

Reverse Observation as a Lever for Hybrid Assessment in the Language Classroom: A Study of the Pedagogical Framework in the Master 1 Program, Department of French, University of El-Oued (Algeria)

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Summary:

This contribution highlights the stakes of reverse observation as a lever for establishing hybrid assessment in Algerian university education, particularly within the context of the global health crisis. To address this, we propose implementing this remote assessment framework within the teaching and learning of the Observation of Pedagogical Practices (OPP) module in the Master 1 program at the Department of French of the University of El-Oued.

At this level of education, students primarily rely on direct observation to analyze and synthesize the teacher's pedagogical practices. The guided dimension of the teaching-learning situation thus becomes a central element of their training, in which they play an active, even driving, role in their own in-class evaluation.

We experimented with various strategies of this unique form of observation and assessment in language courses by reversing the traditional roles in the progression of activities. These experiments were conducted with 12 Master 1 groups from two distinct cohorts, accompanied by directive and semi-directive interviews carried out with a representative sample of students.

The results show that reverse observation and hybrid assessment have a positive impact on the planning of post-university learning. They facilitate the transfer and reuse of acquired knowledge, while contributing to the construction of didactic and pedagogical knowledge. These practices also promote the development of writing confidence, the implementation of telecollaboration, and allow students to better understand their own experiences.

In conclusion, this new approach deserves to be sustainably integrated into the pedagogical practices of the Algerian university.

Keywords: Observation – Assessment – Reversed – Hybrid

I- Introduction :

This contribution emphasizes the stakes of reverse observation conducted by university students. The latter targets the implementation of what is also called reverse assessment within university education in the Algerian Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral (hereafter LMD) system, especially in the era of the global health crisis known to all and everywhere. This crisis was essentially characterized by an excessive recourse to online work via digital platforms – a post-pandemic transformation valued worldwide (Benraouane, 2011, p. 13). Given the unique nature of this experience, we understand that this pedagogical framework may not be transferable to other programs. Nevertheless, we hope that our considered experience will eventually serve other teachers tempted by this type of pedagogical innovation.

This methodological requirement is dictated by the major issues and challenges facing university teaching and learning in its traditional form, still based on in-person contact or face-to-face pedagogy (Cardinet, 1995, p. 57). This form is already constantly threatened by potential disruptions and various crises, such as the global context of the Covid-19 virus spread that affected the entire planet.

To address this, we suggest developing a remote assessment framework within the teaching and learning of the Observation of Pedagogical Practices module (hereafter OPP) in the Master 1 class of the Department of French at the University of El-Oued. Among the specific objectives expected from this module, we mention that of guiding students to structure the methodology of observing practices in French as a Foreign Language (hereafter FLE) classes based on participant observation.

The objectives of this module translate, in pedagogical terms, the expectations and needs formulated as problems to be solved. We aim for highly effective support in the field of teaching and learning in FLE classes, so that students can develop their future professional skills. The target audience thus knows what new behaviors they will be capable of exhibiting at the end of the semester.

The student at this final stage of graduation, relying primarily on direct in-class observation and carrying out the analysis and synthesis of various practices of the French teacher in the classroom, becomes more associated with their university training and a protagonist of their own evaluation within this miniature society, particularly within the guided part of the teaching-learning situation in full action (2). They become more closely associated with their university training and a key player in their own evaluation within this miniature society.

We also experimented with a series of strategies for this *sui generis* variant of observation and assessment in the language classroom by reversing the different roles in the internal progression of activities. Students are therefore invited to observe the various components of the teaching-learning situation as well as the pedagogical flow of the session, and also to monitor different tasks and control the learning planning schedule.

This approach to observation and assessment, also called reversed, mirroring the flipped classroom (Piraud-Rouet, 2017, p. 156), challenges the traditionally held place of the teacher in the language classroom. By yielding the floor (Miloudi & Bassi, 2021, pp. 186-196) to the learner to perform the evaluative task in their stead, the teacher positively acknowledges the considerable role the learner plays in this context. No one can deny this crucial vocation, as highlighted by this passage from Comenius Jan Amos: "Three things give the student the opportunity to surpass the teacher: asking many questions, retaining the answers, teaching" (2002).

Reverse Observation and Assessment (hereafter ROBA) are therefore closely linked to traditional assessment. They are among its specific characteristics. Consequently, they constitute a learning and training tool for the student. They also represent a communication tool between the different partners in the teaching-learning situation.

Our work consists of a sociodidactic study attempting to answer the following pivotal question: What is the place occupied by reverse observation and assessment in evaluative practices in higher education in Algeria, particularly in the language classroom?

In addition to the experiments conducted with different Master 1 groups across five different cohorts (2020-2021, 2021-2022, 2022-2023, 2023-2024, and 2024-2025), we also carried out both directive and semi-directive interviews with a representative sample of the Master 1 students surveyed.

I.1. Contextualized Theoretical Foundations

In order to highlight the various assessment practices prevalent in higher education in Algeria, particularly in French language classrooms, and to draw the audience's attention to the actions implemented within the Department of French at the University of El-Oued (southern Algeria), it seems pertinent to approach this context by starting with the conceptual framework to which the present study relates.

In the etymological sense of the term, "evaluate" comes from "ex-valuere," meaning "to extract value from" or "to bring out the value of." Such a definition suggests a change in attitude towards assessment, in which the positive aspects of what the student produces are valued.

Assessment can be quantitative, numerical, targeting the comparison of an achievement to a standardized external reference. It can also be qualitative, expressed in words, aiming for the contextualization of an achievement in relation to a personalized and socialized internal reference (Rispaïl, 2017).

Three primary types of assessment, according to several didacticians and educators, need to be defined in this context. Let's begin with orientation assessment, a traditionally called diagnostic assessment, which aims to detect strengths and weaknesses to address them or to guide towards a type of learning more suitable for the situation.

As for regulation assessment, also called formative assessment (Roegiers, 2012, p. 47), it aims to detect difficulties to overcome them. It is frequent and immediate, allowing students to correct their errors and gaps before a cumulative process begins.

Regarding the third type, namely certification assessment, also called summative assessment, it concerns the validation of acquired knowledge and skills. It establishes the degree to which the objectives have been achieved, either by comparing students with each other or by comparing the performances demonstrated by everyone with the expected performances.

A pertinent question to ask in order to understand the expected objective of university assessment is (Miloudi & Djedai, 2021, p. 92): for what purpose do we assess? Here, we list a non-exhaustive set of objectives :

- To pronounce success (+) or failure (-);
- To propose individualized remediation to some.
- To decide whether to begin new learning.
- To move on to the next module.
- To develop a new learning objective.
- To develop a new skill.
- To determine training needs.
- To promote learning.
- To inform parents.
- To verify the effectiveness of a training framework.

As for observation activities, they represent "the work that describes teaching based on the interactive teaching-learning processes in the classroom and the analysis of teaching activity in context. It strives to gather and compare existing results from various approaches to make teaching practices, as they exist in their diversity, intelligible and to understand their relationships with students learning in varied contexts" (Altet, Bru & Blanchard-Laville, 2012, p. 11).

The levels impacted by observation necessitate the consideration of several parameters, including the organization of the pedagogical environment, the management of space and time, learning planning, the materials utilized, the management of participation, the pedagogical approaches implemented, the operational phases of a teaching-learning session, classroom management and control, the assessment and regulation of learning, and the completion of curricula.

The observation of the learner, in turn, necessitates the highlighting of the following elements: their involvement in the project, their motivation and demonstrated interest, the development of their autonomy, their completed activities, the construction of their learning, the mobilization and integration of their prior knowledge, the alternation between group and individual work, the extension of their learning, the transfer of knowledge to extracurricular situations, extracurricular activities, etc.

I. 2. Institutional and Pedagogical Contextualization:

The various groups under our supervision consist of final-year undergraduate students at the University of El-Oued, representing a significantly heterogeneous public. From the beginning of the academic year, we observed the absence of a pedagogical support program for struggling undergraduate students. These same students exhibit a certain demotivation accompanied by a lack of autonomy in their learning. These issues engender passive behavior in a considerable number of students, characterized primarily by the consumption of information provided during the course.

In order to initiate engagement within the session dedicated to reverse observation and assessment, students are invited to participate in an initial brainstorming activity by responding to a general question concerning the observation of pedagogical practices. They are asked to provide a series of words that come to mind when they consider the nature of this activity. In this way, knowledge of the key concepts relevant to observation is ensured from the outset.

Said activity targets the amplification of various methods and the diversification of didactic tools to restore the expected effectiveness, efficiency, and systematization to the process of designing and delivering teaching-learning in the Master's level classroom.

II– Methods and Materials:

360 students are invited to observe the instructor of the module in question throughout an entire session, assuming the dual role of a student participating in the lesson and taking notes concurrently to submit a well-structured text detailing their observations during the session. These assignments are to be completed individually and submitted via the dedicated email address for the module in question.

It also seems pertinent to highlight, as an observation, that students in the department are accustomed to assessments based primarily on the systematic restitution of knowledge, the memorization of lessons, and rote learning (Miloudi & Bektache, 2020, p. 13). This practice risks generating a dysfunction with a considerable impact on the quality of the university's final output.

Throughout this work, we have opted for an experimental technique with a predominantly induced approach, as we have officially taught the module in question since 2015. We granted permission to individually assess the class participation profile (De Peretti, 1993, p. 231).

Our primary objective is to understand the various details of reverse observation and assessment in the French language classroom, to ensure the scientific rigor of the approach, and to provide greater reinforcement, consolidation, and credibility to our research work.

To avoid any potentially traumatic or punitive situations for some final-year undergraduate students, and to equally prevent any source of tension, we reassured our representative sample of students by informing them that this was indeed a routine pedagogical assessment to be conducted.

A very clear instruction was given to the target audience within the framework of the session dedicated to the observation of pedagogical practices. This was to avoid disrupting the ordinary pace of work in the classroom.

Thus, based on a limited number of criteria, independent of each other, clearly formulated and operationalized by indicators according to a pre-designed observation grid, said criteria – collectively developed in class throughout the preceding sessions of the module – will first help students to conduct their observations correctly. They must therefore be read, understood, mastered, implemented, and their application verified. They represent the essential roadmap for reverse observation and assessment.

To mitigate subjectivity, we implemented the various aspects of evaluation objectivity (Abboud, 2019, p. 91), namely: objectivity of administration by ensuring that all learners are tested under the same, pre-established conditions; objectivity of analysis by guaranteeing the prior establishment of a grading scale; and neutrality of interpretation by considering the

relationship that should exist between grades and feedback, without regard to the individual who completed the work.

III- Results and discussion :

Reverse Observation and Assessment constitutes a form of active pedagogy in which the student is contractually involved in the development of their knowledge during teaching and learning. The latter takes responsibility for their learning (Olson, 2003, p. 253).

Reverse Observation and Assessment challenges the realm of strict instruction, which often suggests a series of content whose significance and immediate utility, as perceived by the guiding party, are poorly understood by students.

The means of action of Reverse Observation and Assessment is based on the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of students, stimulated by the transition to the concrete realization of a specific final product that highlights the writing competence of the student body.

Reverse Observation and Assessment affirms the absolute necessity of making mistakes to progress. These mistakes, in turn, constitute a learning need for the guiding party.

Reverse Observation and Assessment provides students with the opportunity to learn to communicate effectively and efficiently by emphasizing the verbal and paraverbal aspects.

Reverse Observation and Assessment encourages learning through active engagement both inside and outside the classroom. In this context, students socialize what they learn at university.

Reverse Observation and Assessment reduces selectivity and the culture of failure within academic writing by considering heterogeneity and differentiated instruction.

Reverse Observation and Assessment challenges traditional assessments. It presents an opportunity to conduct a series of no-grade evaluations, to make addenda, and to also value differentiated assessment.

By using Reverse Observation and Assessment, the classroom becomes a small society where individuals complement each other. Students exchange ideas before submitting the requested assignments.

Reverse Observation and Assessment further constitutes an education in freedom and decision-making for students. The latter are freed from any constraint when writing their observation-related texts.

Reverse Observation and Assessment makes the student more responsible and a full participant in their various writing projects. This facilitates any subsequent participation in writing workshops. It is a genuine researcher project.

Reverse Observation and Assessment ensures a flexible planning of the student's academic progress, while valuing self-improvement and the effort invested. These points further increase self-confidence in both the examiner and the examinee simultaneously, which further develops the student's sense of responsibility.

Reverse Observation and Assessment significantly enhances students' confidence in their writing abilities, leading to the externalization of their expected competence. Supervised individual work greatly facilitates this task.

Reverse Observation and Assessment also contributes to better time and space management for writing practice due to this shift in roles. We can observe a definite easing in the relationship between the guided and guiding parties in the situation, which establishes interactive horizontality within the teaching-learning context.

Through Reverse Observation and Assessment, learners feel the need to be evaluated; such a skill further encourages them to be autonomous and motivates them more intrinsically and extrinsically.

A pedagogical innovation like Reverse Observation and Assessment can surely externalize students' skills and make them perform better in various research contexts.

IV- Conclusion:

The results of the current paper indicate that reverse observation and hybrid assessment have a beneficial effect and positive impact on the planning of post-university learning. These methods facilitate the transmission and reuse of acquired knowledge, and contribute to the construction of didactic and pedagogical knowledge. These practices also promote the development of writing confidence, the implementation of telecollaboration, and allow students to better understand their own experiences.

In summary, the pedagogical practices of the Algerian university should be sustainably incorporated with this new approach.

Notes:

- (1) We are part of the pedagogical team that designed the French language inspection report during the national seminar on the modalities of exploiting the new inspection report, organized from March 14th to 16th, 2017 at the National Institute for the Training of Civil Servants of the National Education Sector of Oran.
- (2) This acronym is used in the masculine singular form.

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- Appendices:**Samples of work submitted by a sample of the study population****Informant 1**

Just after the start of the session, the teacher asked a question, requesting learners to raise their hands before speaking. He wants to establish a calm atmosphere in the classroom. He engages them by using a new word for the learners ("taciturn") to capture their attention. Immediately, he proceeded to reactivate prior knowledge (revision) by prompting learners to cite the different types (declarative, interrogative, exclamatory, and imperative) and forms (affirmative and negative) of sentences they have already encountered. To maintain learners' attention, the teacher addressed them by saying, "I am counting on you to succeed in this course."

To ensure a smooth transition between the revision he had just completed and the topic of his lesson, the teacher employed a technique he called an "icebreaker." Specifically, he wrote several sentences on the board that read the same way from left to right and from right to left (palindromes). After a few unsuccessful attempts by the learners, one of them managed to identify the trick; the teacher promised him a favor in the assessment. Following this introductory phase, the teacher distributed a course handout focusing on the use of active and passive voice. He asked the learners to take turns reading the examples, rules, and questions on the sheet. During the reading, he interrupted the discussion and threatened to deduct two points from those who were not following along. During the explanation, he deliberately mentioned examples of homonyms, homophones, and homographs to encourage learners to conduct research at home on these concepts, which would be reviewed in subsequent sessions.

At the end of the lesson, the teacher did not hide his joy, explicitly stating that he was satisfied with the outcome of his teaching. The learners were invited to provide personal sentences demonstrating their understanding; here again, the teacher continued to create a specific atmosphere with his audience, saying, "The person wearing a navy-blue scarf must answer." Along the same lines, he asked the learners to complete the unfinished exercises on the course handout in their activity notebooks, emphasizing that this work would be graded.

Informant 2

The teacher presented a lesson whose title is "The active and passive voice". He started awakening the interest in the types and forms of sentences (question/ answer). Then, he wrote on the board a funny activity (palindromes), such as "Narine had gone to Iran", and asked the students to read them and find out the educational mystery of this game, which is considered motivating and also serves the lesson (the passage from the active voice into the passive and vice versa).

Next, the professor tried to extract from the students the necessary steps to move from one voice to another and to write them on the board. Then, the teacher distributed well-prepared sheets that presented the lesson with illustrated activities, as it can facilitate the lecture comprehension and also make better use of time.

The observation of the presented work raises the following remarks:

The teacher's approach is motivating, putting the student in the heart of the learning situation. As the teacher observed at the beginning that the participation was quite weak, he stimulated it by giving the speech to the learners in turn. He even used the game of colours and fun questions in order to indicate the student who is going to answer the given question. Thus,

The interaction was well conducted as all learners spoke.

This teacher clearly knew how to create a relation of trust with his learners by encouraging them when they answered correctly with remarks such as 'very good, hats off...'

However, it seems that the teacher has a pronunciation problem with some letters as, /e/. Also, he committed an agreement error, saying (in the passive voice); it is recommended that he should improve his phonetics' capacities and spelling skills.

The teacher has been called during the session, which is pedagogically unacceptable; however, he showed a respectful aspect to his students by asking them to apologize, giving himself the reason to do so.

The willingness of the teacher is appreciated to encourage the students to research when someone asks a question that might deviate from the topic or waste time. At the end of the session, he asked them to prepare, in-house, another topic (the position of direct object), which relates to the lesson.

Finally, the professor's intention is good, for he would like, from the start, to encourage and motivate the learner to contribute to building his own knowledge.

The teacher is a dynamic and perfectible professor. We encourage him to persevere in his direction, however; we recommend he redoubles his efforts and further improve his class practices in order to achieve good results.

Informant 3

The transformation from the active to passive voice is the activity I attended with my M1 colleagues. The session is a part of the OPP module and is a simulation of a course intended for 4 MA.

Without getting straight to the heart of the lesson, the teacher started to review some questions relating to the types, forms, and voices of reminder sentences. These may serve as a starting point to get learners familiar with the course, to motivate them and raise their awareness during the lesson, and to create a learning need in them.

The teacher then displayed on the board some sentences known as palindromes to liven up the session. After the activity, he then began rapidly presenting five steps of transformation and then distributed handouts in which the course appeared.

The teacher asks the learners to read the sentences and identify their components, then transform them simply to understand well the sentences' structure in the two voices and changes that should be made.

The participation was satisfactory thanks to the learners level, and the teacher's omnipresence for guiding, correcting errors, filling in their gaps, and pushing them to ask questions. The class was motivated thanks to varied activities. This diversity appeared in the number of different tasks to be accomplished.

Finally, the teacher asked his students to do homework to consolidate the skills they had already acquired. In the end, he announced the next course, which will be the position of the direct object in the sentence, and he invited the learners to prepare it.

I appreciated the efforts provided by the teacher to help his learners who have difficulties; as a result, the participation of learners was overwhelming, with almost all learners speaking.

The professor's good humour created a positive atmosphere, allowing learners to positively interact and work at ease.

I noticed that it was necessary to proceed gradually and move from oral to written form, i.e., the oral transformations should be recorded on the board, but due to lack of time and imposed conditions, the task was not achieved.

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