Name of the project: Preparation for A2 free tests for Official Language School. (English courses)

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Students: Extended from A2 students to all levels and Sections of the Centre.

Course time: Initially for 3'5 weekly hours divided in 3 sessions a week (27 weeks aprox).

Why the use of a PLE methodology

The usage of the PLE methodology enables pedagogical autonomy of our students, being able to extend their learning processes, to keep up to date when they miss the class, to reach to a bigger amount of students initially not included in the plan... Besides, we aimed to the cooperative learning, to open new ways of communication (teacher-students and students-students).

Content of the course (framed in the context of Lifelong Learning)

The course aimed to the acquisition of the basics skills to pass A2 level exams and to continue their studies in B1 and subsequent levels. All this is included in the European Framework for Languages, which regulates the different levels and competencies required for the acquisition of each.

Pre-requisites of the course

Students must have the basic competences on ICT and be familiar with the social network Facebook, since this is the chosen tool to implement the course teachings.
We also make a good use of online sites with interactive activities (grammar, vocabulary, listening and reading comprehension...)

PLE Tools explored in the class

- Facebook (as a communication tools)
- Online additional material (explanations, online practice.
- Youtube (educational videos, musical videos with lyrics subtitled...)

Pedagogical approach in the class

Presential:

In the initial sessions of the course, the basis of the social network is taught. Those students who aren't already familiar with it, are taught how to create an e-mail account, how to register in Facebook and how to use it for the required purposes. These sessions were conducted in the ICT classroom.

As this stage has been completed, the students proceed to the presential stage of the course. The attendance to this is not compulsory (but highly recommended). Since extended this to the different levels and groups –beyond A2 level- we work in class with different materials and textbooks depending on the group.

A1 and A2 levels have been split in two years due to the need of improving spoken skills (listening and reading), since the already have an acceptable level in written ones. These former ones are the ones we decided to focus on due to the fact that is where they show more weaknesses. We are taking more time in "correcting" mislearned pronunciations, inaccuracies, intonation patterns… and to work out their listening and speaking abilities.

We follow the sequencing proposed by the Official School of Languages but split in two courses (the selected contents, the sequencing…).

Autonomous:

Students receive a regular extension of what they are studying in class by means of Facebook Notes (the format which allows us to present more information despite the fact of not accepting natively some phonetic symbols or its character limitation). They can keep up to date when they don't attend the lessons, they can print them, arrange or organize them as they wish, ask and answer…

Results

Overall results:

The course shows a good deal of success broadly speaking when talking about reaching the students and helping them in their learning process.

In addition to that, the result is a corpus of materials which remain to be used along the following years and for all courses.

Advantages over traditional course delivery strategies:

These materials elaborated, the access to them and the diffusion of such is much wider, more effective and permanent and allow students to check them and learn at their own learning pace, promoting thus learning autonomy.

Challenges over traditional course delivery strategies:

The ONLINE FEEDBACK is a bit poor in terms of interaction. They prefer to ask the teachers face to face instead of online questions.

We also found difficulties in the way of arranging online materials due to the evolution of the potential learners involved in the course. Initially planned for A2 students and with focus on ORAL SKILLS (teaching phonetics) it grew wider and the scope of materials (the number of levels and addressees was bigger). Perhaps it will require a new ordering and sequencing of the contents and notes for future courses.

Other aspects of importance

It constituted a good pilot experience which can be extended in the future or in future projects.