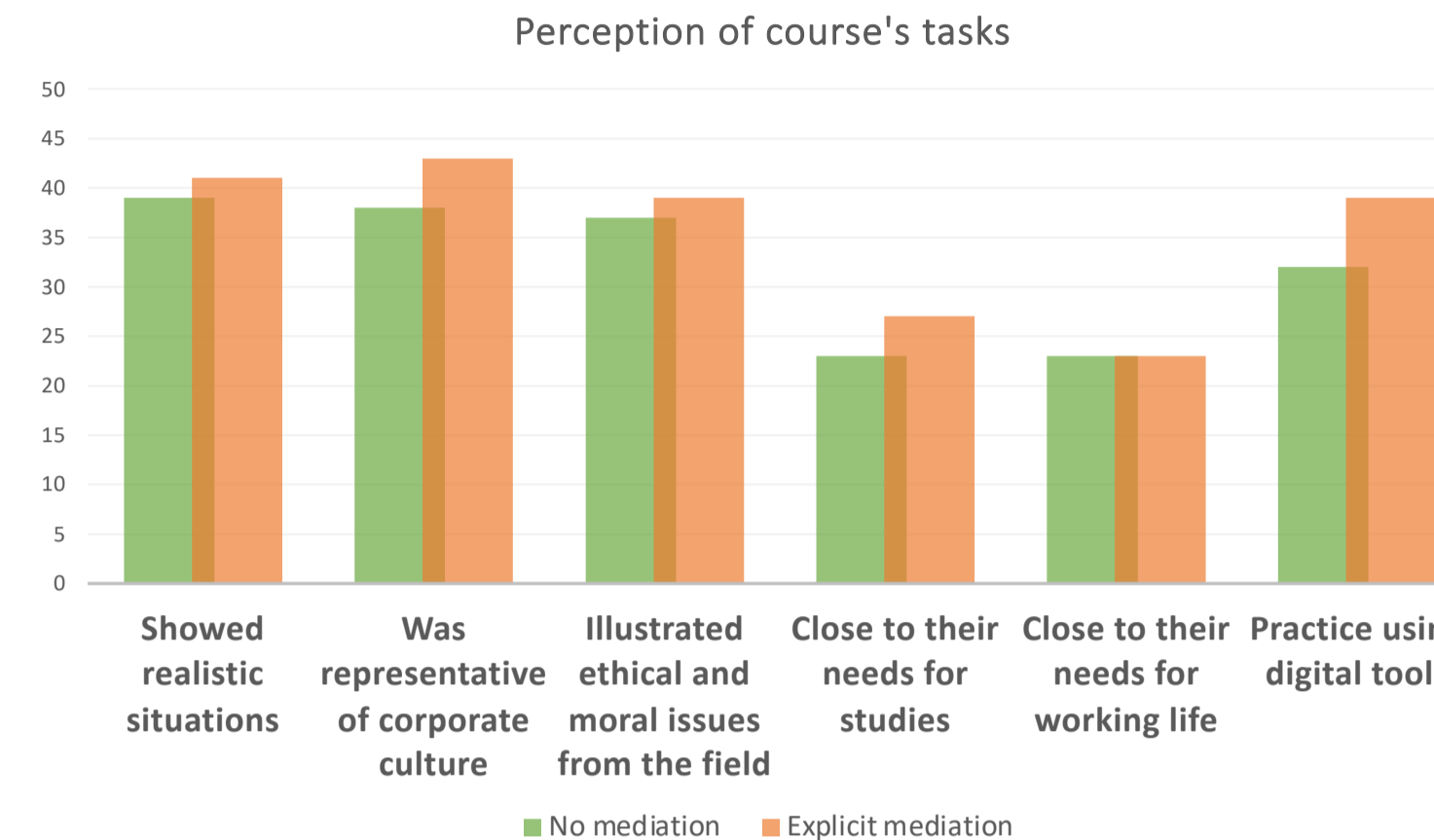
Hi!  
Can you start building a career out of a lie?  
Of course you can!  
In 2012 Kylie Jenner's pictures started to go viral, because her lips looked plumper than ever. She claimed that they were 100% NATURAL and that the increase in the size of her lips was due to lip-lip-ing. Her lying technique was COMPLETE DENIAL.  
She admitted the truth in 2017...

### ...whilst still being relevant to students' needs and encouraging critical thinking on the professional field

"In the world of finance, which is one of the prospects for our degree, we may find ourselves faced with ethical problems, so this allows us to prepare ourselves psychologically in advance." (AG)

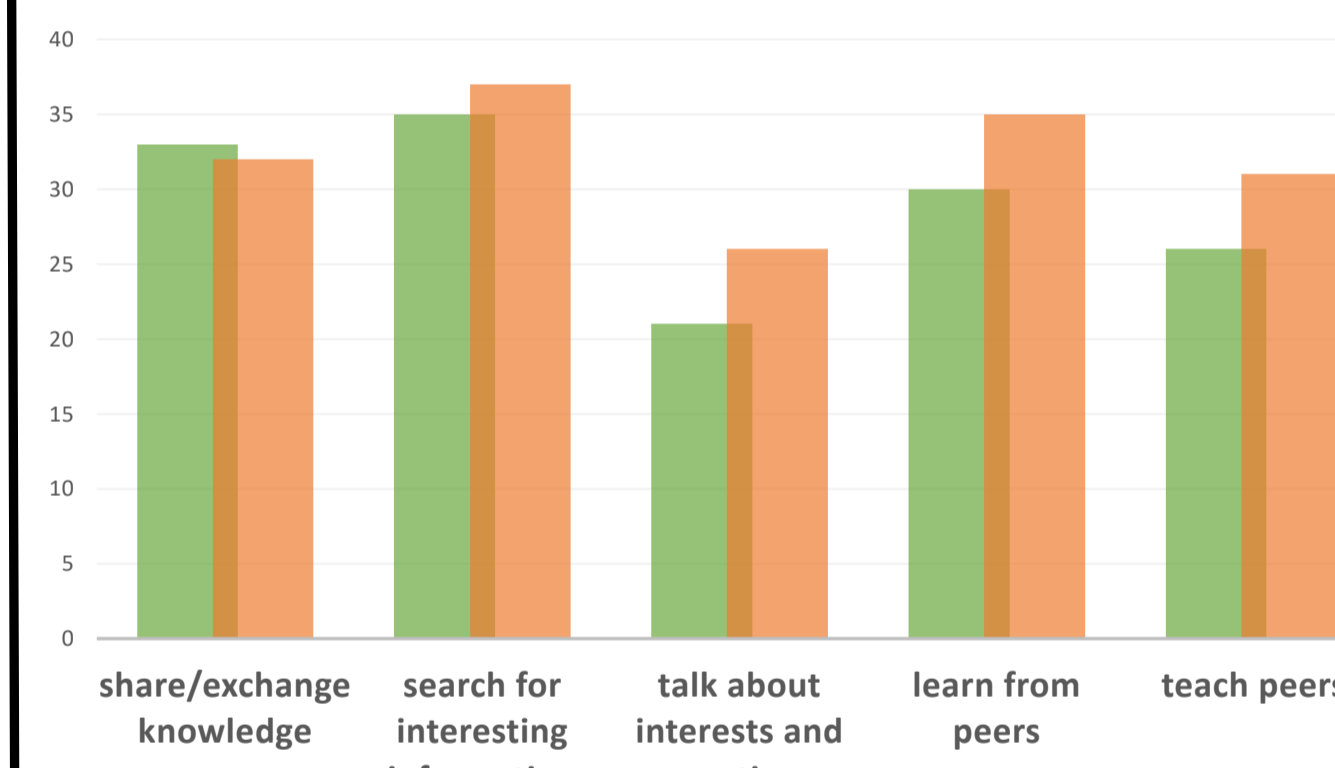
"It led me to what I want to do most, which is either work in an international organisation or work in journalism (...) I have this idea that I want to build a kind of new world, and my idea of justice was only increased tenfold." (HH)

"The fact that it's a film helped me to open up a bit more, and the fact that it's inspired by real events, to reinforce my criticism even more" (EN)



### Because of this reduced distance and the freedom given in the choice of resources, students are able to learn from one another

The course allowed students to...



"In the slideshows because (...) we had more freedom to really put what we wanted (...) For the slideshow about lying, we had our trick and tips, so it was personal, everybody put in a bit of what they wanted, so even by looking at other people's slideshows, I learned some stuff." (KJ)

"There were many, many times when there were words that my classmates used (...) words that I didn't know, or wordings, idioms that I didn't know, and I would write them down." (AS)

### Students for who mediation is not encouraged in tasks express a desire to reduce distance between their prior knowledge, practices and the course

Regarding sharing outside information and practices :

"A bit, but not enough for my liking (...) I would have liked for each of use to add a small piece of information they had seen during the week (...) it would have been interesting, I think." (AA)

Regarding talking about personal experience :

"No, not really, no (...) I'd have liked to have been able to" (KJ)

"It would have been interesting to have been able to talk about ourselves" (KW)

"I would have liked to talk about my life." (EZ)

## Main takeaways

- ❖ Encouraging mediation does allow students to easily refer to their informal practices, personal experiences and prior knowledge and link it to new contents.
- ❖ This allows students to act as knowledge holders and learn from one another
- ❖ Perspectives:
  - Including profession-based fiction as the basis for designing tasks which foster mediation is applicable to many fields in ESP
  - In contexts other than ESP, valuing students' practices and out-of-class experiences allows to develop 21st century skills (critical thinking, creativity, digital literacy...)