



Teaching and learning languages: Beyond the frame

The XXXth Ranacles Congress (2023) on “Transition(s) in and for language and language resource centres” aimed at questioning the complexity and the “In-Between” in language and culture didactics. The 2024 edition of the Congress is interested in what overflows from these interstices to reflect on all forms language learning and teaching existing beyond the frame. To begin with, this reflection leads us to return to the debates that exist on the boundaries between the formal, the informal and the non-formal in the teaching/learning of languages and cultures in higher education language centres. Is it possible to circumscribe these concepts and to what extent do these difficulties generate tensions and questioning at all levels? Next, and in a cross-cutting way, the confrontation of these spaces gives rise to unforeseen events which lead all the participants involved in the pedagogical process to adapt a pre-established framework. What skills are needed to be able to manage uncertainty (Morin, 2014), and what benefits do they bring out? Finally, the concepts of “explicit” and “implicit” will lead us to reflect on the way in which practices -immersion, metalanguage skills, etc.- appear as complementary or in opposition in the range of available teaching practices.

Proposals will fall under one of the following three focus areas:

Strand 1: Formal, informal, non-formal: frameworks, tensions and reassessments

For decades now, didactics has been particularly interested in all language teaching and learning methods that encourage language development and encounters with the Other. In this respect, the ‘classroom’ as a closed universe and unique place of learning is being questioned? (Narcy-Combes, Narcy-Combes, 2019). Thus, researchers are investigating all the areas covered by teachers and learners by problematising (Babault et al., 2022) the relationship between the formal, informal (Toffoli, 2020) and non-formal spaces that make up the panorama of opportunities for learning a new language. This area of focus will address the following questions, without being exhaustive:

- What is the state of research on Understanding the boundaries between and within the concepts of formal, informal and non-formal?
- What teaching practices question these intersections? What are their contributions and limitations in terms of language development?
- How do extra-curricular learning arrangements impact teachers' teaching strategies?
- How and why should we analyse teaching and learning practices both inside and outside the classroom (cinema, theatre, TV series, comics)?
- How do artificial intelligence and distributed knowledge further challenge the limits of formal learning?
- Where does a particular person’s agency fit in with the ability to break out of the institutional framework? Where do guided self-direction practices fit in on this continuum? What is the role of tutoring in this practice?



Strand 2: (En)framing the unexpected in higher education language centres

While it is generally accepted that teaching involves setting up a learning framework and organising teaching sequences to help learners progress towards acquiring knowledge and skills, it has to be admitted that in a teaching situation, the teacher's plan constantly faces the unexpected. Any teaching practice therefore involves framing or reframing the unexpected in order to deal with it when interacting with learners or mediating between learners (Benaïoun-Ramirez, 2009; Nicolas, 2012). The unexpected can emerge at different levels: within the class group, a heterogeneous environment requiring the implementation of strategies to manage this heterogeneity (Pouzergues et al., 2022); in the in the teaching approaches themselves, in that they can generate the unexpected or impose the unexpected on learners (serious games, group work, etc.). We could also look at the management of the unexpected at an institutional and structural level, by tackling the issues of recruitment and job insecurity in language centres, as well as the future of these structures within universities. The following questions, among others, could be addressed in this area:

- Professional identity and teacher training: how to prepare for the unexpected? Is managing the unexpected a core or peripheral teaching skill?
- What new strategies can teachers use to deal with heterogeneous learners and differentiate activities and learning? Do the digital tools available meet these needs for differentiation?
- Using innovative teaching methods to destabilise and provide a different framework. Can we assess the effectiveness of these methods by considering the different reactions of learners with different profiles?
- Is mediation between learners a source of unforeseen events that can be exploited by the teacher? Which teaching strategies could be then used?
- How do language centres deal with the unexpected in their organisation and administration? What avenues are being explored to consolidate the structure both of Language Resource Centres and Language Centres?

Strand 3: The Explicit/Implicit in language and cultural skills

Although in the 1990s the implicit and the explicit (Bery, 1997) were at the heart of the debate, these notions are no longer used today. Yet they allow the reassessment of many existing practices. Veronique (2019) lists several definitions of the implicit, all mainly refer to a non-conscious and unintentional process of language use - i.e. one that is beyond the 'control' of institutions, teachers and learners themselves.

What's more, the principle of immersion is making a major comeback on the teaching and learning scene, supported by communication that is described as 'authentic' and therefore effective. This applies to learning arrangements such as e-tandems (Lewis, 2020) or CLIL (Narcy-Combes et al., 2020), which have demonstrated their benefits and limitations, particularly if there is no reflective phase.



This is also apparent in approaches such as ‘neurolinguistics’ (Germain, 2017), which has been called into question by many researchers (e.g. Roussel, Gaonac'h, 2017). At the same time, questions around immersion are being reinvestigated by researchers interested in the different forms of reality that are taking hold in the twenty-first century with the democratisation of virtual reality (Yibokou, Ciekanski, 2022), for instance.

At the same time, other approaches advocate the use of explicit instruction, such as plurilingual didactic approaches (Candelier, Castellotti, 2013; Gajo, 2015), which aim to develop metalinguistic, metadiscursive, and metacommunicative awareness to support learning.

We will examine the contributions of explicit and implicit instruction in language teaching and the ways in which they are mobilized in classroom practices. For example:

- How do implicit appropriations contribute to learning a foreign language?
- What are the limits of absolutist approaches to the implicit and, especially, the fact of resorting to ‘native speakers’ in immersive approaches?
- Regarding the explicit, what questions are raised by the use of metalanguage in the classroom, and in particular by ‘reasoned practice of language’?
- What are the limits of the explicit, formalisation and metalanguage? How do unexpected questions and comments - often a source of digressions - help or hinder learning?
- Looking beyond positions, how do teaching practices link implicit and explicit learning? How do they deal with methodological doxas?

Proposals for papers (accounts of practice or research work), in French or English, may fall within, one of the three axes and should take the form of a 250-300 word summary (excluding bibliographical references), accompanied by 2-5 key words.

Proposals must be submitted on the Congress website by 15 June 2024: <https://ranacles2024.sciencesconf.org/>

Registration for the Congress will open on 15 June 2024 and 4 RANACLES grants will be offered to participants who do not have funding from their institution and who meet the criteria described on the website.