

Chapter 17

The Effectiveness of the i²Flex Methodology and the CoI in Addressing Complex Instructional Design Needs in High School Language Classes

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the goal is to describe the effectiveness of the implementation of the i²Flex in two different courses in the past five consecutive academic years in an attempt to meet more effectively the educational needs of the new educational framework. Starting with the description of the i²Flex methodology in a Greek class and in an online French class, the author presents the instructional (re-)design of the Moodle shell to reflect the new teaching methodology, and the need to evaluate this via an appropriate framework. It is obvious that the goal is to share under the umbrella of best practices how meaningful and efficient the i²Flex is in two different educational frames. At the same time, the use of community of inquiry (CoI) is taken in consideration to evaluate this educational process. Finally, the new role of the teacher, face to face and virtually, is observed to prove the progress of the educational environment.

INTRODUCTION

Following my work on the i²Flex methodology and the Community of Inquiry (CoI) published in the first edition of this book (Fyrigou, 2016), I decided to go further and study the use of the same methodology in the Greek class and the French online course, two very different courses with multiple challenges each.

In this enhanced version, the goal was not only to reflect on the i²Flex methodology in the Greek class and the Virtual School French classes but also, within it, to describe how Moodle has been used to support teaching and learning and at the same time to extend my insight into instructional design online from

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curriculum development to course activities and especially elements connected with interactivity (CoI presences). The focus of this educational experience was to incorporate in the frame of the American, International school context. This would allow educators to perceive better the i²Flex methodology in an international learning environment and maybe facilitate those who already work in similar population groups to adapt more easily to this methodology.

The implementation of the i²Flex methodology the past 5 years was used in an attempt to meet the educational needs of the 21st century framework more effectively and at the same time to satisfy scheduling issues for a big population of students.

The instructional (re-)design of my Moodle shell served to reflect the new teaching methodology, and the need to evaluate this methodology via an appropriate framework. I wanted to present both courses and programs and hopefully some valuable data. Finally, the aim was to put under the umbrella of best practices how meaningful and efficient the i²Flex is taking into consideration the new role of the teacher in and out of class and its unique potential for student learning. This is a new approach with a lot more evidence from data collected during these past years.

Greek Class Description

The Greek course is a very big class of 64-70 High School (HS) students with Greek background or advanced language skills in Greek who wish to continue Greek in 11th and 12th grade but do not wish to take an IB Greek course. Emphasis is on strengthening the students' knowledge of the Greek language and culture through systematic practice of the writing and speaking skills. Students meet with me twice per month and they have one online assignment and one online forum per month. The biggest challenge is that we have at least 6 levels and during face-to-face, students meet with me not according to their level but according to their availability. This has to do with scheduling and the counselling office, fact that creates some issues. Of course, students have different assignments and different work to complete before and after the face-to-face periods.

Moodle shells had to be modified and get more flexible and friendly for the teacher and students (Figure 1). At the home page the tabs drive students to different levels and different tools help the teacher to offer an excellent quality of teaching and engage the student in different learning activities.

French Class Description

Regarding the French online course, this is an online French course for learners who have completed at least three years of French. The four skills – reading, writing, listening and speaking – are expanded to a more advanced level. Students review and refine important grammatical structures while learning new vocabulary to communicate in French on a variety of topics. French culture is introduced with every opportunity. This course requires analytical thinking and use of the French language. Themes such as family, racism, civilization, technology, leisure, sports, health and every day's life are discussed. Learning activities and different assignments are completed online based on these themes. The biggest challenge for this course is that because this is an online course, the face-to-face session is through the virtual environment and the teacher's presence is only online. For a language class we all understand how important is the practice of the language, as well as the oral part of the work.

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