



Using Mentimeter in an LSP Italian Class to Consolidate Grammar and Vocabulary and to Elicit Peer Feedback: A Practical Showcase

Emanuela Ponti

University of Glasgow, United Kingdom

Abstract

This paper shows ways in which the use of Mentimeter in an LSP Italian class can aid the creative revision of grammar and vocabulary and facilitate the provision of regular peer feedback. In it I draw from my experience of teaching Italian to a small class of complete beginners who study Product Design at the Glasgow School of Art. My decision to start using Mentimeter regularly in this intensive module sprang from a dissatisfaction with a traditional book-based approach, which seemed to keep students very passive and felt limited and repetitive. With this course's ILOs being both 'general' (with topics such as, for instance, finding accommodation) and 'specific' (with content related to the students' field of Product Design), the employment of Mentimeter maintains student engagement high and fosters 'the co-construction of knowledge' (Moorhouse and Kohnke, 2020). As my practical examples demonstrate, Mentimeter enables students to: 1) strengthen vocabulary and grammar knowledge through variation; 2) easily take part in formative and 'friendly' assessment; 3) reflect daily on their own and their classmates' learning. Furthermore, Mentimeter helps teachers 'gain valuable insight' into their students' understanding of the target language (Zhang, 2022).

Keywords: Vocabulary and Grammar Learning, Peer Feedback, Technology in Language Learning, Enhancing Student Engagement, Mentimeter

1. Introduction

This paper focuses on my experience of using Mentimeter - a web-based presentation tool used for live classroom polling, quizzes, surveys, etc. – to consolidate vocabulary and grammar and to provide regular peer feedback in an LSP Italian course. Our MEDes Italian Stage 1 course, which I have taught with other colleagues for over ten years, is a five-week intensive module taking place in April and May. It is available only to second-year students from the Glasgow School of Art, students who in the following academic year will do their year abroad at Milan's *Politecnico*. The students' main subject is Product Design and they all are complete Beginners in Italian. Within a total contact time of approximately 70 hours, this LSP course aims at equipping students with the linguistic skills needed to cope confidently with everyday social and survival situations in the target language. Students should also develop language skills in areas related to their field of studies, and by the end of the course be able to understand short reading and listening materials on both daily and design-related topics.

Traditionally, teaching on the MEDes Italian Stage 1 course has employed a booklet specifically designed by our tutors, and a course Moodle with additional listening and reading materials; on Moodle there are also quizzes and H5P activities the students complete at home by the end of each week. However, in the academic session 2021-22, I decided to start creating interactive presentations with Mentimeter, and to use them in class regularly. A few months before the MEDes module was due to start, I had attended a presentation on Mentimeter by our Learning Technologist; it struck me how easily this app enables tutors to design interactive question types or quiz competitions with which to assess students informally and creatively. Mentimeter is available to all staff in our university, and students access your presentation by simply going to [menti.com](https://www.menti.com) and entering the code shown on your screen.

2. Why Mentimeter?

My decision to trial Mentimeter in this LSP course came also as the result of various considerations. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, I had noticed among our MEDes students a certain reluctance to complete lexical and grammatical exercises from our booklet. Feedback from students indicated that most felt overwhelmed by the amount of vocabulary and grammatical elements they had to master in



the space of five weeks. There were also comments about exercises in different chapters of our booklet being a little monotonous, and on the fact that the feedback received after completing quizzes on Moodle was 'dry' and often 'too technical' for non-specialist students. Furthermore, in the academic year 2020-21, our MEDes course had taken place entirely online on Zoom. While clearly there were some disadvantages in running the whole module remotely, I felt one of the positives of Zoom was the option to create polls which could test the students on various aspects of the target language. This formative and regular assessment offered students an alternative to listening to the tutor or completing tasks in breakout rooms; it made online learning more varied and reflective. With the above factors in mind, I thought different Mentimeter presentations would be an effective way to review grammar and vocabulary; to increase student engagement and encourage active participation in class; and, to elicit peer feedback that would immediately be friendly and intelligible. I will now give practical examples of the question types and quiz contests I have used in the last two years, showing how they can make a language class livelier and solicit meaningful responses from students.

3. Practical examples – Mentimeter to revise grammar and vocabulary

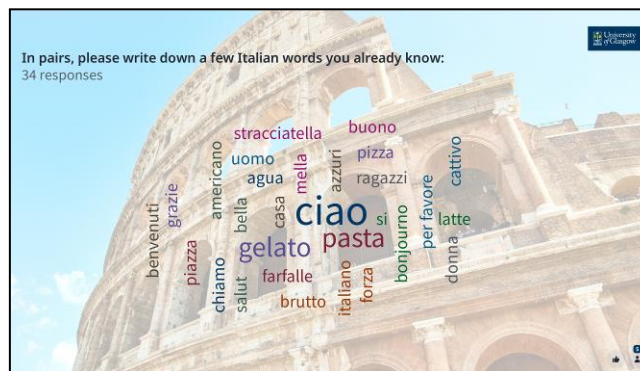


FIGURE 1 – Word Cloud on brainstorming Italian vocabulary

I like using a Word Cloud as the very first activity on Day 1 of this course. It's a good icebreaker as it makes students work in pairs or small groups, and immediately incites them to be co-constructors of knowledge, rather than quiet receptacles. Students may be surprised by the amount of Italian vocabulary they already know and will recognise as familiar some of the words inputted by their classmates. Reading out together every term in the Word Cloud, tutors can begin to point out some of the pronunciation rules which will be explained in that same lesson, as well as spelling mistakes common among English native speakers. For example, I remember a conversation about 'Lucca' and 'Luca', where students thought the name of the town and the boy name were spelt and pronounced in the same way.

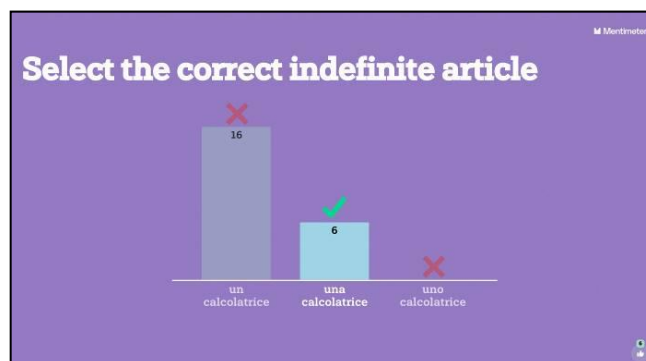


FIGURE 2.1 – Multiple Choice on indefinite articles and classroom vocabulary



Mentimeter's Multiple Choice quizzes allow tutors to combine informal testing on grammatical points – indefinite articles in Figure 2.1 – with a focus on a specific lexical set – for example, that of objects within the classroom (in the above slide, 'calculator'). Each option in this type of quiz can also be linked to a picture (Figure 2.2), and I have used this to survey the mood of the class at the beginning or at the end of a lesson. These personal questions will likely reduce learning anxiety and help build trust between teachers and students. By gathering what hopefully are 'honest responses' (Zhang 2022, page 2) tutors can gain some insight into the learners' mental and physical experiences within the classroom.

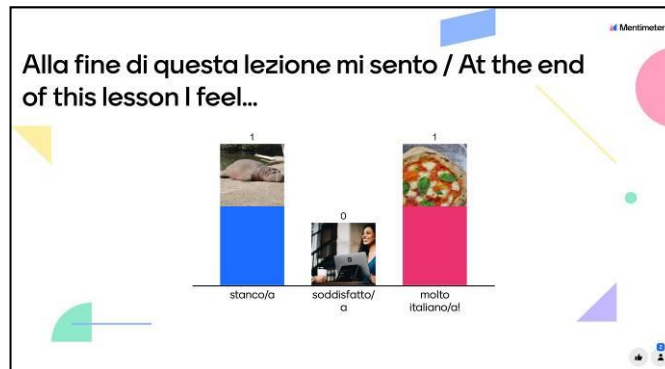


Figure 2.2 – Multiple Choice on students' mood

Other examples in this paper show that a 'Learner Response System' like Mentimeter engages the audience through the variety and flexibility of its questions, and their 'non-judgemental' nature. The 'Traffic Lights' or 'This or That' options are visually stimulating and don't immediately reveal whether an answer is correct or not. Students will see their response end up in either a majority or a minority group, and this can stimulate further discussion on the point in question. In Figures 3.1 and 3.2, the learners who are not sure whether that plural form is correct can ask their peers to clarify their doubts. Figure 4 shows that 86% of participants selected the wrong answer; such a result may actually benefit weaker or struggling students, who will feel they are not alone on their learning journey. The students who got the correct answer ('blu') could explain that this adjective is invariable and therefore agrees with all genders and numbers, unlike the other option 'verde'; learners again cooperate to build knowledge and understanding together.



FIGURES 3.1 and 3.2 – Traffic Lights on plural forms and family / friends / nationalities vocabulary



FIGURE 4 – This or That on adjectives and physical appearance vocabulary



FIGURE 5 – Type Answer on combined prepositions and furniture vocabulary



FIGURE 6 – Truth or Lie on agreements, shapes and colours

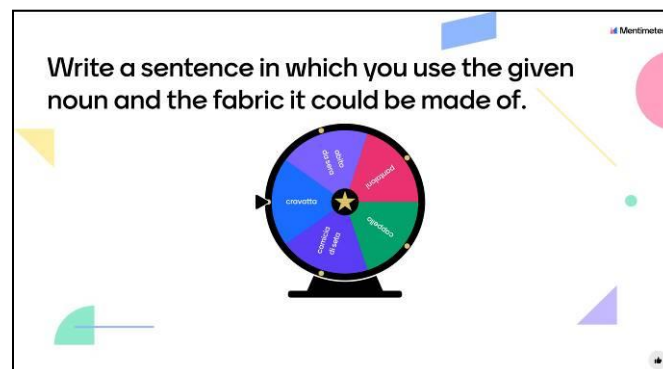
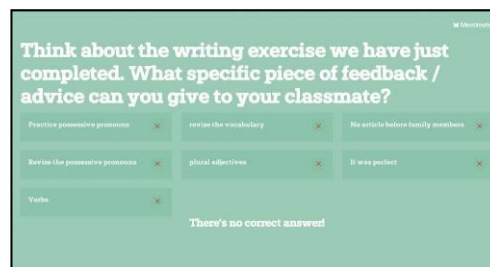
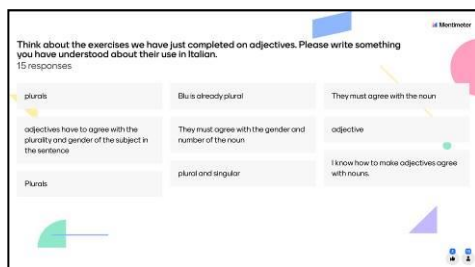


FIGURE 7 – Spin the Wheel on clothing and fabrics

Figures 5, 6 and 7 show possible, ingenious uses of the ‘Type Answer’, ‘Truth or Lie’ and ‘Spin the Wheel’ questions. These exercises fit well into an LSP course designed for Product Design students who will go on exchange to Italy. In fact, each sentence in the Type Answer quiz has vocabulary related to furniture and home accessories, while Spin the Wheel asks students to write a sentence with a clothing-related noun and a type of fabric. In the course of their studies, students may actually design some of the items revised through these two activities. Similarly, the Truth or Lie quiz presents different shapes and colours in every slide, and helps students consolidate their knowledge of these lexical sets so important in Product Design. This exercise also requires students to focus both on grammatical rules (noun – adjective agreement in Figure 6) and on the ‘ontological truth’ of the picture they see: the triangle could be ‘green’ (‘verde’ - the agreement would be correct), but it’s actually ‘pink’ (‘rosa’).

4. Practical Examples – Mentimeter to elicit peer feedback

The last few slides in this paper exemplify the feedback students in our MEDes course have given to their peers immediately after completing together a specific activity in class.



FIGURES 8.1 and 8.2 – Peer feedback on use of adjectives and on writing about family

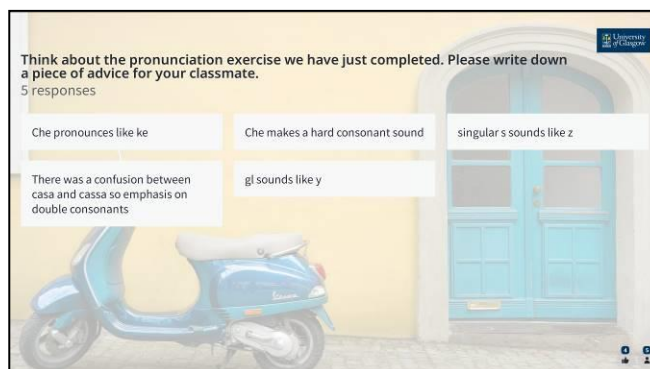


FIGURE 8.3 – Peer feedback on pronunciation

Figure 8.3 shows feedback written by students on Day 2 of their course, after they were introduced to the main rules of Italian pronunciation and had practised in pairs. Only five students out of twelve wrote down a piece of advice on pronunciation, something that may suggest the others were not yet confident enough to do so. However, these five responses are valid and easily intelligible; I believe they provide the whole cohort with key points useful to improve their performance in this area. In Figures 8.1 and 8.2 we see different levels of engagement with peer feedback. Some of the responses appear incomplete or a little superficial: for instance, when students only wrote 'plurals' with regard to their understanding of the use of adjectives, or when they described their partner's performance as 'perfect'. Other answers are much more detailed; possibly, they come from participants who had learned another language in school and are therefore more confident with specific terminology and rules. Nevertheless, I believe each single response can effectively benefit the whole class and make it more aware of 'life hacks' to remember on their learning journey; even a simple word like 'plurals' will help students remember that Italian adjectives have a number, unlike their English counterparts. Thus, mobile-assisted peer feedback gives all students the chance to 'actively share their understanding of the learning material' with their peers, fostering their 'active engagement' in the language classroom (Xu & Peng 2022, page 1042).

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the practical examples in this paper demonstrate the effectiveness of regular Mentimeter use to revise grammar and vocabulary creatively and to elicit immediate feedback exchanges among peers. The numerous types of questions Mentimeter supports enable teachers to increase interaction and stress-free participation, to track their students' learning and understanding easily and daily, and to stimulate fruitful discussion and reflection within the LSP language classroom.

References

- [1] Moorhouse, B. L., & Kohnke, L. (2020). Using Mentimeter to Elicit Student Responses in the EAP/ESP Classroom. *RELC Journal*, 51(1), 198–204.
- [2] Xu, Q., & Peng, H. (2022). Exploring learner motivation and mobile-assisted peer feedback in a business English speaking course. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 38 (4), 1033–1045.
- [3] Zhang, D. (2022). Engaging, Impressing and Captivating Language Learners by Interactive Presentations – A Review of Mentimeter. *Teaching English as a Second Language Electronic Journal (TESL-EJ)*, 26 (1).