Teaching French On-line to 250+ students: Fair and engaging grading strategies

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A bit about FREN 107

FREN107 is an online course offered by the French Department to students wishing to supplement their language skills by enabling them to engage in everyday interactions.

It is mandatory for about one third of students, and about another third are professionals seeking a certificate in French.

The course typically attracts between 100 and 350+ students per term with anywhere between 3-7 TAs to manage. With a very fast-paced timeline, the online learning environment takes place on three platforms including onQ, Pearson MyLab and Feedback Fruits. Paying attention to fair and engaging grading strategies can sometimes end up at the bottom of the priorities list.
Final Assignment – Two Years of Adjustments toward Fairness and Transparency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FALL 2019</th>
<th>WINTER 2020</th>
<th>FALL 2020</th>
<th>WINTER 2021</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First time teaching FREN107</td>
<td>In the summer of 2020, FREN107 was redesigned</td>
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<tr>
<td>250 students; 5 TAs</td>
<td>100 + students; 3 TAs</td>
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<tr>
<td>No grading grid for Final Assignment worth 35%</td>
<td>New, improved Grading Grid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lots of student complaints</td>
<td>Assignment worth 30% instead of 35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>300+ students; 7 TAs</td>
<td>No student complaints</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developed first Grading Grid midway through semester</td>
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<td>No student complaints</td>
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<tr>
<td>200+ students; 5 TAs</td>
<td>Same grid as before</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forthcoming changes to how students will be evaluated for oral French over Zoom: spontaneous conversation with TAs</td>
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Future changes: off-the-grid grading

- Problems with academic integrity violations: some students hired third party to write their scripts. As a result, we were not grading their true language capacities and efforts.

- Student pre-record scripts and didn’t speak spontaneously – also a form of academic integrity violation. We don’t know their French proficiency if they aren’t speaking in the moment.

- In other to get a sense of their true level of French, Future FREN107 TAs will:
  - Ask students a simple question such as “How are you” in French;
  - Students can pass one question but must answer the second;
  - TAs will be able to determine their level (B + or A-) with better accuracy.
  - This will also (hopefully) discourage academic integrity violations.