

Case study 3: The impact of the media on creating quality in language teaching and training

Michel Boiron, CAVILAM, France

Summary of the case study

Through its co-operation with the media (TV5MONDE, RFI, etc), CAVILAM, a centre for French studies based in Vichy (France), can be seen as a centre of reference in the area of innovative teaching. It is implementing working procedures that include all staff members and that also contribute to proposals for learning and education tools around the world.

Description of context

CAVILAM (Centre d'Approches vivantes des Langues et des Médias) was set up in 1964 by the University of Clermont-Ferrand and the town of Vichy. Today, it has three main aims: to teach languages and in particular French as a foreign language (3 000 students a year from more than 110 countries); to train French teachers (850 teachers a year); and, finally, applied teaching research, with the creation of teaching materials intended for use all over the world.

What we needed to do and why we did it

Since its establishment, CAVILAM has gained an international reputation in the area of innovative teaching. This reputation is founded on the constant involvement of teachers in innovative projects and in publication and co-operation projects with prestigious bodies, particularly in the media. It has carried out many projects in co-operation with Radio France, France Inter, TV5MONDE and RFI (Radio France Internationale). Co-operation with the media allows the organisation to concentrate on teaching that focuses on language as a current and up-to-date communication method.

Students at CAVILAM expect the highest quality and for teaching to be in line with the most recent research. Innovation is by definition continuous; it never stops. It is a constant preoccupation; a state of mind.

Moreover, the institution's identity resonates with this brand image: CAVILAM specialises in using media. It is therefore a given that the institute will continue in this vein.

Main purpose (what we wanted to achieve)

The permanent aim of CAVILAM is to position itself as a centre of reference in the area of innovative teaching of French as a foreign language, and as one of the best education training centres for teachers.

In addition, CAVILAM is heavily committed to making tools available to teachers and pupils around the world, which are accessible and easy to use in order to encourage learning and to lead to intercultural reflections.

Action taken (stages and procedures)

An example of a recent project is the interactive multimedia project carried out together with TV5MONDE: "7 jours sur la planète". CAVILAM has been working with TV5MONDE since 1996 to develop a teaching strategy entitled "Apprendre et enseigner avec TV5MONDE". The aim of this activity is to facilitate the use of televisual documents in the teaching of French as a foreign language. It consists, on the one hand, of providing teaching content to the TV5 site (www.tv5.org) and, on the other, of training teachers in different places around the world. Bit by bit, it has involved more and more of the CAVILAM teaching team members.

In 2004 and 2005, in the framework of "7 jours sur la planète", and in co-operation with the international channel TV5MONDE and the Alliance française in Brussels, we developed an online multimedia tool concept aimed at self-learning, face-to-face teaching, and the continuous development of teachers.

The results are available to read and use at: www.tv5.org/enseignants.

The concept includes:

- a weekly twenty-six minute-long television news programme shown on Saturday mornings on TV5MONDE. This programme discusses the main news items of the week. It is available online from Friday evening;

- a complete system of three sequences a week consisting of:
 - six self-correcting online exercises corresponding to three levels of the CEFR: A2, B1 and B2;
 - three pupil worksheets which can be used in class;
 - three teacher sheets which contain a teaching scenario, suggestions for correcting pupil exercises, and hints on teacher self-teaching for each level;
- a transcription of what is said in the document;
- general teaching forms in order to learn how to use the successive broadcasts of the television news: sporting achievements or biography, for example.

The news and the exercises are archived for two weeks before being replaced by the latest news.

Organisation

CAVILAM works alternately with the Alliance française in Brussels.

On Monday there is no material; by Friday evening, just before midnight, everything is online and available to be used for learning.

A team of five teachers works for about sixty hours to produce news exercises. The team is led by a teacher acting as project manager. The editors change regularly so that as many teachers as possible can be included in the “adventure”.

Examples of other projects

- Creation of a French course based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 in co-operation with Radio France Internationale and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2005).
- Creation of a teaching companion for a DVD of “choreographic postcards” made up of pairs of dancers from different cultures in the context of the Francoffonies festival (2006).

- Creation of a teaching booklet based on a text by Léopold Sédar Senghor in co-operation with the International Organisation of La Francophonie and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2006).
- Creation of two teaching companions in the form of short films on DVD in co-operation with the French Short Film Agency and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2006-07).
- Creation of a compilation of contemporary French songs and a teaching booklet in co-operation with the French Music Export Office in London and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2007).

Main outcomes

1. These projects ensure the institution is internationally renowned in its field.
2. This work with the media puts CAVILAM teachers in a project situation, and therefore in a position to develop and progress at a personal level. As each project has a large amount of added value, taking part in them has many benefits for each participant.
3. All staff members identify strongly with the institution because of the pride associated with the projects that have been carried out. Consequently, this reinforces the personal implications for the success of the daily workings of the association as well as for the well-being of the trainees.
4. Each year, new teaching products that are both innovative and original are made available to teachers and students of French: CDs, educational DVDs, online teaching support, etc.

Main conclusion(s)

CAVILAM considers it absolutely necessary, in the interests of students as well as its own smooth operation, to launch innovative teaching projects on a regular basis. This mainly involves producing teaching materials intended for use around the world. This activity enhances its reputation and makes a significant contribution to the quality of the teaching carried out by its team. It also helps improve staff morale and generates a positive atmosphere within the association as it looks to the future.

This enables the entire team to feel involved in a collective project which is participating in the success of the institution.

In some ways, CAVILAM is trying to succeed on two fronts: firstly, to create economic activity that provides employment to a team of more than 70 people. Secondly, to give form to educational beliefs based on sharing and motivation in learning by making materials available that can be used by both students and teachers of French.

Our sites

- www.cavilam.com, the institute's site
- www.leplaisirdapprendre, the teaching site for teachers of French
- www.cavilam.net, the student news site