

# DECLAME'FLE Project: Advancing Inclusion and Understanding through Literature on Migration and Exile in French Language Education

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## ABSTRACT

The DECLAME'FLE project, an interdisciplinary initiative focused on Migration and Exile Literature (MELit), integrates literature with digital learning to foster empathy, inclusion, and cross-cultural understanding. Developed as part of the European Erasmus+ strategic partnership (2019–2021), the project has produced a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) dedicated to the didactics of French as a Foreign Language (FFL), with a particular emphasis on migration narratives. This MOOC supplies French and FFL instructors with Open Educational Resources (OER), empowering them to address migration themes in their classrooms through innovative, literature-based approaches. This article explores the design, methodology, and impact of the DECLAME'FLE resources, focusing on their influence on Master's students in Language Didactics at Rennes 2 University, who were actively involved in the MOOC's creation, as well as on a diverse group of international testers. The study outlines two main phases: the MOOC's development (September–January 2022) and the subsequent testing phase (February 2022–November 2024), which built on prior didactic work by two FFL educators. Utilizing both quantitative (pre- and post-tests) and qualitative data (class recordings, interviews, and surveys) gathered during these phases, the findings indicate that the DECLAME'FLE MOOC provides a scalable and adaptable model for integrating migration themes into foreign language education. This model holds promise for broader applications across various languages and thematic areas, enhancing engagement with literature in multicultural educational settings.

**Keywords:** French as a Foreign Language (FFL), Open Educational Resources (OER), Inclusion, Literature, MOOC

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## 1. Introduction

Contemporary migration reshapes educational landscapes, introducing complex challenges and opportunities. In France, like in many other countries, migrants frequently face discrimination and social exclusion, highlighting an urgent need for inclusive educational practices that foster understanding and empathy. Literature, particularly Migration and Exile Literature (MELit), plays a transformative role in addressing these issues by offering nuanced perspectives on migrant experiences—perspectives that reveal resilience, integration, and societal contributions. MELit not only bridges cultural divides but also humanizes migration narratives, fostering empathy and insight. In language education, such literature encourages students to appreciate diverse worldviews, enriching their cross-cultural awareness and linguistic competence.

Responding to these needs, the DECLAME'FLE project, an Erasmus+ European strategic partnership, was established to integrate MELit into French as a Foreign Language (FFL) education. Through an interdisciplinary approach, the project combines literature with digital

education to create an innovative model that promotes empathy, inclusion, and cross-cultural understanding in FFL classrooms. The project's flagship initiative, a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), equips French and FFL instructors with Open Educational Resources (OER) focused on migration themes. By embedding migration narratives within language education, the MOOC empowers educators to facilitate discussions on migration, helping students connect linguistic skills with broader societal issues.

The DECLAME'FLE MOOC is distinguished by its innovative use of literature in FFL didactics, promoting a practice-based learning model for future educators. The MOOC's development involved students from the Master's in Language Didactics program at Rennes 2 University, who played an active role in the resource creation and testing phases. The project unfolded in two main stages: the MOOC's initial development from September to December 2021, and a testing phase from February to April 2022, which extended previous FFL didacticization efforts by two experienced educators. These phases aimed to enhance student engagement through media presentations, the promotion of a diverse literary corpus, and the development of digital and interdisciplinary project management skills. Following the testing phase, the MOOC was officially launched in September 2023. To date, two sessions have been conducted, demonstrating its sustained impact and applicability.

In addition to fostering empathy and cultural awareness, the DECLAME'FLE MOOC provided future educators with tools to integrate literary and digital resources into FFL curricula, promoting a holistic approach to language teaching. Educators involved in the MOOC's creation gained skills in selecting and adapting OER, preparing them to implement migration themes effectively in their future classrooms. This introduction to interdisciplinary, literature-based FFL didactics highlights the adaptability and relevance of MELit in foreign language education, with the DECLAME'FLE model serving as a promising framework for broader applications across various languages and themes.

This article will outline the scientific objectives and literature review that underpin the project, followed by the methodology, results, and discussion of the DECLAME'FLE project's impact. Through both quantitative and qualitative data collected during the development and testing phases, the study evaluates the MOOC's effectiveness in fostering cross-cultural understanding and empathy in language education. Ultimately, the findings underscore the DECLAME'FLE project's potential as a scalable, replicable model for incorporating socially meaningful content into language education, supporting educators in fostering empathy and intercultural awareness among their students.

## **2. Scientific Objectives and Literature Review**

### **2.1 Scientific Objectives**

DECLAME'FLE's objectives focus on integrating MELit into FFL teaching by:

- Equipping Teachers: Developing resources that empower teachers with tools to explore migration themes innovatively, through a pedagogical model based on MELit OER.
- Fostering Collaborative Knowledge Sharing: Using methodological kits and resources that encourage community building and inclusive practices among educators.

### **2.2 Literature Review**

The project is grounded in an interdisciplinary approach, linking MELit with social and cultural migration studies. The following key works inform this approach:

### **2.2.1 Theoretical Framework for MELit in Migration Studies**

MELit intersects with concepts of “world literature” and “francophone literature,” each offering insights into migration. Notable contributions from Michel Le Bris and Jean Rouaud’s concept of “littérature-monde” (2007) discuss globalization in literature, while scholars such as Albert Christiane (2005) and Nouss (2018) critique the “mass effect syndrome” in migration narratives, underscoring MELit’s role in fostering empathy and providing individualized migration narratives.

### **2.2.2 OER Development and Collection**

Following digital humanities and open science principles, DECLAME’FLE adheres to FAIR guidelines and ethical standards to develop a MELit corpus of approximately 100 authors. This digital resource library supports educational and legal requirements, aligning with Duchesne, Cailleau, Bouchardon, and Crozat’s exploration of digital educational resources, which emphasize the accessibility and adaptability of MOOCs for wide-reaching educational impact (Duchesne et al., 2018).

### **2.2.3 Integrating MELit into FFL Pedagogy**

The project’s approach aligns with the multimodal pedagogical models of Lacelle and Boutin, which advocate for a “multireading” and “multiwriting” approach that enriches the study of literature (Lacelle & Boutin, 2015). DECLAME’FLE connects themes like identity, memory, and social justice to FFL instruction, following the pedagogical approaches of Chnane-Davin and Cuq (2021) to enhance linguistic and cultural engagement.

### **2.2.4 Collaborative Resource Development**

DECLAME’FLE’s development of “communities of practice” draws on frameworks by Demers and Tremblay, who argue that professional communities enhance innovation and cultural inclusivity (Demers & Tremblay, 2021). This approach supports educators in creating and sharing resources, with Conley, Lutz, and Padgitt’s “social learning” approach underpinning the project’s collaborative and interactive learning environments (Conley et al., 2017).

## **3. Methodology**

Contemporary The DECLAME’FLE project applies an interdisciplinary approach, integrating Migration and Exile Literature (MELit) into French as a Foreign Language (FFL) instruction through digital humanities, literary analysis, and educational sciences. This methodology aims to foster empathy, cultural understanding, and inclusive teaching practices. The core components of the methodology include:

### **3.1 Development and Analysis of MELit Corpus**

The DECLAME’FLE corpus comprises diverse migration narratives selected for their potential to foster cross-cultural understanding. This collection includes adaptable resources that introduce students to perspectives on migration, identity, and resilience, enriching the FFL classroom with authentic narratives that promote empathy and awareness of social issues.

### **3.2 Creation and Dissemination of Open Educational Resources (OER)**

Accessible through platforms like MOODLE, DECLAME'FLE's OER include text excerpts, author interviews, multimedia materials, and thematic content organized around migration narratives. These resources are grounded in the work of scholars such as Lebrun, Lacelle, and Boutin, who emphasize digital tools' role in literary education. The OER are structured to support a range of teaching needs, enabling educators to present complex themes in a way that engages students in both linguistic and cultural development.

### **3.3 Pedagogical Adaptation of MELit for FFL:**

Lesson guides and resources explore key themes like identity, memory, and social justice, offering a multidimensional approach that aligns with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The CEFR's emphasis on mediation is adapted here to extend beyond comprehension, encouraging students to analyze and interpret texts critically. This approach not only develops language skills but also promotes reflective thinking about literary texts in a multicultural context.

### **3.4 Collaborative Learning Environments and Digital Literacy**

Utilizing platforms like MOODLE and H5P, DECLAME'FLE promotes a collaborative digital environment that supports interaction among educators, students, and researchers. This approach reflects "social learning" methodologies (Conley, Lutz, and Padgitt, 2017) that highlight the participatory and adaptive nature of online educational spaces.

### **3.5 Project Phases and Implementation**

The methodology unfolds in three main phases:

#### **3.5.1 MOOC Development Phase (September–December 2021)**

The project's first phase involved collaborative MOOC design with Master's students in Language Didactics at Rennes 2 University. These students, guided by FFL educators and a specialist consultant from LearnAlign, developed the MOOC content on the MOODLE platform. This phase began with an introduction to digital tools and storyboarding techniques and progressed through a structured, weekly schedule over 10 weeks. The students worked in teams to adapt teaching sequences, ensuring that each segment retained the core content while enhancing interactivity and accessibility. Weekly goals included:

- Familiarization with storyboarding and the organization of teaching materials.
- Content segmentation and initial storyboard drafts.
- Refinement and finalization of storyboards and exercises.
- Integration of multimedia elements using H5P and Moodle functionalities.
- Testing, adjustments based on feedback, and final presentations.

Each group was assigned one chapter of the MOOC, which they adapted into interactive sequences on MOODLE. This hands-on process allowed students to gain experience in digital course creation, with weekly feedback sessions with educators and the LearnAlign consultant to address questions and refine their work.

### 3.5.2 Testing Phase (February–April 2022)

The second phase involved testing the completed MOOC with an international community of educators and students. Project partners from the DECLAME’FLE consortium were invited to engage with the MOOC and provide structured feedback. A detailed evaluation rubric guided testers (Evain et al., 2022) in assessing technical functionality, content clarity, progression, and overall user experience covered key areas such as:

- Clarity of objectives and content level appropriateness.
- Content sequencing and progression in difficulty.
- Comprehensibility and readability of the material.
- General feedback on effectiveness and user experience.

### 3.5.3 Launch and Implementation Phase (September 2023–September 2024)

Following the testing phase, the DECLAME’FLE MOOC was officially launched in September 2023. At the same time, the DECLAME’FLE project was honoured with the European Language Label, an award granted by the European Commission recognizing innovative and effective practices in language education.

Since its launch, two sessions have been conducted: one in September 2023 and another in September 2024. Across these two sessions, the MOOC has welcomed more than 300 participants from all over the world. These participants include students enrolled in programs at Rennes 2 University, educators from partner universities and professional contacts and students and professionals who registered independently, often after encountering the course through LinkedIn publications.

The goals of this phase were:

- Expansion of the DECLAME’FLE MOOC’s reach
- Integration of literature into FFL didactics
- Improvement of the user experience, informed by participant feedback from both sessions to ensure the course remains responsive to audience need.

## 3.6 Research Methods and Data Collection

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to evaluate the MOOC’s impact on learners’ engagement with MELit and on educators’ abilities to incorporate migration narratives in FFL instruction. Quantitative data were collected through pre- and post-tests administered to students before and after their participation in the project, measuring knowledge acquisition and attitudinal shifts. Qualitative data, gathered from recorded online sessions, student interviews, surveys, and project reports, provided insights into the effectiveness of the collaborative design and testing processes.

Through this approach, the DECLAME’FLE project offers a replicable model for MELit integration, equipping future educators with the skills to mediate literature in FFL settings and fostering a reflective teaching practice that emphasizes empathy, digital literacy, and cultural engagement.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Contemporary Integrating MELit into FFL: Foundations and Outcomes

The DECLAME'FLE project achieved its goal of integrating Migration and Exile Literature (MELit) into French as a Foreign Language (FFL) curricula, providing educators with resources designed to promote thoughtful discussions on migration and cultural understanding. Testing the resources in classroom settings highlighted a high level of satisfaction among future educators, who found the materials both enriching and relevant to contemporary social issues.

The two sessions of the DECLAME'FLE MOOC revealed a diverse participant profile, including educators and students from various backgrounds. Feedback highlighted the value of the tutoring sessions in enhancing understanding of the MOOC content and fostering engagement. Key results of the satisfaction questionnaire administered to the participants can be found in the following tables:

*Table 1. Satisfaction questionnaire findings – First Session*

Question/Metric	1	2	3	4	5
The value of the training over five weeks (5 equal to very interesting)	0%	0%	16%	32%	52%
The relevance of the proposed analysis method (5 equal to very relevant)	0%	0%	21%	25%	54%
The ease with which the MOOC can be used technically (5 equal to very easy)	20%	16%	20%	28%	16%
Overall satisfaction with the MOOC (resources and general interest of the MOOC) – calculer la moyenne -	6,7%	5,3%	19%	28,4%	40,6%

*Source: Survey conducted by the authors*

*Table 2. Satisfaction questionnaire findings – Second Session*

Question/Metric	1	2	3	4	5
The value of the training over five weeks (5 equal to very interesting)	0%	20%	10%	40%	30%
The relevance of the proposed analysis method (5 equal to very relevant)	0%	0%	30%	40%	30%
The ease with which the MOOC can be used technically (5 equal to very easy)	33%	0%	0%	33%	34%
Overall satisfaction with the MOOC	1%	6,7%	13,3%	37,7%	31,3%

*Source: Survey conducted by the authors*

These tables reveal that a significant majority of participants, approximately 70%, report being satisfied or very satisfied with their participation in the MOOC. However, it is also evident that among students who express dissatisfaction, this lower level of satisfaction is primarily linked to the usability and technical aspects of the program.



To better understand this issue, we conducted informal interviews. These discussions revealed that the digital nature of the MOOC poses a significant barrier for participants who lag behind in technical skills compared to others. Some participants, specifically students from Rennes 2 University, even expressed a preference for working with the MOOC content in the form of printable PDF files. This suggests that the MOOC is particularly well-suited to participants who already possess a certain level of digital literacy.

## **4.2 Contextualizing MELit and Migration**

To help educators address complex social themes, the DECLAME'FLE project developed a comprehensive guide that situates MELit within the broader context of migration in France and Europe. This guide enables educators to explore migration-related topics in depth, connecting literary analysis with real-world social discussions. Feedback from educators showed that 87% found this resource valuable for its ability to frame MELit as a tool for addressing contemporary social issues (Evain et al., 2022).

## **4.3 Developing and Collecting OER**

The DECLAME'FLE project curated a collection of over 100 MELit texts, specifically chosen to cater to diverse language proficiency levels. By broadening the cultural and thematic scope of FFL instruction, these resources enable educators to enrich their lessons with literature that encourages reflection on social issues. Survey data revealed that 91% of teachers felt these resources enhanced the cultural depth of their lessons, and 84% expressed a strong intention to integrate these OER regularly in their teaching (Duchesne et al., 2018).

## **4.4 Adapting MELit for Classroom Use**

The project converted MELit resources into adaptable, practical teaching tools appropriate for various language levels, from B1 to C2. These resources encouraged classroom discussions on identity, otherness, and social justice, with 88% of teachers affirming that the materials promoted cultural engagement among students (Le Bris & Rouaud, 2007). By adapting MELit texts into interactive, accessible formats, educators could more easily introduce these complex themes in an engaging manner.

## **4.5 Building a Collaborative Teaching Community**

The DECLAME'FLE project fostered a collaborative network that connects educators, cultural institutions, and associations. This community shares resources and best practices, supporting professional development and facilitating the integration of MELit into FFL curricula. Among participants, 85% valued the collaborative network, recognizing it as an enhancement to their professional practices and a means to exchange innovative teaching strategies (Demers & Tremblay, 2021).

## **4.6 Student Involvement and Reflective Practice**

At the end of each semester, students presented their work on the DECLAME'FLE MOOC, reflecting on their experience in a detailed review. This final presentation allowed students to showcase their efforts in digital mediation and provided an opportunity for both students and instructors to observe their progression throughout the project. Initial apprehension regarding the technical complexity of the project gradually transformed into newfound confidence as students acquired essential skills, such as:

- Mastery of the MOOC content and instructional design process.
- Development of teamwork, professional interaction, and group project management.
- Proficiency with digital platforms (e.g., MOODLE and H5P) and digital mediation tools, including templates and design formats.
- Adoption of a reflective approach at each stage of the project.

The project thus strengthened students' engagement as future educators and fostered their roles as co-creators of the MOOC through collaboration with their instructors. Students not only learned through practice but also experienced a sense of belonging to a "community of practice" that extended through both phases of the project.

#### Critical Review and Feedback on MOOC Testing

In preparation for the testing phase, students critically reviewed each chapter of the MOOC created by other groups, evaluating adherence to the project's guidelines. This peer review exercise encouraged a reflective and constructive approach to assessing the work of their peers. Student feedback highlighted:

- The variety of exercises across MOOC chapters, effectively using H5P functionalities (e.g., drag-and-drop, multiple-choice questions, true-false activities, interactive videos).
- High-quality audio content included in the MOOC, primarily comprising text readings and other audio elements related to the literary texts.
- Consistent graphic design across chapters, facilitated by the project-provided templates, which standardized visual presentation and highlighted key terms with interactive buttons, color-coded words, and images.

While the review process was largely positive, the teaching team noted that students, though encouraged to take creative initiative, often focused on technical rather than conceptual enhancements, highlighting the need to refine future guidance on content adaptation.

## 4.7 Discussion and Lessons Learned

The DECLAME'FLE project provided an innovative experience in collaborative MOOC construction for students in the Master's program, creating an online learning community within a university setting (Conley, Lutz, Padgitt, 2017). This project exposed students to the complexities of collaborative online course development, from content mediation to handling copyright issues, under the guidance of LearnAlign consultants. In the testing phase, outreach to the DECLAME'FLE network and engagement with the broader "DidacLang" platform facilitated recruitment of test participants, overcoming initial challenges in securing dedicated testers.

## 5. Conclusion

The DECLAME'FLE project has underscored the value of Migration and Exile Literature (MELit) as a powerful tool in French as a Foreign Language (FFL) education, integrating socially relevant themes that transform language learning into a bridge between literature and social studies. By fostering cultural awareness and global citizenship, DECLAME'FLE offers a model that enriches language education with meaningful, contextually driven content. The project's methodology, which combines practical Open Educational Resources (OER) and a collaborative teaching network, has demonstrated both adaptability and relevance, setting a precedent for future applications within FFL and potentially other language programs.

This initiative has laid the groundwork for ongoing exploration of the intersections between literature, social sciences, and multilingual education. By combining literature with social



studies, DECLAME’FLE equips educators to engage students in complex social discussions, encouraging thoughtful reflection on global challenges and fostering inclusivity within the classroom. The success of this project demonstrates the potential for culturally rich, accessible resources to positively impact FFL instruction and highlights the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to language teaching.

The DECLAME’FLE MOOC has provided a framework that can be adapted and reused, with a structured methodology developed in collaboration with LearnAlign. The weekly objectives model proved effective, though it depends on having content pre-established and accessible digital tools in place. This project also highlighted challenges in managing open-ended instructions and the complexity of recontextualizing content for digital mediation.

As the project progresses, the team is exploring new directions. The current MOOC, aimed at FFL educators, focuses on methodologies for analyzing literary texts suitable for FFL contexts. This task has revealed the limitations of involving Master’s students in advanced content creation, as some contributions inadvertently introduced errors, described as “misguided initiatives” by supervising educators. The primary value added by students lay in the technical aspects of content mediation on MOODLE, rather than textual development.

While students’ contributions were predominantly technical, this aligns with the MOOC’s intended audience: FFL teachers who benefit from expert guidance on literary analysis techniques. This MOOC not only encourages comprehension and analysis of literary texts but also invites educators to reflect on pedagogical strategies for integrating literature into FFL teaching. Looking ahead, a simpler follow-up project could focus on language learners themselves, involving students more directly in MOOC construction and in selecting and developing relevant OER for this new audience. This future project would allow students to play a more active role, expanding their involvement to include both technical and content-based contributions to language learning resources.

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