Postprint

This is the accepted version of a paper presented at *EADTU 2013 Conference, Paris, 23-25 October.*

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.

Title of paper: Development of on-line courses focusing on quality
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Strand: QA in e-learning, educational technology, on-line assessments

Introduction:

Dalarna University (DU) began offering courses online in the early 2000s. The Faculty of Languages, which we discuss in more detail later, has grown to such an extent that today the department offers courses in 12 languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish and Swedish as a second language. In 2012 over 65% of the students at DU were enrolled in online courses. In the Faculty of Languages, however, this figure was close to 100%: there are 3,968 students registered for language classes that will begin in the fall semester of 2013 and 3,299 (83%) of these students are registered for courses that will be conducted on-line. From the outset there was agreement among the instructors, technical staff and the administration that the **primary** focus must be on education and not on the technology that facilitates education. In other words, the technology must be adapted to fit the requirements of the instructor, not the other way around, although this is easier said than done. Online education at DU is based on two main tools: first, a Learning Management System. DU uses Fronter (http://www.du.se/en/NGL/NGL-Centre/Tools-and-Courses/Fronter/). The Fronter L.M.S. is a hub or portal from which students can access basic course information, files related to their courses, submit assignments, take tests and complete anonymous course assessments. The second tool is a program that enables synchronous online contact between the instructor and students. In order to accomplish this, DU has chosen to use Adobe Connect (http://www.du.se/en/NGL/NGL-Centre/Tools-and-Courses/Adobe-Connect/). Students therefore need, in addition to the course textbooks, an internet connection, a computer, a headset with microphone and a camera. A term that we have used and to which we return repeatedly is "synchronous". Indeed, what distinguishes DU from other institutions that also offer off-campus education is that at DU the student has the option of completing a portion or all of their education online in a synchronous environment that allows for direct interaction among students as well as between the students and instructor. This is particularly characteristic of the language department. In this article, we will provide several concrete examples of how online instruction has been implemented at DU. What follows is a concrete description of classroom practices which is accompanied by a reflection on their impact on the learning process.

1 . Language teaching online

1.1. Language teaching at University level in Sweden

Sweden follows the Bologna rules (B.A -Master -PhD). Courses in language departments are grouped at the Undergraduate level for three semesters. At the advanced level, the Master 1 is performed over two semesters plus two semesters for the Master 2. For some languages (Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Arabic, Portuguese) the Undergraduate level includes preparatory courses that resemble courses for beginners, but are adapted to the university level of training. Each course has a syllabus. Language skills alone are not enough: each course must also have the typical characteristics that are required of any course in a Swedish institution of higher education. This is required by law. A university education should provide students with an "opportunity to make independent judgments and criticisms, the ability to identify, formulate and solve problems, and the ability to cope with changes in working life". Moreover, "in addition to knowledge and skills in their field of study, students must develop the ability to search and evaluate knowledge at a scientific level, follow the evolution of knowledge in the field in question and exchange knowledge with others who are specialized in the field of study" (The Swedish Law on Higher Education, *Högskolelagen* § 8, our

translation[1]). Finally, education is not limited to learning basic language skills; goals also include the study of literature, social issues and the language systems of the various cultures.

1.2. Teaching methods

Before, during and after the process to put the language courses online, teachers were faced with a challenge. Most traditional teaching methods could not be simply transposed to an online education, while most educational tools that have been developed can also be used face-to-face. It is today common, for example, that the teacher requires the students to use the internet in their research or assign homework a course website. The fact is, however, that online education pushes us constantly to invent new teaching activities, which in turn may also be applicable in a traditional classroom setting. According to a survey conducted under the Next Generation Learning program at DU (the project is called "Pedagogical methods"), teachers conduct a wide array of activities online. This includes everything from lesson and homework preparation, to equipment distribution and actual teaching. In this regard, the majority of teachers had to create their own or adapt existing course materials in order to be able to use them online. This poses some significant copyright problems. For example, we cannot simply scan an entire textbook and make it available online. Another problem is that because the students and teacher may be physically very far apart, there may be difficulty in creating a sense of belonging among class participants. One highly recommended method to foster a sense of community comes from Gilly Salmon (2011 reprinted in 2013). Salmon recommends working with the group in order to get a sense of belonging to a group:

"Study after study has shown that an online team or small community must be built up for engagement between participants to occur, and relevant authentic and purposeful e-learning activities must also be simultaneously introduced to sustain the community" (Salmon, 2011: 36).

Some solutions used by our colleagues to create this sense of group belonging include using the web-cam. The web-cam allows the students to acquire non-verbal cues and see the spontaneous reactions of their classmates, just as they would in a traditional classroom. At the beginning of a course, teachers at DU make it a point to spend some time having everyone give a short self-introduction. The so-called personalization method (see below) is also used. Finally, students have several opportunities throughout the semester as well as at the end, to give their opinions regarding the structure and content of the course[2]. This fosters the feeling that they, the students, are participating in the development of the course.

Interactive synchronous online seminars are deemed positive by teachers because they allow interaction which is often seen as the basis for not only the acquisition of language (in the sense of language skills), but also contributes to the development of critical thinking skills. An example of this is in French literature courses, at least one interactive seminar is conducted for each work read during a course. This means that on average each course will have between eight to ten interactive seminars throughout the semester. Each seminar consists of a variety of activities. Theoretically, the majority of the time in each seminar should not be devoted to a presentation of information by the teacher. Essentially the goal of the seminar is to facilitate student involvement by prompting the students to ask questions and engage in dialog regarding material covered in the course. Since groups may be relatively large (up to 15-20 students), it is often difficult to ensure that

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[1] 8 § […] Utbildning på grundnivå ska utveckla studenternas förmåga att göra självständiga och kritiska bedömningar, förmåga att självständigt urskilja, formulera och lösa problem, och beredskap att möta förändringar i arbetslivet. Inom det område som utbildningen avser ska studenterna, utöver kunskaper och färdigheter, utveckla förmåga att söka och värdera kunskap på vetenskaplig nivå, följa kunskapsutvecklingen, och utbyta kunskaper även med personer utan specialkunskaper inom området. Law (2009:1037).

[2] Note here that in Sweden, the active participation of students in the course evaluation is a highly developed process. The teacher thus takes into account the need for measures of student feedback.

all students participate. In order to increase student participation, seminars often include debates among small closed groups, discussion of a particular topic, or the teacher will ask specific questions to groups of 2-3 people. After each small or breakout group has had a chance to discuss a particular topic, all of the participants will return to the main group and discuss what was said in the smaller groups. This can lead to brainstorming in order to solve a problem or simply to an oral discussion. Adobe Connect was designed with the goal of increasing student activity. With the click of a mouse students can raise a virtual hand, express themselves using emoticons, and supplement the discussion via chat which the entire class can read or even take part in a poll. This is reminiscent of the method of voting that is increasingly used in large packed lecture halls. Adobe Connect also supports video streaming either from YouTube or video that has been uploaded to the Connect server. During these activities, language development is significant. This involves primarily the development of listening skills, since students have to understand the instructions given by the teacher. However, verbal skills and to a lesser extent writing skills are also developed. Verbal skills are developed because the students are forced to speak with one another, while writing skills may be developed if the students use chat as a mode of communication with each other or the instructor. In this sense, synchronous online courses are more communicative and interactive than traditional courses. For literary knowledge, the group discusses various aspects of a work: style, structure, themes. Students must acquire this knowledge through questions and answers not linearly. Problems may then arise because active participation may frustrate some, since it is not a body of knowledge presented in one piece by the teacher who controls all the informative content. The active participation approach closely resembles a case study in which the responsibility for the learning process is shared between students and teacher. The interaction between students and the teacher is significantly increased by understanding how to use the technology, for example, knowing how to conduct surveys or pose questions in the chat room. The equivalent is certainly possible in a traditional classroom, but this type of interactivity is more common in synchronous online courses.

Another example comes from students studying Japanese at DU. The Japanese teachers extensively use the "information gap" technique. By using a method called "personalization" the Japanese teachers have used the fact that most students attend class from home as an opportunity to increase communication (Kawaguchi, 2004 and 2012). Personalization aims to persuade the students to express their own ideas, opinions, feelings and preferences. The analysis of Saito and Hayakawa-Thor (2012) suggests that the "personalization" of language courses on the Web is a surprisingly effective teaching method, because the interactions are more meaningful and students are urged to improve their vocabulary. Additionally, the more students get to know each other, the easier it is to create a "supportive classroom environment" (Nuibe, 2001). We will return to this concept below, when we discuss the adaptation of "personalization" as an online teaching position.

1.3 Assessment

One problem often posed by online education, or at least often addressed in discussions on this subject, is that of assessment. In this regard, another NGL project initiated by DU (Goal - Oriented Assessment and Secure Examinations) showed how assessment is integrated into language courses and can be considered a teaching method. All sections of the language department engage in continuous reflection regarding assessment. The most trivial reason for doing so is because of the risk of cheating. It is possible someone other than the student could do the homework or more commonly in our case, that the student will attempt to use Google Translate or some other online resource and submit this translation as original work. However, it should be noted that the risk of cheating is also present in a traditional classroom. Students in traditional courses have been known to plagiarize. Another rather trivial but unfortunately real reason for thinking about assessment so often, is the workload of teachers. Correcting both the substance and the form of dozens of papers of several pages does not please any colleague (Huver & Springer, 2011: 61-62 who discuss the "bad reputation" of assessment).

Most language teachers have decided either to combine a summative assessment (that is to say, evaluate the goals of the lesson plan at the end of the course) and a formative assessment (that is to say assess student achievement continuously throughout the course), or rely solely on a formative assessment. Even in traditional classes the formative assessment has been highly recommended in recent years. Research supports this recommendation (for example Koc Vonderwell & Boboc, 2013, see Gikandi, Morrowa, & Davis, 201, which reviews the literature on the subject and Garrison, Anderson & Archer 2000: 206). The supportive research however, takes, of course, a decidedly constructivist view of learning. Constructivism is a theory often cited by authors working in online learning (Harasim, 2012, Salmon 2011, quoting other authors, Palloff & Pratt, 2007: 16 or Schneckenberg & Ehlers, 2010: 132). It postulates that the learner constructs his own knowledge through experiences and ideas and by interacting with the world and especially with others. The knowledge in question is considered "dynamic, changed, constructed and negotiated socially" (Harasim 2012: 60). Evaluating such knowledge at a single point (at the end of a course, for example) seems to be bordering on absurdity. In addition, formative assessment allows you to use the results for the rest of the course. For example, the teacher sees that a particular grammatical concept has been misunderstood by a majority of students and is able to come back to it. At the end of the course, this would be impossible; it would be too late. Formative assessment also allows for more personalized and regular corrective feedback. It has been shown that this encourages acquisition (Lundahl 2012: 287). However, the summative assessment cannot always be ruled out entirely, since it does not show the same thing as the formative assessment (see Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000: 206). In the sections of French, Spanish, English and German, for example, in the first and second semesters, the grammar examinations are proctored either at the university or at a designated off campus location. In the Italian section, the literature exams for the first and second terms are also proctored; however the students may do so online as long as they are visible via the web-cam. DU now has at its disposal online supervisors who supervise students who are taking exams by watching the students via web-cam. In this case, the questions and examination requirements are tailored to the needs of teachers and courses.

Several language teaching colleagues tested different methods to answer the two questions of "who": "Who assesses?" and "Who is being evaluated?". Indeed, around the globe, correction or assessment based purely on the status of the teacher is questioned, or at least its limits are tested. Therefore many institutions have chosen to use instead the methods of "hetero-evaluation" (peer review) or self-assessment. As we will see later, the method of self-assessment is interesting in that it empowers the learner. However, in online education, full participation of the learner is required (see Palloff & Pratt, 2007: 5: "learning in the distance education environment cannot be passive") and self- assessment of knowledge and its evolution cannot but help students learn (Lundahl , 2012: 288). However, the peer review form of assessment is not without problems. Are the students able to evaluate their classmates' work? And, often in extremely heterogeneous groups, can everybody be regarded as peers? An experiment that was conducted in the French literature courses consisted in the teacher using the "Forum" function in the Fronter LMS to discuss the students' work. The answers are often commented or corrected by the teacher who judges their adequacy to literary standards, but it is also possible to require students to do the same with the responses of their classmate. This is often the case for students in secondary school teacher training, but it can also be applied to other students. They receive a copy of anonymous answers to some questions and they should comment on the responses by correcting both the content and the language. Then the feedback from students is forwarded to the student who was the author of the comments. Regarding language development, this method produces good results and it is a good opportunity for future teachers to learn and correct. This should in theory also help the students learn how to correct another person's language errors, as well as forcing the student to correct and submit a text of his own that is free of mistakes. This is true if one assumes that the teacher is there to correct errors and the student feel comfortable showing the teacher his mistakes. While showing the teacher one's mistakes is commonly accepted, it can be quite another thing to show one's mistakes to a fellow student. There is the chance that a student may be too embarrassed to allow a

classmate to see his errors. However, experience in these courses has shown that few students were making a real effort to use this opportunity as a way to improve their language ability. Furthermore, some students would simply not correct their classmate's error. This was either out of ignorance, they didn't notice the errors, or out of concern that they would hurt their classmate's feelings. This fear is rooted in Swedish culture[3]: one of the fundamental principles of Swedish society is to avoid offending one's neighbors. However, regarding the acquisition of literary knowledge, the method provides only limited results: It produces useful results only if the student is capable and willing to find and correct another student's errors.

Teachers have also chosen to combine so-called closed assessment tools (such as Multiple Choice Questionnaires) and open tools (such as dissertation). As stated by Huver and Springer, "It's not the fact that the tools are open or closed that determines their validity[4] (or not) but the fact that evaluative activity is consistent with the purposes" (2011: 101, our translation). The Fronter LMS enables the implementation of Multiple Choice Questionnaires that are either automatically corrected or corrected by the teacher. Some language departments also use Multiple Choice repeatedly in the auto-assessment perspective that we mentioned above. Of course, the higher the level of the course, the more the so-called open tools are used. One of the last exams consists in writing an essay and defending it in public at an online seminar. Among the twelve languages to date, all except a few require the writing and defense of a thesis as the final exam. Students then have ten weeks to prepare their essay and they have the obligation to critique a classmate's thesis, before seeing their own thesis critiqued. We were talking about cheating at the beginning of this paragraph and would like to mention here that the language departments that have this kind of assessment have developed a detailed procedure to prevent plagiarism. This includes regular meetings held using Adobe Connect between the student and his thesis supervisor in which the supervisor monitors the student's progress. The public seminar defense, which is an adaptation of the Socratic method, is of course also done online (see also the comment from Trowald 1997: 25, "The Highest form of examination – the doctoral dissertation - [...] has never been questioned "(our translation)).

2 Some new teaching methods made possible by online education

Here are three examples of educational activities, which are very difficult to implement in a traditional classroom. We will first introduce the idea of student cooperation beyond borders with the goal of acquiring both language and culture. We will then present an exercise involving the use of a wiki and finally with an exercise that utilizes literary blogs. These last two examples show that the interactional approach – doing real tasks in real social interactions - is used in the department of languages and allows the implementation of the action-oriented approach of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL). The goals of this approach are to increase the motivation of learners, to encourage the development of quality work, to change the student-teacher relationship and enhance the knowledge as well as the responsibility of the learner.

In Rieko Saito's (a colleague in the Japanese department) Master thesis, five students from Taiwan and four students from Sweden interacted with each other in Japanese. The purposes of the previous project were to seek advantages of web based education and to afford students the opportunity to broaden their world view by interacting with learners in other parts of the world, as

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[3] See for example Daun, Å., 2005. Swedishness as an Obstacle in Cross-Cultural Interaction, p. 158-160.

[4] "Validity is the concept with which the Framework is concerned. A test or assessment procedure can be said to have validity to the degree that it can be demonstrated that what is actually assessed (the construct) is what, in the context concerned, should be assessed, and that the information gained is an accurate representation of the proficiency of the candidate(s) concerned. Reliability, on the other hand, is a technical term. It is basically the extent to which the same rank order of candidates is replicated in two separate (real or simulated) administrations of the same assessment » (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, page 186).

well as to increase the student's ability to communicate in Japanese. Even if the project showed some difficulties or challenges, it also showed that learners have many things in common. Some of the things the students had in common included their goals and problems in learning Japanese. It is easier to interact with other students if one knows the person with whom you are interacting has problems similar to one's own. Learners can learn Japanese from each other, even if they have different teachers and textbooks and learning environments. The students each bring their own experiences and interests which they can share with the other students, and it is a good opportunity for learners to broaden their views. Of course a project of this kind is also a good opportunity for professionals who are researching the scholarship of teaching and learning in higher education. What is important is that this would have been impossible in a traditional classroom setting (these students had never met!) and that the project had a positive effect on their learning. The Japanese department continues to work on this topic and has explained the didactic advantages of this method to all of the language sections at DU. With our Erasmus agreements in Europe and our other cooperation agreements in the world, it is possible to develop these intercultural encounters and encourage the acquisition of transculturality for our students. In other words: "transculturality at home", which can reap the benefits of international trade without having to move from one continent to another, through the intelligent use of new educational technologies.

Some teachers use a wiki. The Spanish department uses a wiki for example, during the written proficiency courses, during the first half of the term or during the courses for student-teachers. They use the wiki as a platform for web publishing of encyclopedic items that students write in the course. First, the students have to read two prototypical articles on Wikipedia and analyze the structure of this type of publication (external structure and internal hyperlinks, references, etc.) This type of publication is also discussed during a synchronous seminar online. Then they select a Swedish theme to write an encyclopedic article. It may be a concept, a phenomenon, a region, a pop band, a writer, whatever. The only requirement is that the information in question is not on the Internet in Spanish (which is the reason why this theme is related to Sweden). It is the student who creates the information in Spanish on the topic. The first draft is submitted to the teacher, who informs the student about linguistic errors and comments on the structure, content and format. The student corrects the text and publishes it in the wiki at the DU. He or she also has the option of publishing this article in the "real" Wikipedia but is not required to do so. This approach is highly recommended in professional research (For language, see Huver & Springer, for example: 2011: 211) and also by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages under the section regarding action-oriented teaching by tasks. The idea is to use the knowledge gained, but also the sequence in language acquisition based on real work for a predetermined goal (which increases the motivation of the learner). Moreover, as the final work will be seen not only by the teacher as would homework in a traditional situation, it will also be seen by other students and possibly by people all over the world, the students are motivated to produce a good quality text. The students tend to be more independent and responsible than they would be if the assignment were not to be published on the web. The student gains not only skills in writing but also in creativity. It becomes apparent that the teacher is no longer only a corrector but rather a collaborator.

The Department of French is conducting an experiment involving the use of literary blogs. The teacher asks the students to post their comments about a work on a literary blog website and participate in the debate that takes place on those sites. There is a series of blogs on the francophone web 2.0 from which the teacher can choose. A teacher can undoubtedly find one or more that are compatible with the teacher's educational goals. The teacher will guide the students to an appropriate blog, according to the students' levels of French and ability to produce original relevant thoughts. Some students will find themselves in the situation of having launched a debate among bloggers and will be able to interact in French with "real people ", about a literary work that interests them (See Ollivier & Puren, 2011 for a detailed analysis of the use of the web 2.0 in language classes).

Discussion

In the discussion that follows, we would like to raise two specific issues: Assessment and the role of the teacher. Huver & Springer showed, in the early 2000s the existence of a very / quite common opinion in the world of the language teachers: they advocated assessment which was "objective, quantifiable, external and based on observable behavior" (2011: 321). This idea is currently criticized. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages has an action-oriented approach to assessment, which we have already mentioned, and a concept of lifelong acquisition, self-assessment and formative assessment which are also applicable to online education. Indeed, alternative assessments are available that are described as ethical (learners are responsible for their own acquisition and the assessment is formative, that is to say the learners receive support and feedback throughout the course), ecologic (they reflect real, genuine/authentic situations) and social (there is an interaction between the teacher and the learner, and sometimes they negotiate to determine what assessment procedure will be used) (2011: 209-211 and ibid: 323). However, as we have already discussed, self-assessment, responsabilization, interaction and assessment by real tasks are used in online courses. Many of our colleagues are currently testing this new type of assessment and the results look very promising.

Secondly, regarding the role of the language teacher, it appeared that the interaction between teachers as well as among students is greatly increased by the online practices just described. But beyond a simple pedagogical benefit, online language teaching has permitted the acquisition of what Lamy and Hampel called multi-literacies that are the result of emotional charge induced by learning a foreign language. In other words, as long as the techniques are quite easy to use, it is possible for the teacher to overcome the barrier of distance and establish a true criticism:

"If teachers want to follow a socio-cultural approach and believe in critical literacy, affective, social and critical skills become crucial. Multi-literacies go beyond dealing with the technical aspect of the electronic medium and include engaging with others through the new technologies and using them creatively as well as critically" (Lamy, Hampel, 2007: 43).

It follows, then, that the teacher's role has changed considerably. The teacher is no longer the central figure in the class. There has been a paradigm shift that means that it is the job of the language teacher that has to be redesigned. As Guichon says:

"Losing some control over the learning process and on linguistic correctness, granting greater autonomy to learners in relation to their learning, going out of the education scheme in three phases (exposure, practice and production), considering the added value of ICT and learning to use them wisely are all elements that require the language teaching profession to be rethought" (2012: 134).

If there is a major change in the expected role of the teacher it is around the concept of a knowledge transmitter, or even around the nature of transmitted knowledge. In regard to languages, practices which have been presented make it possible not only to change the role of the teacher into that of a coordinator of the exchange of structured points of view, but also sensitize the students to the specificity of language and culture. The new techniques for language teaching make it possible to alternate synchrony and asynchrony and increase the interaction and renew the teaching profession. As long as the student audience adopts this perspective and requires the same level of participation, these advances will become the norm. Moreover, these new teaching methods will also influence traditional teaching, because it will no longer be possible for a teacher on campus to ignore the participatory requirements of learners.

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