

DISTANCE LEARNING TOOLS AT THE SERVICE OF MULTILINGUAL COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: *The Web environment provides its users with a large variety of tools which can play a significant role in both learning and teaching a new language, including all of its components, such as pronunciation, lexical items, and grammatical structures. Certain websites and applications offer a number of opportunities for language teachers (in terms of content creation and implementation), as well as for language learners (to support the individual learning process). The aim of this paper is to analyse and describe selected online tools that can be used in order to enhance multilingual competence among students learning French as their second foreign language after English.*

Keywords: language competence, multilingualism, cross-linguistic influence, new technologies, e-learning

INTRODUCTION

The development of new information and communication technologies has made an impact on practically every sphere of contemporary human activity. Needless to say, it has also influenced the language teaching-learning process in which modern educational technologies (in the broad sense of this term) are becoming more and more widespread. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that this kind of support is likely to be appreciated by all the actors of the didactic process. Both teachers and students are increasingly willing to use the Internet and multimedia devices at various stages of language training, as well as to apply them when trying to accomplish different linguistic and communicational goals. These may include, among others, the improvement of language skills affected by context- or learner-dependent problems during the acquisition of a new language system. In practice, the language system in question can be the learner's first or subsequent foreign language, which (as it has been demonstrated by research revolving around multilingualism) may entail certain more or less apparent differences in acquisition. The purpose of this paper is to explore the possible use of new technologies in order to overcome specific difficulties faced by second/subsequent

language learners (or, in other words, to develop their multilingual competence), with a particular focus on the process of teaching-learning French as a third language after English in the academic context. To avoid confusion, in the following sections the term *third language* (L3) will be used in reference to the language acquired after the native language (L1) and the first foreign language (L2).

1. THE QUESTION OF MULTILINGUALISM IN THE CONTEXT OF RESEARCH ON FOREIGN LANGUAGE DIDACTICS

1.1 Multilingualism and multiculturalism

Nowadays, the ability to communicate in foreign languages is one of the most fundamental skills expected from prospective employees. What is more, employers tend to *hunt for* candidates who are fluent not in one, but in at least two foreign languages. In addition, certain geopolitical factors (such as, for example, open borders and favourable immigration policy undertaken so far by a number of governments) have fostered different kinds of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural contacts that have taken place over the last few decades. As a consequence, multilingualism has become a clear desideratum for the contemporary language policy promoted at the institutional level by the Council of Europe or, for instance, by the authors of the *Common European Framework of reference for language learning, teaching and assessment*. As it is observed by Zygierewicz, the members of the European Commission recognise multilingualism as one of the most significant European values, on the one hand defined as “the knowledge of a number of languages”, and on the other as “the co-existence of different language communities in a given area” (2010:5). However, Cenoz and Gorter (2013, cited by Pawlak, 2016) note that the phenomenon of multilingualism can be understood in several different ways, depending on three major factors: its individual and social dimensions, the number of languages known or taught to a given person, and the level of proficiency in these.

Multilingualism and multiculturalism (mutually complete and practically inseparable) constitute a major area of interest within the field of modern language didactics, and, as a result, they are frequently described and analysed from various points of view: linguistic, psychological, sociocultural, and even neurobiological (cf. Mackiewicz, 2005; Widła, 2007; Chłopek, 2011). The following part of this paper moves on to address the phenomenon in question in the context of cross-linguistic influence.

1.2 Cross-linguistic influence in third/subsequent language learning/teaching

When one takes into account its specific and multidimensional nature, the development of multilingual competence (or linguistic multicompetence) is without a shade of doubt one of the most striking challenges faced by language didactics. It cannot be denied that the process of learning a third/subsequent language differs

from the acquisition of a first foreign language (L2). Prior linguistic knowledge has a significant impact on the acquisition and development of further language systems. In the subject literature, this phenomenon is most frequently referred to as cross-linguistic influence or language transfer, even though certain specialists do not claim these terms to be perfect synonyms, the first one being considered as hyperonymous to the other (cf. Chłopek, 2011). However, terminological discrepancies (interesting as they may seem) are beyond the scope of this paper, in which for reasons of clarity both terms will be used interchangeably.

From a theoretical point of view, cross-linguistic influence can be defined as any kind of “interaction between (at least) one language (interlanguage) and any other language (interlanguage)” which, depending on the speaker’s intention or the lack of it, may be conscious or unconscious (unintentional; Chłopek, 2011:141).

Moreover, depending on the direction of the influence, it is possible to distinguish proactive transfer (from previously acquired languages to those being acquired at the moment) and retroactive transfer (the opposite situation, cf. Komorowska, 1980).

Cross-linguistic influence can be both positive and negative in nature. It is said to be positive when previously mastered language skills facilitate the acquisition of a new language system, and negative – when they constitute some kind of obstacle to the successful acquisition of further language skills (cf. Cuq, 2003). It has to be stressed that there is a growing body of literature devoted to negative transfer, which, since the apparition of contrastive studies, has been referred to as interference (cf. Widła, 1999).

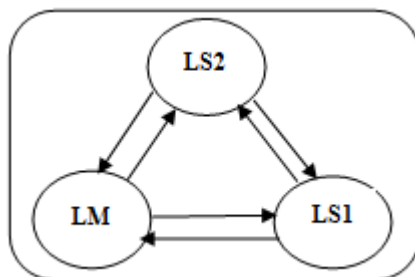


Figure 1. Possible interlingual influences in a trilingual person’s mind. The scheme does not take into account the fact that certain languages could have been acquired simultaneously.

Source: own work based on Chłopek, 2011.

Both kinds of language transfer (positive and negative) can be interlingual (when two or more language systems interact with one another), but also intralingual (when transfer appears within a single language system; Arabski, 2007). Numerous observations have indicated that the latter case is not as rare as it may seem, especially in the context of learning a new language, when newly acquired

rules are constantly influenced not only by previously learnt languages, but also by certain rules of the very language (interlanguage) whose acquisition is in progress (cf. Póltorak, 2015).

It is also worth mentioning that the nature of cross-linguistic influence can be determined by a whole variety of factors, including formal/genetic relationship between given languages, the level of proficiency in them, their level of activation, their status, as well as the methods, context and order of acquisition.

To conclude, taking into consideration the previously mentioned elements, which are likely to have a strong impact the nature of cross-linguistic influence, the process of learning a third/subsequent language is highly individualised. Particularly in the initial phase it can (but does not have to) be reflected in the speed of acquisition, as well as in the progress of its particular stages. This may require the use of additional, context-adapted exercises, enabling the learner to practise new structures and to concentrate on the most problematic communicational and linguistic units at different levels of language competence. Standard in-class sessions do not always facilitate the task because of various organisational and curricular constraints. This is why the widely understood e-learning tools, if properly selected and adapted, are likely to constitute a possible solution to certain problems generated by this kind of obstacles.

2. THE USE OF DISTANCE LEARNING TOOLS IN THE PROCESS OF THIRD LANGUAGE TEACHING/LEARNING

2.1 Theoretical framework

Since the apparition of the first computer applications and Skinner's teaching machines, new technologies have been systematically evolving and gradually broadening the repertoire of proposed language learning-teaching methods and techniques. At present, it can be stated that the Internet and multimedia devices constitute significant elements of the didactic process, during which they may serve multiple functions (see for example Mangenot, Louveau, 2006; Póltorak, 2008; Ollivier, Puren, 2011). What is more, the immense variety of tools available provides teachers and learners with practically unlimited possibilities of application in language training, offering them both ready-made solutions (such as series of interactive exercises) and toolkits allowing each user to create their own multimedia didactic content (e.g. self-prepared e-learning courses and modules).

In the lines that follow, we shall examine the possible use of new technologies in the process of third language learning-teaching. The context of learning-teaching French as a third/subsequent language after English will act as a point of reference for our analysis. The emphasis will be put on selected online applications, taking into account their accessibility, multifunctionality, diversity and adaptability to various contexts. Our purpose is to demonstrate how certain distance learning tools could be employed in order to consolidate newly acquired language structures, as

well as to eliminate certain difficulties that are likely to appear at the initial stages of learning French.

3. A SURVEY OF SELECTED DISTANCE LEARNING TOOLS FOR FRENCH TEACHERS AND LEARNERS

3.1 Pronunciation

3.1.1 FrenchPod101.com

FrenchPod101.com is a distance learning course for English-speaking French learners at all levels. After having completed the registration process, the user chooses one of the four levels available: absolute beginner, beginner, intermediate or advanced. Although the toolset is based on paid services, it offers a free seven-day trial in order to enable the learner to compare different learning plans and choose the one that they consider the most appropriate. Among the large variety of didactic materials (including culture classes, vocabulary lessons, and grammar notes) it includes a well-developed introductory part with a section entirely devoted to the most pertinent aspects of French pronunciation: vowels, consonants, accent, silent letters and final letters, liaisons, and French rhythm.

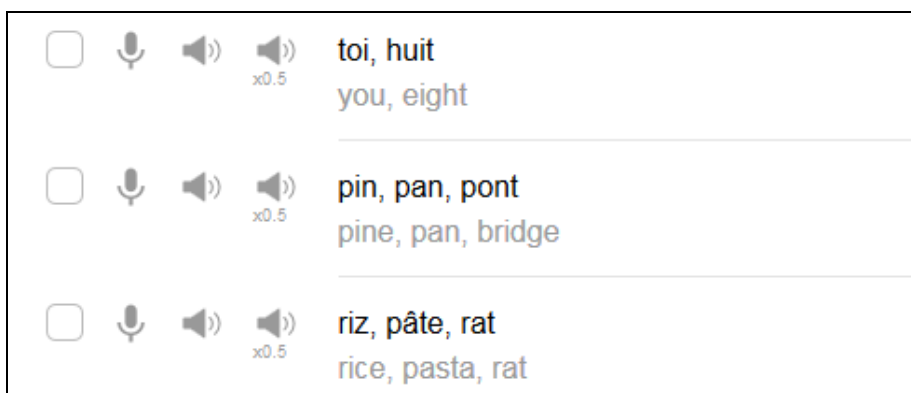


Figure 2. Phonological contrasts with recordings and English translations. The microphone icon allows the user to record their voice.

Source: <https://www.frenchpod101.com/2010/11/22/pronunciation-1-french-vowels/>

Each sub-section contains an audio lesson recorded by an English speaker and a native French speaker who, in form of a dialogue, describe the most important grammatical notions, including numerous comparisons between French and English pronunciation (taking into account the fact that the course is addresses to English-speaking learners). Lessons include phonological contrasts which may be considered difficult by English speakers, accompanied by recordings that can be played at a lower speed. The site also offers a voice recording tool allowing the user to compare their pronunciation to this of a native French speaker. Along with

listening to the podcast, the learner can read a full lesson transcript. Taking into consideration the fact that both English and French phonological systems are more vowel-dominated than the Polish one, the pronunciation section can also be found useful by Polish native speakers who, having already mastered English, are learning French as their third language. The tool can be recommended by teachers in order to motivate their students to successful error correction and self-assessment in terms of French pronunciation. Moreover, the difficulties highlighted by the authors of the course could (and even should) be emphasised when teaching French after English, as they may underlie numerous pronunciation mistakes stemming from cross-linguistic influence between the second and the third language.

3.1.2 French Spanish Online: Learn French with Pascal

Learn French with Pascal is a free-of-charge series of distance learning courses, available in several languages (including English) addressed mainly to beginners. It contains two sections devoted to pronunciation: *Basic French with Recorder* and *Pronunciation Tips*. The first one contains a number of rudimentary French lexical elements (such as greetings and numbers). They are pronounced by a native speaker, and their use is explained by means of multimedia presentations. Like in the case of the previously described tool, the learner can record their voice, then play it and compare it to the professional recording. The presentations include short notes comparing English and French pronunciation of selected items. The content, addressed mainly to absolute beginners, is highly interactive and seems reasonable to be used in the individual learning process.

Vocabulary

Bonjour

Hello
Good Morning
Good Afternoon

Compare your Voice

Record Stop / Play

Bonjour

Next >>

Tip
Bonjour = Bon (Good) + Jour (Day)
Pay attention to the letter J in French, JOUR is not said like DJOUR, the letter J is soft in French
Listen carefully to the audio and repeat the word several times.

Figure 3. French for Beginners – basic words and pronunciation notes.

Source: <https://www.frenchspanishonline.com/learn/hello-in-french.html>

The part called *Pronunciation Tips* is divided into thematic sections devoted to the pronunciation of selected grammatical and lexical items. Each lesson is presented in English by a native French speaker (Pascal, the author of the course) in a

YouTube video embedded into the website and accompanied by notes, emphasising the most important rules and aspects to be remembered. The videos focus on some more particular aspects of French pronunciation, such as the pronunciation of the future tense forms (*future simple*), possessives and the *liaison*. This allows the learner to avoid certain mistakes whose source may lie in the influence of the English language, which is often very difficult to notice. Frequent mistakes are enumerated and described. Moreover, the author also concentrates on everyday speech, comparing the neat, formal pronunciation to more current forms used when speaking faster. This aspect, although incredibly important to successful communication, tends to be neglected during standard in-class lessons.



Figure 4. Pronunciation tips concerning everyday speech in French.

Source:

<https://www.frenchspanishonline.com/magazine/pronunciation-tips-in-french-future-tense/>

3.2 Vocabulary and phrases

3.2.1 Memrise

Among the websites and learning platforms described in this paper, *Memrise* seems to be the most multidimensional and developed one, from the point of view of both the teacher and the learner. This is why the present section is slightly more extensive than those devoted to other distance learning tools analysed here. As the authors of the website claim it, *Memrise* puts into practice the concept of *effortless learning* based on three ingredients: *science*, *fun* and *community*. Not only is it a language teaching/learning platform, but it also offers a huge variety of courses referring to other domains such as History and Geography, Mathematics and Science, Business and Finance, or even Medicine and Healthcare. It is available as a browser-based tool, but also as a mobile application for Android and iOS. Although it can be used to develop basically all sub-competences of a foreign language, in our opinion its efficacy is at its best when it comes to lexical training. The very name of the tool refers to *mems*, understood as anything that can help to engrave a given item in the learner's long-term memory. This is why the method

employs interactive flashcards accompanied (among others) by photos, videos, or example sentences. The site is available in both free and premium versions, and can be used by learners as well as by teachers (enabling them to create and manage didactic content). Various courses elaborated by the authors of the platform and community members can be accessed by all the users, which means that everyone can create a course depending on their needs. Moreover, the site is available in a number of languages, which may be particularly useful in the process of language learning and teaching.

When accessing the learner's mode, the user selects the language they speak (which means: the language in which they will study) and the language they would like to learn. After completing this step, it is possible to browse among courses labelled either with the level of proficiency (for example: A1, beginner) or with the theme, which is a relatively good solution when it comes to vocabulary, hence allowing the user to learn or master lexical items belonging to a given field. Among the courses available on the platform one can find content referring to English-French false friends (words having the same or similar form in both languages, but different in meaning). This aspect is notably significant in teaching French after English, as these two language systems share a number of lexical units of this type (cf. Widła 2007, Serwotka 2016).

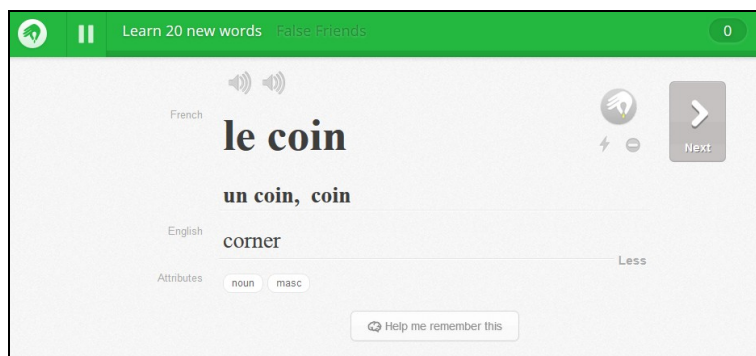


Figure 5. The Memrise learning mode: the word *coin* has a different meaning (as well as pronunciation) in English and in French.

Source: <https://www.memrise.com/course/1436807/false-friends/>

Each course contains a preview of all its components. At this step, the user can pick the items they would like to ignore during the learning process, hence skipping the words with which they are already familiar. As the learners obtain gratification points in the learning process, it is also possible to view the so-called *leaderboard* (a list of the users who scored the most points in a given course), which can be considered an additional motivating component. In the premium mode (PRO version), one can mark selected words as difficult, which means that they will receive particular attention during the lesson. In the settings part, the user is allowed to choose the number of words they would like to study in a single

learning session (5, 10, 15, 20), or the number of words to master during a revising session (5, 10, 25, 50, 100).

In the learning mode, a given word is displayed in the target language and accompanied by its equivalent and/or definition in the source language (the language of the course). In most cases, the user hears a recording with the correct pronunciation, but it is also possible to mute the audio if desired. The option *help me remember this* permits the user to choose a given *mem* or to create one (be it an image, an example sentence, a pun, or a combination of these). If added by the author of the course, certain attributes of a given word, such as grammatical category (noun, verb, adjective etc.) or gender are distributed.



Figure 6. A *mem* referring to the word *coin*.

Source: <https://www.memrise.com/course/1436807/false-friends/>

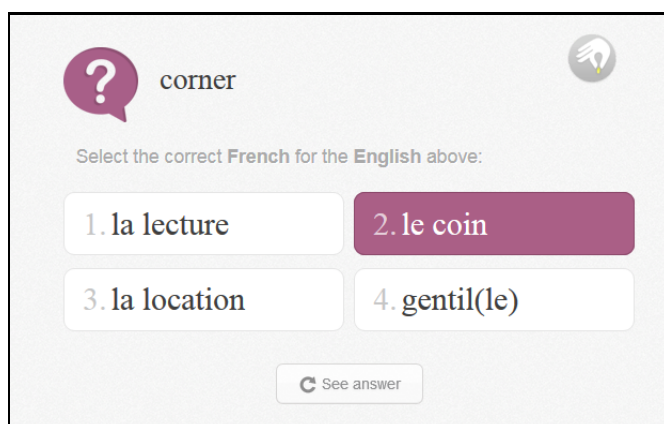


Figure 7. Memrise: testing.

Source: <https://www.memrise.com/course/1436807/false-friends/>

The knowledge acquired during the learning session is later tested in both configurations (from the source language to the target language and the other way round). When the user chooses or types the appropriate meaning of an item, they receive a specific number of points. When the answer is incorrect, the word and the previously selected *mem* are displayed once again. The session can be paused at any time. The acquisition of a given item is visualised in the process of planting a flower. When the flower is fully grown, the word is memorised and will then have to be watered (revised). The intervals between revision sessions of given items become longer and longer depending on the learner's progress. This system allows the words to be transferred from short-term to long-term memory.

As it has already been suggested, *Memrise* proposes also a set of tools that can be used by language teachers. As the creator of a course chooses all the parameters by themselves, it is possible to adjust the didactic content to a specific learning/teaching context, such as a particular combination of languages known or taught to the learner. This is why this tool is likely to make a valuable contribution when it comes to (for instance) teaching French as a third language after English. In the course edition mode, the user can add words in a selected order and divide them into a given number of levels. Items can be added manually or selected from proposed databases. Moreover, it is possible to include alternative versions of words, which may reveal itself useful in teaching English and French, as it allows to include a noun with a definite/indefinite article, as well as to accept an answer without any article. The edition mode allows cooperation between teachers, for it is possible to add one or more contributor(s) to the course, who will later be able to modify the content. In the context of learning French, it enables various teachers to take into consideration specific lexical difficulties (which may result from cross-linguistic influence) that they have observed in their students.

3.2.2 Internet Polyglot

Internet Polyglot is another website (available also for Android and iOS) offering a number of possibilities for language students, as well as for teachers. Like *Memrise*, it is based on common memorising techniques and its primary objective is to help learners remember new vocabulary in a selected language. The user can chose a particular vocabulary theme or themes (among the courses created by the community) or create their own course. All words are accompanied by speech synthesiser recordings, demonstrating their pronunciation, and pictures referring to their meaning. There are five learning modes referred to as games: *Picture Game*, *Guessing Game*, *Typing Game*, *Matching Game* and *Word Search*. Unlike in the case of *Memrise*, only one learning mode can be applied during a single studying session. The authors have put emphasis on the social component of learning: it is possible to add other users as friends and to communicate with them via messages.

In the *Picture Game*, the user can see a word in the target language, and a number of pictures accompanied by their equivalents in the source language (swapping words and translation is also possible). The task consists in selecting the picture

referring to the meaning of the word displayed. All the correct and incorrect answers are counted, but the scoring system is not as developed as in the case of the tools offered by *Memrise*. When the answer is wrong, the user has to try again and choose the right meaning of the item. The *Guessing Game* is based on a very similar pattern. However, in this case the user does not select a picture, but only the meaning of a given word/expression. After choosing the correct answer, the pronunciation recording is played, which may be found useful by student preferring the auditory learning style to the visual one. In the *Typing Game*, the meaning of a word has to be written by the learner. In case of difficulties, it is possible to show first letters of the equivalent required. The *Matching Game* requires ordering a set of vocabulary items so that they are placed next to their translations. Finally, in the *Word Search* mode the user is to find indicated words within a grid of scattered letters. In all cases, incorrect items can be posted to the website administrator.



Figure 8. Internet Polyglot: Picture Game.

Source: https://www.internetpolyglot.com/picture_game

As it has already been mentioned, it is also possible to create one's own vocabulary sections (courses). This content-creating mode can be employed by teachers willing to provide their students with well-adapted learning supports enabling them to revise or to become familiar with selected materials. After choosing the language configuration and the level, the user creates a glossary of terms which are later displayed in selected games. Unfortunately, the website is not free from drawbacks: for the time being it is not possible to upload photos (and hence, to create picture games), and to add recordings, which means that all the options offered by the authors are only available in case of already existing lessons. The website interface is also less intuitive in use than the one available on *Memrise*.

3.2.3 Learnalanguage.com

Like *Internet Polyglot*, the *Learnalanguage.com* toolset uses a gaming mode in order to teach words and phrases in a selected language. However, it is not possible to choose a desired language combination: the source language is always English, as the website is addressed to Anglophones. Nevertheless, as it has previously been suggested, using English in the French teaching process can constitute a valuable

point of reference for language learners, thus enabling them to avoid fossilization resulting from the *foreign language effect*, whereby the influence of a previously acquired foreign language can be particularly strong. The learner can choose between three language games: *Learning Lounge*, *Memory Machine* and *Lingo Dingo*.

The *Learning Lounge* is a tool aiming at familiarising the learner with lexical items from a selected category, their meaning in English and appropriate pronunciation in the target language. It is possible to browse between a number of categories addressed to beginners (e.g. body parts, colours) and more advanced learners (e.g. car parts, government). Each vocabulary section includes an English-French glossary. Selected items are displayed in an interactive presentation serving as a set of flashcards accompanied by recordings and animated pictures. The equivalent in the target language can be shown or hidden depending on the user's preferences. What is important in the context of learning-teaching French after English, the pronunciation of particular words in both languages can be compared, which may be useful in case of items sharing the same graphic form in English and in French.



Figure 9. Learnalanguage.com: Learning Lounge.

Source: <http://www.learnalanguage.com/learn-french/french-words/furniture.php>

As the very name suggests, the *Memory Machine* is supposed to help learners memorise previously learnt words. In the game a word in English is displayed and accompanied by four different translation propositions in the target language, as well as by an animation. The task consists in choosing the right equivalent. As in most games, the points are scored, which may enhance the learner's motivation.

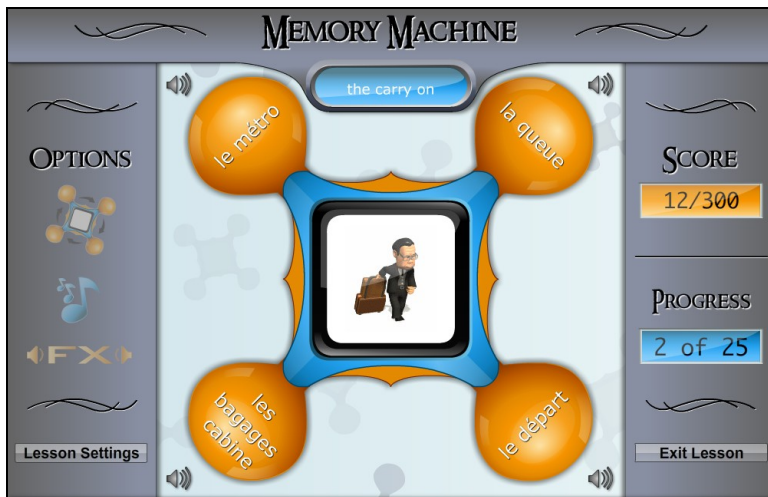


Figure 10. Learnalanguage.com: Memory Machine.

Source: <http://www.learnalanguage.com/learn-french/french-words/travel.php>



Figure 11. Learnalanguage.com: Lingo Dingo.

<http://www.learnalanguage.com/learn-french/french-words/military.php>

The last one of the three, *Lingo Dingo*, bears a resemblance to an arcade game. The user chooses the level of difficulty: *easy*, *difficult*, *crazy* or *impossible*. Then, one or more words in English are displayed. The learner has to type their target

language equivalents before they reach the top of the screen. Missed and correctly typed words are counted and contribute to the final score.

3.3 Grammar and spelling

3.3.1 Word Reference Forum

The contact with native speakers of a given language is immensely important when it comes to assessing the correctness of a language form. What is more, certain grammatical constructions, while seeming perfectly correct at a first glance, may provoke confusion or sound unnatural (or *less idiomatic*). This is why the *Word Reference Forum* constitutes a valuable source of information for language teachers, learners and translators-to-be. The platform is divided into specific language combinations (such as French-English, Spanish-English) and subcategories (for example vocabulary, grammar, specialised terminology). Users can view the questions that have already been asked, or submit their own questions in order to obtain comments/answers from native speakers of a selected language. In the *French and English Grammar* section one can find numerous comparisons between the two language systems in terms of both similarities and differences. The correctness of statements and expressions is evaluated by native speakers. The forum also contains links to various other grammatical resources which may be found useful by learners.

3.3.2 Banque de dépannage linguistique

Banque de dépannage linguistique (Linguistic Troubleshooting Bank) is a website in French and a database provided by the Quebec Board of the French Language (*Office québécois de la langue française, OQLF*) whose objective is to eliminate the most frequent and apparent grammatical, spelling, and lexical mistakes committed in French, and particularly those resulting from the *contamination* caused by the influence of the English language (this problem is especially noticeable in Quebec taking into account the geographic and sociocultural conditions of this Canadian region). However, this didactic support is addressed to all speakers and learners of French eager to improve their language skills, as well as to ensure grammatical correctness of their (both spoken and written) statements. It is possible to view the articles divided into grammatical categories, displayed in alphabetical order, and also to search for specific questions and items. From our perspective, one of the most interesting and advantageous categories is the one referring to Anglicisms (*les anglicismes*) subdivided into a number of thematic sections: Integral Anglicisms, Hybrids, Semantic Anglicisms, Syntactic Anglicisms, Morphological Anglicisms, and Phraseological Anglicisms. The articles refer to the most frequent interferences caused by the influence of the English language. The content may be found useful by learners (who can find answers to troubling questions about similarities and/or differences between the two language systems) and teachers, for whom the website may serve as a base to create grammatical exercises for students mastering French after English, as it puts emphasis on both conspicuous and less apparent difficulties in this language

configuration. The website enumerates the most frequent mistakes and provides the users with correct versions of given statements.

Avec

La préposition *avec* peut indiquer différents rapports : l'accompagnement, le moyen, la manière, etc.

Exemples :

- Je suis allée voir ce spectacle **avec** ma sœur.
- On fait des miracles **avec** un bon outil.
- Il s'en est sorti **avec** brio.
- Nous sommes arrivés **avec** le soleil.
- **Avec** le temps, on s'habitue à tout.

On utilise parfois à tort *avec* dans certaines expressions directement calquées de l'anglais, alors que le français exigerait une autre préposition : ainsi *to be with (a society)*, *to be satisfied with* ou *to help somebody with*, entre autres, donnent lieu à des tournures fautives que l'on corrigera en s'inspirant des exemples suivants.

Exemples fautifs :

- Jean travaille **avec** la même société depuis vingt ans.
- Êtes-vous satisfait **avec** ce produit?
- Heureusement qu'elle m'a aidé **avec** mes devoirs, je n'aurais rien compris!

On écrira plutôt, par exemple :

- Jean travaille **pour** la même société depuis vingt ans.
- Êtes-vous satisfait **de** ce produit?
- Heureusement qu'elle m'a aidé **à faire** mes devoirs, je n'aurais rien compris!

Figure 12. Banque de dépannage linguistique: a section devoted to the word “avec” (“with”), including the most frequent calques from English.

Source: http://bdl.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/bdl/gabarit_bdl.asp?id=2528

3.3.3 Lyricstraining

The Web-environment provides its users with certain tools enabling them to practise spelling in a selected foreign language. It is worth mentioning that the spelling aspect is particularly challenging in learning French after English, taking into consideration the differences between the phonic and graphic level in the two languages, together with a huge number of cognates (words of common origin). *Lyricstraining* is an unusual solution for teachers and students, allowing them to leave behind traditional dictations and to teach/master spelling and word-recognition skills in a more ludic way. It is available in both teacher and student mode.

In the student mode, the user chooses a YouTube video with a song belonging to a particular genre in the target language, whose lyrics will later serve as a kind of dictation. There are four levels of difficulty: beginner, intermediate, advanced or expert. The number of blank spaces in the song depends on the level selected (at

the expert level, the learner has to type all the lyrics of a particular song while listening to it). Points are counted in order to display the final score at the end of the song. When the user does not manage to type a word or an expression correctly, the problematic extract is played once again. The website has also the function referred to as *karaoke*, allowing its users to practise pronunciation.

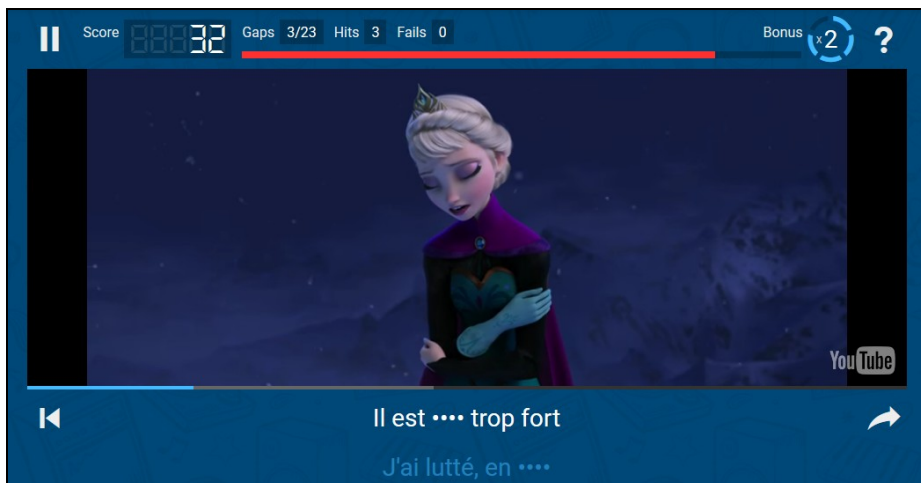


Figure 13. Lyricstraining: the learner mode.

Source: <https://lyricstraining.com/fr/play/anais-delva/liberee-delivree/H5ofqYN195>

The tool can also be taken advantage of by teachers, enabling them to create their own exercises. It is possible to add a song with a music video, or to choose one of the numerous songs already added to the website. Next, the user can select words to be filled, listen to particular extracts of a given song several times, adjust input modes (*write* or *choice*) and preview the exercise.

CONCLUSION

As it has already been suggested, the development of new technologies, particularly in the field of the Internet, has opened a whole new horizon for language learners at teachers. The functionalities offered by numerous websites and applications can be employed in order to properly adapt didactic materials to the context, to specific language configurations, as well as to the learners' needs/preferences, which is of a particular importance when it comes to the acquisition of a third/subsequent foreign language, as this process is conditioned by a number of both context- and individual-dependent variables. The immense diversity of distance learning tools offered by the World Wide Web makes it possible to refer to multiple learning styles. Therefore, users are able to find and/or create exercises and multimedia lessons putting emphasis on practically all the constituents of a selected language system, including pronunciation, lexis,

grammar, and spelling; and taking into consideration all kinds of individual didactic and linguistic needs. Moreover, the form of online didactic supports, frequently interactive and diversified, is likely to enhance the motivation component, immensely significant to the process of acquiring a new (subsequent) language system (cf. Chłopek, 2011). Finally, multiple functionalities offered by the above-mentioned websites refer to various learning preferences: they enable the students to revise the content in given intervals (e.g. Memrise), they join together learning and the ludic component (e.g. Learnalanguage.com, Lyricstraining), and they allow the learners to verify linguistic information (Banque de dépannage linguistique), as well as to communicate with native speakers of a selected language (e.g. Word Reference Forum). All of these aspects may have an immense impact on the effectiveness of both teaching and learning a second/subsequent language.

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