



Bridging Educational Emergency to Digital Pedagogies

Proceedings of the **BRIDGES**
Symposium, Vipava, Slovenia,
September 2022

Editors

Maka Eradze
Anja Poljanar
Manuel León Urrutia
Nic Fair

Ayse Saliha Sunar
Donatella Solda
Andrea Tinterri
Anna Dipace



Program Committee:

Maka Eradze, University of Foggia, Italy

Manuel Leon Urrutia, Southampton University, UK

Nic Fair, Southampton University, UK

Ayse Saliha Sunar, Bitlis Eren University, Turkey

Andrea Tinterri, University of Foggia, Italy

Anna Dipace, University of Foggia, Italy

Donatella Solda, Wonderful Education, Italy

Organizing committee:

Mitja Jermol, UNESCO Chair on Open Technologies
for Open Educational Resources and Open Learning
at Jožef Stefan Institute, Slovenia

Pablo Castillo, Octaedro Editorial, Spain

Tanja Urbančič, Dean of School of Engineering and
Management, University of Nova Gorica, Slovenia

Anja Polajnar, Jožef Stefan Institute, Slovenia

Tijana Ilić, Univeristy of Nova Gorica, Slovenia

Monika Kropelj, Jožef Stefan Institute, Slovenia

Špela Sitar, Jožef Stefan Institute, Slovenia

Kim Sevšek, Jožef Stefan Institute, Slovenia

Matiija Ovsenek, Jožef Stefan Institute, Slovenia

Franc Dolenc, MiTeam, Slovenia

Bridging Educational Emergency to Digital Pedagogies

Proceedings of the **BRIDGES**
Symposium, Vipava, Slovenia,
September 2022

Editors

Maka Eradze
Anja Poljanar
Manuel León Urrutia
Nic Fair

Ayse Saliha Sunar
Donatella Solda
Andrea Tinterri
Anna Dipace



Octaedro 
Editorial

Title: *Bridging Educational Emergency to Digital Pedagogies. Proceedings of the BRIDGES Symposium, Vipava, Slovenia, September 2022*

First published: june 2023

© Maka Eradze, Anja Poljanar, Manuel León Urrutia, Nic Fair, Ayse Saliha Sunar, Donatella Solda, Andrea Tinterri, Anna Dipace (eds.)

© Ediciones OCTAEDRO, S.L.
C/ Bailén, 5 – 08010 Barcelona
Tel.: 93 246 40 02
octaedro@octaedro.com
www.octaedro.com

Rights: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

ISBN: 978-84-19690-98-2

Cover designed and typeset by Ediciones Octaedro

Open Access



Behind the screen:

Collaborative development of
an online theater course

NATASHA MARIA GOMES¹  , AJITA DESHMUKH²  

¹Goa University, Goa, India

²MIT-ADT University, Pune, India

Abstract. This case study outlines the development and adaptation of a skill-based theater course offered in the online mode during the academic year 21-22 to undergraduate students pursuing Bachelors in foreign languages at Goa University, India. The study highlights the presence of two distinct phases in collaborative course design. These phases when carried out remotely were characterized by synchronous and asynchronous collaboration techniques that the instructors used while designing and developing the course. Similarly, collaboration was employed by the students while brainstorming, practicing, and rehearsing for the final class performance. It was observed that the processes followed by the course designers were organic but similar to Design-Thinking cycles and instructional design models. The results of the case study bring to the fore the use of multilingualism in fostering the inclusion of students, lowering the attrition rate and increasing student participation in the course.

Keywords: Experience, online course design.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns have had a profound impact on all aspects of life, including the university education system. In India, emergency remote teaching was initiated within three weeks of the first lockdown to ensure that learning did not come to a

halt. Educators used a variety of platforms and teaching strategies in the online mode during this unprecedented situation.

2. Context of the Study and Literature Review

This case study focuses on the development and adaptation of a skill-based theatre course 'Language on Stage' offered in an online mode in Semester 1 of the academic year 2021-2022 to students (n=13) pursuing Bachelors in either French or Portuguese in regular mode at Goa University, India. The course aimed to improve language fluency, communication skills, and creative expression through the conceptualization and staging of a play. Additionally, the course was designed to provide students with an opportunity to connect with peers, express their emotions, and receive support during the pandemic.

The main challenge in adapting the course was to design it to meet the demands and constraints of online learning. A theatre course involves working on facial expressions, body movements, space awareness, and "tuning" with co-performers on stage, which are difficult to replicate in an online setting. Factors such as students' age and experience, internet connectivity, and device availability needed to be considered while adapting the course to the online mode.

Trentin highlights that the online course design process involves not only creating the course plan and deciding on the communication architecture and dynamics but also the inclusion of strategies to facilitate learning (Trentin, 2002). Collaboration, reflection, mentoring, and problem-solving are all evidence of high-level learning outcomes and an effective course (Dole & Bloom, 2009). However, interviews with instructors revealed that they didn't explicitly use instructional design models while developing online courses through the design process including key features of the ADDIE model (Baldwin et al., 2018). In order to teach effectively online, "the capacity to design courses well is frequently the greatest limiting aspect" (Fink, 2003). Students become disinterested and learning suffers in a poorly planned course (Koszalka & Ganesan, 2004).

3. Methods and Processes

3.1. Design of the Study

The Case study method was found to be appropriate since this study is an empirical inquiry investigating a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context (Creswell, 2013; Pandya, 2015). The qualitative descriptive nature, considering the unitary nature of each component for analysis which was the aim of this study, consolidates the choice of case study as the research method for this study (Creswell, 2013). Since the researchers were also the course designers, ethnographic insights could be incorporated into the case study method.

3.2. Research Questions

This study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- ▶ RQ1. How have instructors collaborated in the design and adaptation of a skill-based course?
- ▶ RQ2. What are the strategies used to adapt a skill-based course online?
- ▶ RQ3. What are the perceptions of instructors and learners about the adaptation of the course?

4. Process: Setting the Stage

The course was conducted by a team of four instructors. The lead instructor was aware of the constraints of conducting the course in the online mode and hence voice acting and puppets were included as alternatives. Subsequently, two co-instructors were onboarded for their expertise in the use of puppets (puppet theater) and voice-over art, respectively. The third co-instructor was onboarded to provide language support to certain students. These instructors were adept at conducting online courses, and each instructor conducted their classes as per their domain of expertise, according to the course objectives. Interlinked modules of the

course necessitated regular communication among the instructors for a seamless course experience.

Popular communication tools were appropriately used for convenience, with the goal of providing both asynchronous and synchronous communication channels. These channels were utilized for communication between instructors and students, as well as among instructors and students themselves. WhatsApp groups and individual chats, as well as Google Meet, were used for virtual meetings, class sessions, practice sessions, and performances. The use of Google Classroom facilitated student submissions, access to learning materials, doubt-solving, and focused discussions. Instructors and students used telephonic calls as needed. Additionally, a range of G Suite collaboration tools were used for various elements of the course.

5. Analysis: Behind the Screen

Adaptation and development of the course for the online mode followed the Design Thinking cycles (Pan, 2020). The following process diagram (Fig 1) attempts to answer all three research questions.

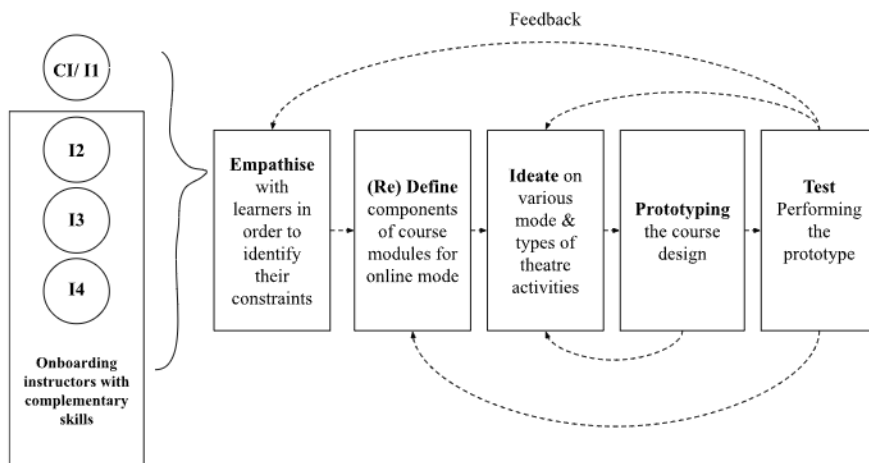


Fig. 1. Adaptation and development process of the course based on the Design-Thinking cycle. (CI=Course Instructor, Instructor=I)

5.1. Empathize

The course instructor team discussed the constraints encountered by students mentioned in section 2. Data from a class survey on accessibility to tools and the internet were considered while conducting the course. The team of instructors with varied experiences and viewpoints ensured diversity and inclusion in the course.

5.2. Define

While the course objectives were defined in the prescribed syllabus, the instructors brainstormed and adapted the course to suit the pandemic-imposed constraints. One of the key adaptations was the inclusion of communication tools and easy-to-use, familiar platforms to ensure ease for a maximum number of students. Considering the non-availability of bandwidth and devices, as per the PRAGYATA guidelines issued by the Government of India (Government of India, 2020), it was unanimously decided to include asynchronous submissions and interactions on the platform. Submissions in formats such as text, audio, and/or video, as per the affordances of the platform, were accepted. Orientation of students on the usage of these tools was incorporated into the design of the course.

5.3. Ideate

The on-screen movements and expressions are limited compared to those on stage. All the co-creators, being practitioners of theater at different levels, were aware of how the Art and Theater world had adapted to the pandemic-enforced 'new normal'. Taking cues from that and the limitations of students, the course was converted into a format that included puppets and emphasis on voice acting, as opposed to full-body movements, which were included in the offline format.

Initial online meetings and WhatsApp chats among the instructors were used to discuss all the possibilities in the online format. The instructors demonstrated the components of theater practices that could be used in online performances during synchronous classes. Recorded

sessions of each instructor were shared with the students and the course instructor team. These theater practices were applied by students in their performances. To ensure the engagement of the maximum number of students, group performances were preferred over monologues. The ideation process is the crux of the Design-Thinking process that drove the course restructuring and adaptation in this case. Camera hesitancy of students was addressed by including puppet theater and voice acting.

5.4. Prototype

This Design-Thinking process reflected the inadvertent use of the AD-DIE model of instructional design as also indicated in the previous studies [3]. As often experienced anecdotally, instructors imbibe existing models in their instruction without explicitly focusing on one model.

5.5. Test

The pandemic-enforced emergency remote teaching did not allow the instructors to test the design of the course before launching the adapted course. The user (student) inputs were collected based on the issues encountered by them. These issues were addressed during the orchestration of the course. Feedback from students was sought for accessibility, tech comfort, asynchronous learning, instructor presence, and other aspects. The instructors regularly shared their experiences and the feedback received from students. When required, the issues were defined, and various ideas were proposed before iterating the course design and orchestration. It was decided to include multilingual texts for inclusion and reduction of attrition as recommended by the NEP 2020 [10]. This mirrors the Design-Thinking approach where the prototype is put to the test, and suitable modifications based on the feedback are carried out.

In addition to verbal and written feedback, learners maintained a drama journal that was shared with the course instructors. The learners reported that they felt more confident performing on-screen after the course. They initially found the activities challenging due to the use of various tools but soon became conversant with the tools with peer support. The instructors also observed a marked improvement in the

performances of the students in their final performances as compared to those during practice sessions in terms of fluency, ease of students using intonations, facial expressions, and voices to portray various characters, and manipulation of puppets.

6. Conclusion and Future Research

Using the Design-Thinking process for course design is an approach that is not commonly followed in formal academia. The formal education system typically involves co-creation within the same institution, and the inclusion of an external instructor has little scope for modifying the course. The experience of co-creation of the skill-based course was new for the instructors. Design-thinking cycles were used to adapt the skill-based course to the online mode. It should also be noted that as this was a course with little focus on theoretical components, it could have made the frequent adaptation of the course easier. The small class sizes definitely aided the dynamic adaptation and conduct of the course. Various online engagement trends, the use of household items for storytelling, and theater practices were incorporated during the conduct of the adapted course. Orientation of students towards using tech tools laid the groundwork for the familiarity of the tech tools to be used. Hand-holding and demonstrations by instructors and peers proved to be effective. The perception of the students and instructor was found to be favorable towards the adaptation of this online theater course.

This is a unique instance where instructors from different educational institutions, at different locations, co-create and adapt a course through remote collaboration. This could be exemplary and prompt academia to explore such possibilities in other subject domains and contribute to the vision of NEP2020, by breaking barriers of subject domains, geography and timelines. However, further research is required into the application of this co-creation model based on Design-Thinking for the more theoretical subjects as well as large student groups would give deeper insights, strengthening this model.

References

- Baldwin, S. J., Ching, Y.-H., & Friesen, N. (2018). Online course design and development among college and university instructors: An analysis using grounded theory. *Online Learning*, 22(2). <https://doi.org/10.24059/olj.v22i2.1212>
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among the five approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Dole, S. & Bloom, L. (2009). Online course design: A case study. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.20429/ijstl.2009.030111>
- Fink, L. D. (2003). *A self-directed guide to designing courses for significant learning* (p. 34).
- Government of India. (2020). PRAGYATA guidelines for digital education. Retrieved from https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/pragyata-guidelines_0.pdf
- Koszalka, T. & Ganesan, R. (2004). Designing online courses: A taxonomy to guide strategic use of features available in course management systems (CMS) in distance education. *Distance Education*, 25(2), 243–256. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0158791042000262111>
- Pandya, S. R. (2015). *Educational research*.
- Pan, F.-M. (2020). Exploration of design thinking in general knowledge courses.
- Trentin, G. (2001). *Designing online courses*. Haworth Press Binghamt. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/4740622/Designing_Online_Courses