

SUPPORT FOR LANGUAGE SKILLS OF STUDENTS IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHING

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Abstract

In Quebec, the *Reference Framework for Professional Competencies* (MEQ, 2020) prescribes language proficiency as one of thirteen competencies to be developed during university education. Therefore, passing the “Test de Certification en Français Écrit pour l’Enseignement” (TECFÉE) is required during training. The TECFÉE consists of two parts: 1) linguistic code and 2) writing of a critical report. However, grammar and writing remain challenges for students (Boivin and Roussel, 2022), resulting in a low pass rate for the Test (Dion-Viens, 2024). In this context, our support project includes theoretical and practical workshops, exercises, and formative assessments related to the two parts of the TECFÉE. This project has been in place during four years for physical education students ($n \sim 55$ /cohort/year). An evaluative research design, inspired by Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2006), was used to measure the effect of this support project on the results of an online questionnaire for students, and of two formative assessments specific to writing during an academic year. In terms of student assessment based on questionnaire, the results highlight greater motivation to prepare for the TECFÉE and a better perception of language skills. The results indicate higher scores on the second writing critical report test ($t[55] = 4.025, p < 0.001$). As part of this presentation on the topic of “Teaching and Learning/Higher Education,” the potential for transferring such a support project to higher education will be discussed.

Keywords: *Writing skills, support project, higher education, physical health education.*

1. Introduction and context

In Quebec, the *Reference Framework for Professional Competencies* stipulates that students, upon completion of their initial training, must, among other things, “communicate appropriately in the language of instruction, in writing, in all contexts associated with the performance of duties.” (MEQ, 2020). This is why they are required to pass the “Test de Certification en Français Écrit pour l’Enseignement” (TECFÉE) at the beginning of their last year of any four-year teaching program. This test consists of two parts: a multiple-choice exam on linguistic code (part 1) and the writing of a critical report (part 2). However, writing and grammar remain a challenge for university students (Boivin and Roussel, 2022; Delcambre and Lahanier-Reuter, 2012; Lefrançois et al., 2008), which is reflected in a low success rate among students having achieved the TECFÉE (Dion-Viens, 2024), particularly among students studying physical and health education (PHE). That is why the research team, attached to the PHE program and the Student Services Department at UQTR, was formed to determine how to better prepare these students for success on the TECFÉE.

The research team designed a support project that included formative assessments related to both parts of the test and twenty-two theoretical and practical workshops related on linguistic code and critical reporting. The workshops are based on the modern grammar and key principles of grammar instruction (Boivin and Pinsonneault, 2020; Chartrand, 2016). In addition, others workshops on critical reporting are based on the concept of genre (Bernié, 2001; Bronckart, 2004; Swales, 1990), which is very present in the field of academic literacy (Delcambre and Lahanier-Reuter, 2012). The main objective of this research was to evaluate the effect of this support project on language skills of 2024 students cohort in PHE.

2. Methods

An evaluative research design was used to achieve based on the four evaluation levels proposed by Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick's model (2006) including: satisfaction, acquisition, transfer and repercussions. First, students completed two formative assessments specific to the writing of a critical report test during the year. These formative assessments were completed during a university course ($n=57$ students) and the averages obtained on the two tests were compared using t-tests (Haccoun and Cousineau, 2010). Then, at the end of academic year, they completed an online questionnaire (Durand, 2021; Moscarola, 2018) to assess their satisfaction of this support project ($n=25$ students). This research received ethics' certification (CER-22-294-07.09).

3. Results

The results are presented according to the four levels of Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick's model (2006). First, the results show a high rate of satisfaction among students across all four levels measured ($\bar{x} = 4.4/5$). For the level related to acquisition, the students consider the content ($\bar{x} = 4.8/5$) and tools ($\bar{x} = 4.7/5$) provided in the workshops to be relevant. The results also highlight greater motivation to prepare adequately for the TECFÉE (*before the workshops*: $\bar{x} = 2.4/4$; *after the workshops*: $\bar{x} = 3.3/4$), referring to the transfer level. As a repercussion, the formative assessments to the writing critical report indicate higher scores on the second critical report writing test ($t [55] = 4.025, p < 0.001$).

4. Discussion and conclusion

The results reveal a positive perception of this support project among students. They also highlight a marked improvement in their language skills throughout the project. This project is of great importance as it aligns with the objectives of the *Reference Framework for Professional Competencies* (MEQ, 2020), which emphasizes the importance of using appropriate language levels to communicate with students, parents, and peers, among others. Furthermore, the fundamental role of language in education and teaching is also underscored requiring university teachers to develop it throughout the academic process (MEQ, 2020).

The potential for transferring such a support project to higher education is important to consider since writing and grammar remain a challenge for university students (Boivin and Roussel, 2022; Delcambre and Lahanier-Reuter, 2012; Lefrançois et al., 2008). However, there are some limitations to our study, including the absence of a control group for formative critical writing report and a small sample of the questionnaire compared to the target population.

Acknowledgments

The authors wish to express their thanks to Caroline Vézina for her collaboration throughout of this project study. We are also grateful to the participants without whom the project could not have been realized. Finally, we would like to thank also the "Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur" for the financial support.

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