

**LEARNING THROUGH SHARING :
OPEN RESOURCES, OPEN PRACTICES, OPEN COMMUNICATION**

Shared Practices amongst Teachers in Online Training Courses

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Abstract

This paper will research some aspects of shared practices and social interactions amongst language teachers who took part in a modular in-service teacher training programme taught online in 2010. The programme consisted of six modules each lasting for six weeks with an approximate learning time of five hours per week. The participants could choose freely the number of modules they wished to complete.

After a brief introduction to the training programme and its module contents, the guiding principles for the online training will be discussed. The formation of course participants who were experienced language teachers followed a task-based approach where the participants learnt cooperatively, by sharing their practices and experiences. The tutors in the modules were no longer transmitters of knowledge and in full control of the learning process. Instead, the tutor role entailed a set of diverse tutoring functions and styles, including the "social tutor" who "places greater emphasis on the socio-affective needs of the students" and the "cognitive tutor" who fosters reflection and subject knowledge (Lamy, M.-N. & Goodfellow, R., 1999: 475).

The virtual platform *Moodle* was selected as the learning environment for the online courses. In *Moodle*, the main activity used was the forum as a tool for asynchronous communication as discussion fora allow for reflection, feedback and extended comments, thus fostering peer collaboration (Lamy, M.-N. & Hampel, R., 2007: 40).

The tutor-learner interactions as well as the interactions amongst the participants in the various course fora will be analysed. The focus will be on such exchanges where true sharing of successful teaching practices took place. The aim will be to identify how tutors but also the participants themselves can evoke and encourage such open communication in which learners can profit from each other's experiences. Sources for this analysis will be messages extracted from the courses' discussion fora as well as data from the course evaluation questionnaires including comments of participants.

References:

- Lamy, Marie-Noelle and Goodfellow, Robin (1999). *Supporting language students' interactions in Webbased conferencing*. Computer Assisted Language Learning, 12(5), pp. 457–477
- Lamy, Marie-Noelle and Hampel, Regine (2007): *Online Communication in Language Learning and Teaching*. Palgrave Macmillan.

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