

DESIGNING A FRENCH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES COURSE FOR THE AGRIFOOD SECTOR

Elena PETREA¹

e-mail: elenapetrea@uaiaasi.ro

Abstract

Unlike the learning language methods of general French, which have as topic everyday life, designing French for Specific Purposes (FSP) courses involves, for the teacher-designer, the processing of new contexts that he discovers and which must become familiar to him. In the situation where there isn't already a manual for that area, the teacher-designer of FSP courses has to set up an activity of investigation, research, collection and processing of information and knowledge necessary to fulfil a course, these information and knowledge constituting the core of the communicative situations targeted by that training program. The designing of a FSP syllabus follows a five-step approach: identification of the training request needs analysis, data collection, data processing and elaboration of didactic activities. This article is a result of the experience gained in designing FSP worksheets for the agrifood sector within the context of an international partnership developed between five universities, from Romania (the "Ion Ionescu de la Brad" University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Iași, the University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Cluj-Napoca, the "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați), Croatia (the University of Zagreb) and Republic of Moldova (the "Alecu Russo" State University of Bălți) and financed by the Agence universitaire de la Francophonie – Bureau pour l'Europe centrale et orientale, entitled "Strengthening of French Language and of Research in French for the non-specialist students in a multicultural and French-speaking environment" (November 2011-March 2014). The article presents the five-step approach for FSP supports and illustrates the description of each step by concrete examples taken from the educational sheets designed for the learners trained in agrifood sector.

Key words: French for Specific Purposes; designing and implementing; syllabus; agrifood sector

Designing programs in French for Specific Purposes (FSP) involves, for the teacher-designer, the processing of new contexts he discovers and that must become familiar to him. In the situation where there isn't already a manual for that area, the teacher-designer of FSP courses has to set up an activity of investigation, research, collection and processing of information and knowledge necessary to fulfil a course, these information and knowledge constituting the core of the communicative situations targeted by that training program.

The designing of a FSP syllabus follows a five-step approach:

- a) identification of the training request,
 - b) needs analysis,
 - c) data collection,
 - d) data processing
 - e) elaboration of didactic activities
- (Magiante J.-M., Parpette C., 2004).

We consider important, from the point of view of the terminology that we use in our work, the distinction that Jean-Marc Magiante and Chantal Parpette operate between:

a) *the specialized foreign language*, which requires global approach of a discipline or a professional field and is open to an audience as wide as possible. The example of the authors is that of language courses coupled with the profile of a faculty, courses focused around a theme. The consequence of this type of training offer would be the uncertainty regarding the training purpose in terms of professional and academic use, and

b) *the foreign language for specific purposes*, that works with each individual situation, or, in other words, case by case, depending on the demands and needs of a precise audience (Magiante J.-M., Parpette C., 2004).

MATERIAL AND METHOD

This article is a result of the experience gained in designing FSP worksheets for the agrifood sector inside an international partnership developed between five universities, from Romania (the "Ion Ionescu de la Brad" University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Iași, the University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Cluj-Napoca, the "Dunărea de Jos"

¹ University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Iași

University of Galati), Croatia (the University of Zagreb) and Republic of Moldova (the "Alecu Russo" State University of Balti) and financed by the Agence universitaire de la Francophonie – Bureau pour l'Europe centrale et orientale, entitled "Strengthening of French Language and of Research in French for the non-specialist students in a multicultural and French-speaking environment" (November 2011-March 2014). The article presents the five steps designing approach of FSP supports and illustrates the description of each step by concrete examples taken from the educational sheets designed for the learners trained in agrifood sector.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A French for Specific Purposes course results either from a clear and precise request made by a client (a person, a company, etc.) to a training institution, or it can be part, along with other courses, of general French syllabi, for example, according to CEFRL levels (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), from a catalogue of courses proposed for a wide audience of the same pedagogical institution. In the situation we are concerned with, it presents the particularity to have resulted from a context common to all five higher education institutions participating in the project: the existence, for a few years, of a growing number of students receiving professional internships financed by the Agence universitaire de la Francophonie or by the Erasmus programme. These students perform practical internships in enterprises from the agricultural and food area, in agricultural exploitations, in agencies involved in the environmental protection or in veterinary offices or clinics, from France, in particular, and the communication skills that are required from them enter in the professional training area.

The needs analysis consists in the identification of the communicative situations in which students are likely to find themselves in the target context during the professional internship, as well as in listing knowledge and linguistic and specialty skills that students should acquire during the course. More specifically, the FSP syllabus designer must answer the following questions: To whom the student will speak in French? in what context? What does he have to say? to write? What work tasks involving the use of French language he will have to meet?

In this case, the analysis was done in several steps: it assumed, firstly, a personal reflection, doubled by a common one, of the teachers involved in designing FSP resources in the agrifood area, during the training organized by the project. The training was conducted between 3rd and 7th of June 2013, at the University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of

Iasi; it was entitled "Designing teaching materials in FSP" and had as trainer Mrs. Julie Stauber, from Université Lyon2, France. The grid filled out by the teachers was divided into five columns: Domains, Locations, Conversation partners, Activities, Speech acts; a separate column was dedicated to "cultural needs".

In the second stage of the analysis, teachers discussed based on the grid elaborated with the students who already did professional internships; this step allowed an identification of the most required areas for this traineeship: dairy processing, bakery and meat processing. The discussion made possible a detailed analysis regarding the general communicative context, the role and status of communication (on vertical/horizontal), the contact dimensions (face to face, group, etc.), the code used (rather written or oral) and the language register.

This step was followed by the direct contact with the professional environment, for the validation or invalidation of the elements already reunited, as well as for their completion.

For a FSP project, the data collection represents the "most specific" step and the "centre of gravity" of the approach (Mangiante, Parpette, 2004: 46). On the one hand, this stage "confirms, supplements, even changes more the needs analysis performed by the course designer" (Mangiante, Parpette, 2004: 46), an analysis that loses its hypothetical feature once attested by the fieldwork. On the other hand, this stage "provides information and speeches on which basis it will be constituted the linguistic training course" (Mangiante, Parpette, 2004: 46). The teacher-designer gets out of his usual context and faces updated speeches in the situations where students will find themselves after they have completed the training; in this way, the designer can definitely identify the needs of his future students (Carras: 2007: 31).

The first function of the data collection is "to inform the teacher-designer about the area he is going to handle, its actors, the specific situations, information and discourses that circulates in that framework" (Mangiante, Parpette, 2004: 47, see also Carras, 2007: 31 and the following).

In our project, the collection of authentic documents was achieved largely through field activity - visits to enterprises, manufacturing processes records, interviews with experts and gathering of specific written documents. For if it is possible to easily find on the Internet or in the specialized literature about dairy products, their manufacturing processes, the equipment from a dairy processing plant, it is more difficult to imagine a cost sheet, a purchase order, a delivery

order, a safety analysis form and so on, or to imagine speeches that occur between actors in the area, such as a technologist, a quality manager, a worker on the manufacturing chain, a cheese maker etc. The familiarity with a branch of activity different from the initial training of the teacher-designer of language course on specific purposes demands from him a high degree of involvement: he will have to move more often; fix meetings; explain the approach and carry out work in collaboration with his interlocutors.

The second function of the stage of data collection refers to its finality: these data will serve, to varying degrees, as supports in the designing of didactic activities. There are two major forms of use of the authentic documents collected:

- in their original form (in particular, written or iconic documents): thus it was done with the forms and the recipes, for the case of the collection from the agricultural and food area and, more specifically, for dairy;
- by data processing in order to adapt them to the level of the public or to training needs (creating a progression, for example) (Mangiante, Parpette, 2004: 52-53)

The work carried out by teachers-designers involved a selection of the documents gathered, because they were in a large volume and often less usable; and then one passed to:

- an adaptation at the level and the purposes of the learners (students in professional internship), by an operation of simplification and by selecting only some aspects to be worked during the French language course for specific purposes for the agri-food area;
- a processing of the resources gathered in order to ensure a required progress of learning;
- an update of certain collected information for the purpose of reflecting the evolution in the area.

A third type of data processing was also used, this one has established itself as an essential aspect for any courses designer who uses an authentic discourse for educational purposes - (re) simulated situation exercise or re-contextualization (Mangiante, Parpette, 2004 : 55). Determined within a specific time and space, the oral discourse does not always imply the verbalization of the contextual information; removed from the original context, these data can hinder the understanding and therefore require an explanation, which our team of teachers has conceived in two forms:

- in the case of an audio document, it was used an introductory phrase like: "Sir ..., you are quality manager in a dairy processing plant and you have the courtesy to explain some requirements of a laboratory approved by the European Community"

- in the case of a video document, it was inserted on the screen a title like "Cheese-making process."

There is also the possibility to design this re-contextualization not by using the resources collected as they are, but by using them as informational basis for the creation of fabricated documents. For reasons of sound quality, complexity or privacy, some recorded speeches are then transcribed, and these transcripts allow the conception of reconstructed dialogues with professional or amateur actors, or their recording and supporting with iconic items such as photos, diagrams, etc.

In the collection of authentic documents necessary for the elaboration of didactic resources for French language for specific purposes for the agricultural and food area, the Internet was a valuable tool, to which the teachers-designers resorted in the cases where they didn't have the possibility to achieve a fieldwork. Thus, the teachers have used video documents showing the jobs from the agricultural and food area, these authentic documents being put at their disposal by francophone organizations responsible for professional training. These movies (of a few minutes, in their form from the elaborated pedagogical documents) have the advantage of offering an overview of the profession, the activities undertaken, the qualities necessary for practicing the profession in question, as well as on their advantages and disadvantages thereof; they also contain suggestive images of that professional environment.

The competencies targeted by the learning units developed include:

- the discovery of the job, of the professional training required
- the presentation of the work situations (manufacturing, equipment maintenance, operations ...)
- the discovery of the European legislation in the field.

The didactic supports put at the student's disposal are:

- Learning sequences, with audio and video transcription of the documents, at the end
- A DVD containing audio and video documents, as well as the key to the exercises.

The organization of a learning sequence.

Each sequence consists of four parts:

- The introduction, which presents the context, cultural references, lexical references;
- The activities, in the order: oral comprehension, written comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, oral or written production;
- The evaluation

▪ The glossary

At the end of the manual there are useful documents: resources for the student (webliography, magazines, online dictionaries, movies, television programmes, etc.), as well as the transcripts for all audio and video documents.

CONCLUSIONS

The five steps of a French for Specific Purposes program that we have presented and exemplified in our work, based on the didactic units of the textbook *Communiquer en FOS. Renforcement du français pour les étudiants* (2014), allow students to actively participate in the learning activities, which are built according to their linguistic needs and communication situations in which they will use the foreign language. In the learning context specific to the five higher education institutions participating in the AUF project mentioned above, the student becomes a full actor of the educational process in French for Specific Purposes for the agrifood industry.

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