

Integrating interaction through CMC for French-as-a-second language in the Anglophone context in Cameroon: the Melff project at the University of Buea

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Geographical, historical and linguistic framework

- Cameroon in central Africa
- Colonisation and independence
 - German colonisation (1844-1916)
 - French and English rule under the League of Nations mandate
 - 1960, French Cameroon achieved independence
 - 1961 northern Cameroon joins Nigeria, southern Cameroon joins French Cameroon to form a federal republic.
 - 1972 the two parts came together to form la République Unie du Cameroun, which became République du Cameroun in 1984.
- Linguistic heritage
 - French spoken in 80% of the territory and English in 20%
- There are more than 250 other languages



Figure I. Geographical, historical and linguistic situation of Cameroon

French and English in Cameroon

- Two official languages (written in the constitution)
- In reality, French is used in the francophone part of the country and English in the Anglophone part
- French as a second language for both Francophones and Anglophones
- English as a second language for both Anglophones and Francophones
- English speakers are in minority

French at the university of Buea

- University of Buea, anglosaxon tradition
- Offered by the French Department through courses in two degree programmes
- Taught as a university-wide course known as Functional French

Functional French

- A two-semester course
- Objectives: provide students with linguistic and communicative tools that can enable them interact in speaking or writing in a French speaking environment
- “university requirements”
- More than 5000 students enrolled per semester
- 65 groups
- 75 to 80 students per group
- 2hrs per week for each group,
- Heterogeneous groups
- Little or no interactions, little or no oral and written expression
- High failure rate

Melff Project

- Aim is to improve this situation by introducing blended learning using two online platforms
- We hope to
 - Give more opportunities to students to be in contact with the French language
 - Give them opportunity to interact orally and by writing more frequently
 - Improve on students' performance
- This presentation is about the pilot phase of the project.

Research question

Our challenges

- Introduce real oral and written communicative situations using CALL
- how to make these students with problems in writing and speaking, with very low levels in French, express themselves by interacting with others in such a way as to have feedbacks on what they have produced, and revisit in order to improve them?

Research on discussion forum and specificity of our study

- Oral competence can be developed using discussion forums (Montero et al, 2007)
- Discussion forums can be used as a learning environment to encourage students to observe their peers written language (Zha et al, 2006).
- Discussion forums promote high levels of cognitive engagement and critical thinking (Thomas, 2002)
- Discussion forums favour reflexive dialogues, considered as propitious for language learning, and provide learners with more opportunities to be exposed to *stimuli* in the target language. (Rézeau, 2004).
- The difference with our study lies in the fact that discussions in our set-up were almost synchronous

Situation of CALL in the university

- **Very few students have Internet at home**
- **The large majority of them access Internet only is school or in cybercafés**
- **Two hours of connection cost about one euro.**
- **In school they also have to pay to get connected.**
- **Connections are not reliable**
- **I had to meet with them once a week.**

Description of Melff pilote


- Platforms
 - Moodle
 - Voiceforum (Fynn, 2007)
- Actors
 - 30 students
 - 4 groups (2 groups per platform)
 - 4 students (experts) (within the 30)
 - A tutor (researcher)

Content

- Online activities based on the classroom lessons
- Auto-corrective drills on *Moodle* accessible by all 30 students
- 4 forums on each platform
- Forum subjects:
 - contact
 - Talking about daily activities
 - Expressing quantity
 - Talking about past events

Pedagogical scenario.

In the classroom

- 
- Correction homework
 - Introduction to the new lesson and general comprehension

- 
- Reading and detailed comprehension
 - conceptualisation

- 
- Systematisation
 - Homework



Frame of activity with discussion forum

Frame of activity with discussion forum

At the IT centre

Writing activities in two phases

Phase 1

- each student writes a text following instructions.
- Questions are asked, corrections made
- Text is read by other students and/or the expert or the tutor

Phase 2

- New discussion thread created with the sum of learners' productions
- with the instruction to say what they think is wrong in the new the production as a whole

Role of tutor = give feedback

Role of experts = participate and give feedback

Constraints

- University games
- Catch-up classes
- Public holidays
- Unstable and poor Internet connection
- Computers not configured
- Absences
- Closing of the IT center

Content analysis

- Data from the two groups working in *Moodle* only
- Quantitative analysis conducted.
- Total number of messages produced in the forum

	Number of messages	total
Group_AR1	255	517
Group_AR2	262	

- Messages produced by experts and tutors

	Number of messages	total	%
Group_AR1	61	83	16
Group_AR2	22		

- Interpretation: many messages have not received feedback from tutors or experts

Interactions

- There is interactive participation not only when a contribution comes as an answer to another contribution, generating thus a discussion thread, but also when participants build their knowledge from contributions of other participants, referring explicitly or implicitly to their messages. Mangenot, (2007) cited by Combe Celik (2011)

	Number of interactive participations	total
Group_AR1	220	258
Group_AR2	238	

Reflexive dialogues

- Terminology to characterise exchanges between participants in a discussion forum:
- Monologue
- Conversation
- Reflexive dialogue

(Lamy & Goodfellow, 1998)

	Number of reflexive dialogues	total
Group_AR1	35	73
Group_AR2	38	

- Difference between successfully completed Reflexive dialogues (SCRD) and uncompleted reflexive dialogues (URD).
- SCR D are dialogues on language, at the end of which we have the feeling that learning has taken place
- UR D are dialogues on language whereby negotiation is interrupted and does not lead to a modified output from the learner

Example of Successfully Completed Reflexive Dialogues

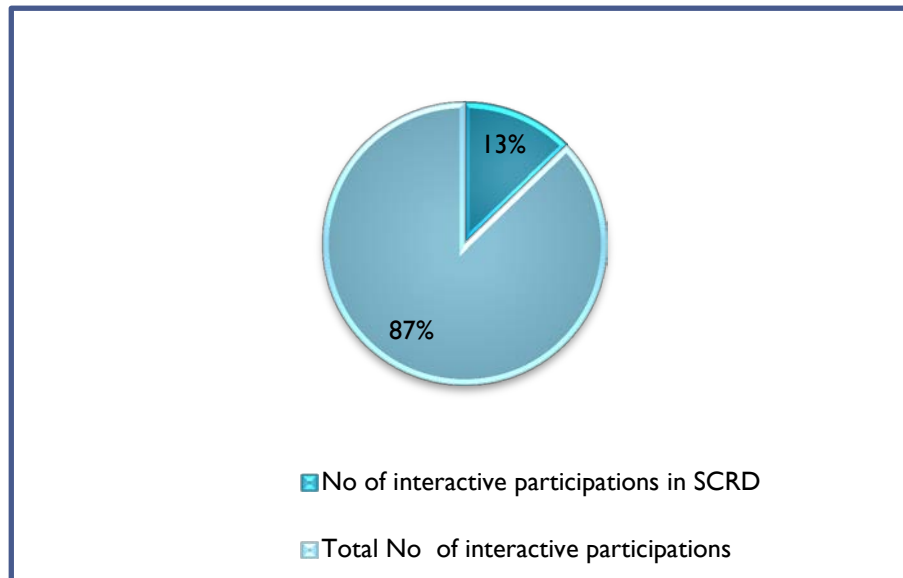
Speaker	Title of the message	Content
afar2-7 Janefrancis jeudi 14 juin 2012, 15:50		<p><i>En venant pour la fete, j'apporterai de la viande(soya) et du poulet... j'apporterai aussi une bouteille de jus et un cadeau pour Paul. je vais l'offrir une chaussure et un chapeau rouge comme cadeau</i></p>
tm blaise jeudi 14 juin 2012, 16:00	Petite correction	<p><i>janefrancis, on offre quelque chose à quelqu'un est-ce que tu peux reprendre ta dernière phrase?</i></p>
afar2-7 Janefrancis jeudi 14 juin 2012, 16:23	Re: petite correction	<p><i>je vais lui offrir une chaussure et un chapeau rouge comme cadeau</i></p>
tm blaise jeudi 14 juin 2012, 16:36	Re: petite correction	<p><i>C'est bien</i></p>
afar2-7 Janefrancis jeudi 14 juin 2012, 16:23	Re: petite correction	<p><i>Merci monsieur</i></p>

Exemple of URD

Speaker	Title of the message	content
efar2 leisly jeudi 26 avril 2012, 17:25	Re: présentation	<i>Salut! je m'appelle Leisly et je suis au departement de "journalism and mass communication... J'aime beaucoup visionner surtout les films romantiques; je deteste le sport en particulier le football ... Je suis très heureuse de faire votre connaissance. je suis là pour vous aider. A plus!</i>
afar2_4 levai jeudi 26 avril 2012,17:42	Re: présentation	<i>pourquoi tu detest le sport tu ne sais pas que ce bon pour les fille?ques-ce que ce bon dans ton programme</i>
efar2 leisly jeudi 26 avril 2012, 17:51	Re: présentation	<i>c'est juste que je suis nulle en ... Et je ne comprends pas bien ta question.</i>
efar2 leisly jeudi 17 mai 2012, 16:39	Re: présentation	<i>On dit : pourquoi tu détestes le sport? Ne sais-tu pas que c'est bien pour les filles? ... tu dois conjuguer le verbe détester à la deuxième personne de singulier et ce verbe doit prendre «s» ... j'ai séparé l'une de tes phrases en deux parce que ... ceci permet de mieux respirer en parlant et de mieux comprendre ce que tu dis .Et ta dernière phrase je ne la comprends pas.</i>

	SCRD	URD
Group AR1	12	23
Group AR2	14	24
Total	26	47

- Number of SCRD= 26
- 26 SCRD = 67 interactive participations
- Total number of interactive participations =458



What went wrong

- Not many feedback from neither tutor nor experts.
- Cause: the quasi-asynchronous nature of our set-up
- The quasi synchronous nature caused learners not to focus on form.
- learners engage in correction without having the capacity, and focus on form and meaning in the same activity.

- les activites des John

par <acd

cd='afar2_4'><firstname>easterline</firstname><lastname>afar2_4</lastname></acd>, , jeudi 31 mai 2012, 15:50

Il mange son repas a vingt heures. Ensuite il regard le television pour trente minuites,il lis son cahier,fait son devoir de neuf heures a onze heures. Quand il finis son devoir il repasse. En retard il dormir.

- Re: les activites des John

par <acd

cd='afar2_2'><firstname>merelise</firstname><lastname>afar2_2</lastname></acd>, , jeudi 31 mai 2012, 16:36

bon soir,ont dis vingt-un heure a vingt trois heure comme ce le soir

- Re: les activites des John

par <acd

cd='afar2_3'><firstname>easterline</firstname><lastname>afar2_3</lastname></acd>, , jeudi 31 mai 2012, 16:46

merci pour ton correction

Example of correction from learner

speaker	Title of the message	content
afar2_4 easterline jeudi 31 mai 2012, 15:50	les activites des John	<i>Il mange son repas a vingt heures. Ensuite il regard le television pour trente minuites,il lis son cahier,fait son devoir de neuf heures a onze heures. Quand il finis son devoir il repasse. En retard il dormir.</i>
afar2_2 merelise jeudi 31 mai 2012, 16:36	Re: les activites des John	<i><u>bon soir</u>,<u>ont</u> dis vingt-un heure a vingt trois heure comme <u>ce</u> le soir</i>
jeudi 31 mai 2012, 16:46	Re: les activites des John	<i>merci pour ton correction</i>

For the next phase

- Make sure only experts and tutors can correct learners' messages
- Use the two phases of the forum to
 1. work on the form
 2. work on the meaning
- Implement asynchronicity to give time to students to prepare their messages, and also give opportunity to experts and tutor to read them and engage learners in reflexives dialogues that succeed.

Conclusion

- Introducing oral and written communication through CALL in the functional French course at UB as main challenge
- Oral not possible
- Writing not effective
- The set up of *Melff* in its present state cannot lead to achievement its goals
- Given the number of interactive contributions, we can say that it is already a success to have student interact in a context like that which characterises *Melff*.

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<http://lrlweb.univ-bpclermont.fr/spip.php?article307>

QUESTIONS ?