Boost for Online Language Course through Peer Evaluation

Authors : Kirsi Korkealehto

Abstract : The purpose of this research was to investigate how the peer evaluation concept was perceived by language teachers developing online language courses. The online language courses in question were developed in language teacher teams within a nationwide KiVAKO-project funded by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture. The participants of the project were 86 language teachers of 26 higher education institutions in Finland. The KiVAKO-project aims to strengthen the language capital at higher education institutions by building a nationwide online language course offering on a shared platform. All higher education students can study the courses regardless of their home institutions. The project covers the following languages: Chinese, Estonian, Finnish Sign Language, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish on the levels CEFR A1-C1. The courses were piloted in the autumn term of 2019, and an online peer evaluation session was organised for all project participating teachers in spring 2020. The peer evaluation utilised the quality criteria for online implementation, which was developed earlier within the eAMK-project. The eAMK-project was also funded by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture with the aim to improve higher education institution teachers' digital and pedagogical competences. In the online peer evaluation session, the teachers were divided into Zoom breakout rooms, in each of which two pilot courses were presented by their teachers dialogically. The other language teachers provided feedback on the course on the basis of the quality criteria. Thereafter good practices and ideas were gathered to an online document. The breakout rooms were facilitated by one teacher who was instructed and provided a slide-set prior to the online session. After the online peer evaluation sessions, the language teachers were asked to respond to an online questionnaire for feedback. The questionnaire included three multiple-choice questions using the Likert-scale rating and two open-ended questions. The online questionnaire was answered after the sessions immediately, the questionnaire link and the QR-code to it was on the last slide of the session, and it was responded at the site. The data comprise online questionnaire responses of the peer evaluation session and the researcher's observations during the sessions. The data were analysed with a qualitative content analysis method with the help of Atlas.ti programme, and the Likert scale answers provided results per se. The observations were used as complementary data to support the primary data. The findings indicate that the working in the breakout rooms was successful, and the workshops proceeded smoothly. The workshops were perceived as beneficial in terms of improving the piloted courses and developing the participants' own work as teachers. Further, the language teachers stated that the collegial discussions and sharing the ideas were fruitful. The aspects to improve the workshops were to give more time for free discussions and the opportunity to familiarize oneself with the quality criteria and the presented language courses beforehand. The quality criteria were considered to provide a suitable frame for self- and peer evaluations.
Keywords : higher education, language learning, online learning, peer-evaluation
Conference Title : ICETOL 2021 : International Conference on Education Technology and Online Learning
Conference Location : Sydney, Australia
Conference Dates : March 29-30, 2021