

**Teaching Verbal  
Interaction  
and Culture**

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# Table of Content

	pages
Acknowledgements	v
Introduction	vi
<b>Chapter One</b>	
<i>Reflection on the treatment of spoken skills and culture in second language teaching theories and methodologies</i>	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Approaches to teaching a second language from antiquity to 15th Century.	4
1.2.1 Teaching of Sumarian, archaic Egyptian and ancient Greek as second languages.	4
1.2.2 Teaching of Greek and Latin to Romans.	8
1.2.3 Teaching of Latin and other vulgar tongues (12th-15th Centuries).	10
1.3 Approaches to language teaching from the 16th to 17th Centuries.	14
1.3.1 Ascham	16
1.3.2 Montaigne and Comenius	16
1.3.3 Locke	17
1.4 Approaches to language teaching in the 18th, 19th and early 20th Centuries.	18
1.4.1 The Grammar-translation method.	18
1.4.2 The Direct method.	21
1.5 Approaches to language teaching in the 20th Century	22
1.5.1 The Audio-lingual method.	26
1.5.2 The Situation method and the Audiovisual method.	27
1.5.3 The Silent way.	29
1.5.4 Suggestopedia.	30
1.5.5 Community Language Learning.	31
1.5.6 The Total Physical Response.	31
1.5.7 The Communicative Approach.	33
1.5.8 Canale and Swain's model of Communicative competence.	35

1.5.9 Bachman's model of Communicative Competence	37
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<i>Conclusion</i>	43
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## Chapter Two

### *A conceptual framework for the teachable components of verbal interaction*

2.1 Introduction	46
2.2 The conceptual framework	46
2.2.1 Typology of cultural traits	48
2.2.2 Pragmatic norms	61
2.2.3 Norms of interaction	66
2.2.4 Kinesic features and Prosodic features	73
2.2.5 Spoken grammar	77
2.2.6 Colloquial lexicon	79
2.2.7 Pronunciation	81
<i>Conclusion</i>	83

## Chapter Three

### *Definition of pedagogical principles for the teaching of verbal interaction and culture*

3.1 Introduction	84
3.2 What is communicative competence?	84
3.3 Second Language Acquisition research and the teaching/learning of verbal interaction.	99
3.4 Definition of pedagogical for the teaching of verbal interaction and culture.	
<i>Conclusion</i>	144

## Chapter Four

### *A methodology for the teaching of verbal interaction and culture*

4.1	Introduction	145
4.2	Structure of the language course into which the module was integrated.	146
4.3	Macro-methodological steps for the teaching of verbal interaction and culture.	155
4.4	The micro teaching components: the programme for teaching content and samples of classroom activities.	171
4.5	Evaluation of the module and concluding remarks.	193
	<i>Conclusion</i>	199
	Conclusion	202
	References	215

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## Introduction

For many years, as a French language teacher in Australia, I had heard myself often say to my students: "yes, this is grammatically correct, but we (French people) just wouldn't say it that way". I would then inevitably launch into lengthy explanations, giving anecdotal evidence of why "we would not say it that way" but the other way, that is "the socially and culturally appropriate way". My explanations and anecdotes however had always left me with some sense of frustration, that it was not quite enough, that there was more about human verbal interaction in a foreign language than I taught my students. I therefore naturally became very eager to find out what was in the gap between "grammatically correct" and "culturally appropriate" language use. I had intuited that the answer to my quest would lead me to fully rethink my views on the nature of language and in particular of spoken language. I had also hoped that this rethinking would lead me to review my approach to language teaching and my general sense of purpose for practicing this profession.

It is with this frame of mind that I have embarked into postgraduate research, to find out the links between spoken language and culture and to explore the implications of that knowledge for language teaching.

To answer my questions I have turned to research in discourse analysis - in particular pragmatics, conversation analysis and cross-cultural communication - as well as research in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and second language pedagogy. Despite my appetite for "reliable academic knowledge" I was also always acutely aware that research on spoken language alone would not provide all the answers.

This thesis is therefore an account of a reflection on the nature of spoken language and its relationship to culture as well as the presentation of an explorative endeavour into a new way of teaching verbal interaction in a foreign language. Considerable references are made to the teaching of spoken French since it is the language I am teaching. The overall argument of the thesis is however applicable to all foreign language teaching situations.

Chapter one is an historical overview of the treatment of spoken skills and culture in second language teaching theories and methodologies. We felt it was important to situate one's work within the field in which it operates. It was a way to ensure that the argument we sustain throughout the thesis is linked to the work of many others in the past who have sought to improve language teaching and in particular the teaching of spoken skills.

In chapter two our premise is that culture in everyday verbal interaction is not easily identifiable. We argue that the invisible, intangible cultural features of language use constitute the basis on which the visible, tangible linguistic forms of language is created. We suggest that the invisible cultural features of language use have to be made explicit in order to be teachable. We present seven teachable components of language use in which culture can be found.

Chapter three recognizes that knowing where to find culture in verbal interaction does not imply automatically knowing how to teach the cultural embedment of spoken language. Furthermore this chapter shows that teaching language as an expression of culture pushes the boundaries of traditional language teaching and expands the notion of "communicative competence" into "intercultural communicative competence".

Chapter four offers a methodology for the teaching of verbal interaction and culture which stems from my experience as a language teacher who has tried to implement a new approach to teaching spoken language. A detailed account is given on what has actually happened in the classroom in terms of methodology and learning tasks. This account includes also a reflection on what has happened and what we can learn from it.



# Chapter 1

## *Reflection on the treatment of spoken language skills and culture in second language teaching theories and methodologies*

### 1.1 Introduction

The aim of this first chapter is to give an historical perspective to the propositions we make in subsequent chapters for an approach to teaching everyday verbal interaction as an expression of culture. We wish to show that any new direction in language teaching is part of a natural historical development towards a better understanding of the nature of language use and of teaching a second language. By *natural historical development* we infer that any personal inquiry into a new language teaching theory/methodology does not happen in isolation from the past or the current works of others who have shared and continue to share the same interests. We suggest that observing past and current approaches to language teaching allows us to reflect on why we are doing (on a personal level) what we do today in a particular way. Giving a historical context to a personal inquiry and experience is therefore a way to better understand, and hence also a way to better articulate, this experience.

As the object of this thesis is to give particular focus to the teaching of *verbal interaction and culture in a second language* we have sought to trace and observe *the specific treatment of spoken skills* throughout the history of language teaching. That is we have sought to understand how the teaching of spoken skills has been approached in the past and how this tells us about past conceptions of the nature of spoken language and the goals of language

teaching. Our observation is meant to provide an overview rather than a detailed account of the treatment of spoken skills in all theories and methodologies of language teaching known to this day. This would be a very worthwhile task but well beyond the scope of our study. Our overview therefore presents a limited diachronic description of the history of the teaching of one language skill. It aims solely at supporting our argument that spoken language as used in everyday verbal interaction ought to be taught as a carrier as well as a producer of highly valuable cultural knowledge and that in turn this perspective on spoken language implies a new language pedagogy.

Many scholarly works have been written on the history of language teaching (see for example: Mackey 1965, Rivers 1968, Kelly 1969, Titone 1968, Stern 1983, Larsen-Freeman 1986, Puren 1988, Germain 1993).

For our study, to cover the periods from antiquity to the first part of the 20th century, we chose to concentrate mainly but not exclusively on the works of Kelly, Stern, Larsen-Freeman and Germain for the following reasons. Germain offers the most comprehensive chronological history of language teaching from 5000 years ago up until the 1980's. Stern offers a sketch and an analytical description of recent and current trends from 1880 to 1980. He therefore covers in details the period we are most interested in. Kelly chose a thematic approach to a history of language teaching which has allowed him to offer a reflective insight and "describe the ideas that make up teaching methods" (Kelly 1969). Larsen-Freeman focuses on the presentation and reflection on eight well-known language-teaching methods still currently in use. The four authors mentioned above provided us with a chronological development of language teaching and a detailed description and reflection on theories and methodologies known up until today in mainly Western Europe and the U.S.A. We have added to our framework developments in language teaching in the 90's which were not covered by

any of the four authors.

We are aware that our inquiry is necessarily biased and limited since it cannot consider the history of language teaching in orate (non-literate) societies for the lack of available records and it does not consider language teaching in other parts of the world apart from almost exclusively Western Europe, North America and Australia.

For our convenience we have divided the history of language teaching into four periods as follows:

- Period one:           Antiquity to 15th Century
- Period two:           16th and 17th Centuries
- Period three:         18th, 19th and early 20th Centuries
- Period four:         20th Century

We will start developping our argument from period one but will discuss in more depth developments in language teaching in the 20th century and more specifically from the period of the emergence of the communicative approach in the 1970's until the more recent developments of the 1990's.

In order to sustain clarity and focus in our argument we have chosen to examine the four historical periods of language teaching mentioned above using five referential aspects of language teaching.

Each period was therefore observed under the five following headings:

- 1) Purpose of Second Language Teaching (SLT) in the relevant period.
- 2) Identification of the main language skills emphasized in the theory or methodology under scrutiny, as well identification of the main features of the teaching approach used.
- 3) Explicit and/or implicit links made by the theory or methodology on the links between spoken language and culture.
- 4) Description of the role of learners' first language in the given theory or

methodology.

5) Description of the particular aspects of spoken language the theory or methodology focuses on.

Stern (1983:77) has pointed out that any historical survey of language teaching should distinguish between ideas and actual practice. Our survey distinguishes between the two but is also a blend of the two as we believe ideas and practice are intimately related. Practice can lead to new ideas and vice-versa. It is not our purpose to trace in very specific terms for example whether Montaigne's ideas on language teaching did or did not have a significant impact on language teaching. Any new idea or practice in language teaching is bound to make an impact on those who are open to them. The impact an encounter with a new idea or practice might have on different individuals is not up to historical analysts to decide. What is certain is that ideas and practice in any field become part of a *collective mind* which pushes towards future developments. Our overview of the treatment of spoken skills throughout the history of language teaching is an attempt to gain insight into the collective mind of language teachers and linguists of all times who have contributed to our current understanding of the nature of language, its relationship to socio-cultural environments and the implications of these progressive understandings for the language teaching profession.

## **1.2 Approaches to teaching a second language from antiquity to 15th Century (see table 1.1 p14)**

### **1.2.1 Teaching of Sumerian, archaic Egyptian and Ancient Greek as second languages.**

Since the beginning of time human beings have taught themselves foreign

languages from direct contact with foreigners when they have needed to communicate with others who did not speak the same language. The history of this informal "language teaching" or for that matter any "formal" language teaching which might have taken place in orate/pre-literate societies in ancient times is of course not recordable.

Any record of language teaching therefore always comes to us through a written medium.

Although written language appeared about 10,000 years ago in selective populations around the world (Kaplan 1986:9), the first written evidence of the teaching of a second language appears to date from 5000 years ago when writing started to be more widely used (Germain 1993:21).

According to (Germain 1993) - who derived most of his information from Kramer (1957) and Kramer (1963) - during the Sumerian civilisation (today near Bagdad in Irak), the written form of Sumerian language (cuneiform writing) was first taught to Sumerian scribes and later to the elite of the Akkadian people who had invaded Sumer. After the Akkadians took over Sumer, Akkadian became the dominant language used in daily life. Sumerian quickly became a dead language and as such it really became a second language for the inhabitants of Sumer who no longer used this language in their everyday interactions. The written form of Sumerian was then the only language taught formally in schools. As a sacred language which "froze" the most valued body of knowledge in this society, written Sumerian was the embodiment of "high" culture and hence of social promotion.

Regardless of political or historical explanations, the association of "written language" with the most valued form of recording "cultural knowledge" seems therefore to have existed since ancient times and persists up until

today. Spoken Sumerian and later spoken Akkadian in Sumer, the languages of everyday use, were not taught or even spoken in schools as they were not associated with “valued” cultural or other content. Oral communication used in the practice of teaching was in Sumerian. The fact that subjects other than language (ie: science, agriculture, medicine etc...) were also taught in the written form of Sumerian - a “dead” language - shows, in this society, the undervaluing of everyday spoken language as an appropriate medium to carry knowledge. We will observe throughout this chapter over and over again the clear disproportionate distribution of social and political power between spoken language of everyday use perceived as “cultureless”, and written forms of languages taught in schools as the hallmark of the only valued form of cultural expression.

The only aspect of spoken language taught formally in the schools of ancient Sumer was correct pronunciation of the written form of Sumerian. Teaching focused on the rote learning of lists of written words or symbols.

With regard to the linguistic situation of ancient Egypt and, as in ancient Sumer, the only language taught formally was a form of archaic language which had very few links with the language people used in their everyday interactions. Only archaic Egyptian was taught in schools. In this sense it can be considered to have been a second language of young Egyptians - mainly scribes to be - who had to learn it.

What is of interest to us is that the reason why only archaic Egyptian was taught formally as a “foreign” language was that it was the language of “the M’at”, the ethical code of conduct of this society. The M’at was considered to be the most valued body of knowledge that schools or any educator had the duty to teach.

Again we find here a case where the highest expression of culture is associated with writing expression through a language which was not used

by the people of this society in everyday verbal interactions.

The correct pronunciation of the M'at was the only "spoken skill" formally taught in ancient Egypt. Emphasis was given to mainly rote learning of maxims from the M'at.

Apart from archaic Egyptian, other languages were learnt by Egyptians in ancient Egypt out of necessity. They were languages mainly government administrators needed to learn to communicate with "conquered" foreigners in the Egyptian Empire. According to Germain (1993:36) there are no records of how those languages were learnt but he assumes they were not taught in schools but learnt through direct contact. The inference here is that language needed for direct use in ordinary life did not need to be taught.

In Ancient Greece we find the same situation as the two cases mentioned above. Only the language of classical authors was taught in schools. It was an archaic form of language for the students who had to learn it. The Greek of the classic authors was far removed from the Greek language people spoke in daily life. Again in this case, the only language taught institutionally was very distant from the language of common use. We argue that the early historical split between a higher and lower form of language within the same society created a particular archetype in the western European collective mind for the conceptualization of what constitutes valuable language teaching. This archetype is still deeply ingrained within us and can be summarized as follows: what is regarded as a higher form of language is generally associated with "written language" and "high culture" while a perceived lower form of language is generally associated with "spoken language for daily use" and is considered "cultureless". We will come back to this distinction later in our argument.

The Greek of the classic authors was of course representative of the only form of valued cultural knowledge. Correct pronunciation of classical Greek

was taught as a “spoken skill”. Great emphasis was given to the study of grammar, poetic vocabulary and the philological study of texts. The study of a “second” language in this sense differed from the study of Sumerian and ancient Egyptian in that it required some analytical study by learners as opposed to rote learning.

Languages other than Greek were not studied in ancient Greece as they were regarded as “barbarian” uncivilized languages, in other words languages which were not carriers of a culture worthy of study.

The tendency of any society to teach only what it values within the limits of the culture it produces seems to be intrinsic to the nature of human societies. Not much has changed in this regard since antiquity.

### *1.2.2 Teaching of Greek and Latin to Romans*

In ancient Rome, education was bilingual. Students learnt and were taught different subjects (ie: mathematics, geometry, philosophy, law etc...) in either Greek or Latin (Germain 1993: 43- 47). Greek was taught as a learned tongue as Greek culture - works of the classics - was highly valued. Latin was taught through the study of the classical authors, also regarded as high culture.

In schools (reserved to the elite in the cities) focus was given to the study of written skills. Rote learning, imitation and reciting were important aspects of the teaching approach.

Students learnt Greek and Latin (as found in the classics) as second languages as they were not the languages they spoke at home. Vulgar Latin, far removed from classical Latin, was the dominant first language for daily verbal interactions.

Classical Latin and Greek were “learnt” as spoken languages rather than “taught formally” in an institution. In the confinement of their homes, children of the Roman aristocracy were taught “to speak” the learned



tongues (classical Greek and Latin) from an early age by a slave or a servant employed for this purpose.

Our point is that in ancient Rome focus in schools was not given to the study of spoken skills in a second language because what was regarded as valuable cultural knowledge was accessed through the study of written texts in Greek and Latin. This also points to the fact that the study of language was valued primarily because it gave access to high culture and not for its inherently "language" value as a medium of communication.

With regard to the teaching of spoken language, it is interesting to note that in ancient Rome, as reported by Marrou (1960) and Titone (1968), manuals of what was called "daily conversation" (*quotidiana conversatio*) were used in schools. There were not in fact transcripts of everyday conversations as literally spoken by people but a presentation of written language shaped into dialogues for a more accessible - as in more "lively" - delivery of a targeted body of knowledge. In this case, the manuals of conversation used in ancient Rome were mainly used to teach grammar. Germain (1993) reminds us that it was common in antiquity for "dialogues" using the written form of a language to be used to present a given content:

"Il faut préciser que la présentation d'écrits sous une forme dialoguée n'est pas nouvelle: même la plupart des écrits philosophiques de Platon (5e-4e siècle avant notre ère) se présentent sous la forme de dialogues" (Germain 1993:45)

We must add that in ancient Rome the teaching of oratory skills was of significant importance in the later years of schooling. Oratory skills however, although a form of spoken skills, had more to do with the ability to demonstrate style and eloquence in public speeches using classical Greek or Latin than the ability to communicate in daily verbal interaction which is

what we mean today when we refer to spoken skills in a foreign language.

### *1.2.3 Teaching of Latin and other vulgar tongues (12th-15th Centuries)*

During the middle-ages in Europe, after the fall of the Roman empire Latin in schools was taught as both a spoken and written language. Spoken Latin was taught through the rote memorization of dialogues and also psalms which students were required to sing. Singing was also used to memorize grammar (ie: cases, verb endings etc...)

From the 12th century onwards, national languages (ie: French, Italian, Spanish etc...) started to emerge and to compete more and more with Latin in the school systems. As national languages became the main medium of communication in daily life rather than Latin they started to first be "used" in schools between teachers and students during classroom interaction and then they started to be taught formally.

Approaches to teaching national languages in schools (known then as "vulgar tongues") followed the approach used until then to teach Latin (Puren 1988:24-33 and Germain 1993:51-65). That is, great emphasis was given to grammar and vocabulary. Following the tradition in the teaching of Latin of using dialogues, the teaching of "vulgar tongues" also made a great use of dialogues. As grammars of the newly formed national languages were not available as yet, the use of dialogues which attempted to reproduce the language of use in everyday life were popular teaching material (Germain 1993:58).

It is interesting to note that towards the end of the middle ages although national languages, the "vulgar tongues", were slowly appearing in education as a legitimate teaching subject, Latin which was becoming a dead language was still the main and only language taught in schools. According to Puren (1988:24) in France for instance it was only during the second half of the 17th century that French - and in particular "written" French - started

to be taught more widely.

As in the case of vulgar Latin in antiquity, “vulgar” tongues towards the end of the middle ages - “vulgar” from the Latin *vulgaris* meaning multitude - represented the languages spoken by “the multitude”, that is the majority of the “common” people. It is worth noting that spoken language as “language used by the majority of a people” has tended in the past to be always undervalued over the learned tongues used by “a minority of people”, the intellectual elite. It is therefore not only written language which has been valued over spoken language. Language used only by the elite has tended to be valued more than language used by “the people”. We will argue more strongly later that it is in part the recurrent biased perception of spoken language of everyday life as not worthy of teaching because of its “culturelessness” which has prevented us from seeing and appreciating the rich cultural component embedded in everyday verbal interaction.

### *Summary*

In Antiquity, it was through the learning of a second language, mainly in its written form, that a people could gain access to what was considered the realm of high culture. Correct pronunciation of the written form of the second language was the main aspect of “spoken skills” teachers focused on. First languages used in daily verbal interactions were not perceived as carriers of valuable cultural content and they were hence not considered worthy of being formally taught in schools.

From Antiquity to the middle ages, from the records available we can say that second languages were taught as either dead or semi- living languages depending on their exact sphere of use in a given society. Second languages taught in schools were learnt to access what was perceived as the higher expression of culture in society. Generally speaking, as in the case of the teaching of Greek and Latin, learners’ first language (ie: the language used in

everyday life) was not used or used very little in the school environment, as it was considered too "vulgar", not suitable enough for use in a learned environment. Explanations about any aspect of a second language were given in the second language itself. Learners also learnt a second language through immersion by learning other subjects in the second language. Approaches to teaching focused mainly on the teaching of vocabulary using rote learning and grammar as embedded in "sacred" or literary text. The only aspect of spoken language taught or rather practiced formally - mainly through reciting, and later singing in the Middle ages - was correct pronunciation. When dialogues were used to teach a second language as in Ancient Greece and Rome and later throughout Europe, it was mainly to give a more lively context for the illustration of grammatical correctness. These dialogues were not faithful transcriptions of everyday spoken language, they were rather written texts shaped into dialogues.

	<b>Purpose of SLT</b>	<b>Main skills emphasized and approach to teaching</b>	<b>Links between L2 and culture</b>	<b>Role of first language</b>	<b>Aspects of spoken language emphasized</b>
<b>Sumerian (3000 BC to 2350 AD)</b>	Sumerian taught as sacred language to "invaders" of the country, to scribes mainly.	Written mainly rote learning of vocabulary. Correct pronunciation	Written sumerain symbol of higher culture and status. Other school subjects taught in Sumerian (immersion)	Reserved for spoken language in every day use. Not taught or spoken in schools. use in translation of L2 into L1 to assist pronunciation of L2.	Correct pronunciation.
<b>Egyptian (3000 BC to 2100 AD)</b>	Teaching to scribes of sacred K (The Ma'at) in ancient Egyptian no longer spoken. Languages learnt for communicative needs with foreigners not taught formally.	Written. Teaching of phrases not words. Rote learning. Some grammar taught.	Learning of the Ma'at = learning of Egyptian ethics (truth and order).	L1 (non-archaic Egyptian) is used for communication in daily use.	Correct pronunciation.
<b>Ancient Greece</b>	Teaching of classic authors akin to teaching an L2. No teaching of other "barbarian" tongues.	Pronunciation / correct grammar/ poetic vocabulary and philological study of texts. Role learning + analysis.	L2 (ancient Greek) is high culture and the only one studied formally.	L1 is not learnt formally. Used for spoken language in daily use.	Correct pronunciation.
<b>Ancient Rome</b>	Greek taught to Romans as learned tongue. and Latin of the classics to upper class in cities.	Emphasis on written skills but use of bilingual manuals of vocabulary and conversations. Rote learning and imitation, reciting, grammar, immersion. Also teaching of "l'art oratoire and eloquence".	Written Classic Greek and Latin are taught as high culture.	L1 (Vulgar Latin) is not taught formally except partially through written dialogues Latin of the classics akin to a L2.	Pronunciation / reciting and eloquence in public speech.
<b>12th - 15th centuries</b>	Classic Latin taught as L2 and other vulgar tongues (ie: french, German etc...) taught for trade needs.	Spoken and written. Manuals of conversation to teach grammar. and also psalms. for Latin (sung and recited)	Latin of the Classics alone is considered culture and "high" culture	L1 is vulgar Latin not taught formally except partially through dialogues.	Classical spoken latin in use in schools over vulgar Latin (L1) /Reciting/singing.

**Table 1.1: Approaches to language teaching from Antiquity to 15th Century.**

### 1.3 Approaches to language teaching from the 16th to 17th Centuries (see Table 1.2).

Language teaching in Western Europe during the Renaissance developed in different directions. Firstly, it was marked by a renewed interest in the study of classical texts in their purest form. It was perceived that during the Middle Ages classical Greek and Latin had been invaded by impurities which had to be removed in order to avoid spreading barbarisms (Kelly 1969:36). This teaching by the book led to the production of complex grammar books to support the linguistic analysis of classical texts. Studying a language (ie: Latin or Greek) was no longer primarily a way to access high culture as it had been in the past. It became an intellectual exercise in itself (Germain 1993:60).

In time, the awareness that this “purist” approach to language teaching was ineffective became widespread (Puren 1986:25) and new approaches to language teaching started to be articulated by different thinkers. They are the ones we will explore now for our argument because they represented the seeds of future developments.

We will look at language teaching ideas in the works of Ascham, Montaigne, Locke and Comenius as representatives of the major progressive trends in language teaching during the 16th and 17th centuries. We will concentrate only on features of interest to us (see Table 1.2).

What is common to the four thinkers mentioned above is the idea that a second language is best taught using an inductive approach, that is through direct exposure to the target language. “Direct exposure” though did not necessarily equate using the language in authentic verbal interaction. It rather meant practising the language through, for instance, translation or ludic activities because direct contact with native speakers, although an ideal, was not an easily accessible reality.

	Purpose of SLT	Main skills emphasized / approach	Links between L2 and culture	Role of first language	Aspects of spoken language emphasized
Ascham	"Pure" Latin taught as dead lang. as a mean to promote style in spoken expression	spoken and written skills/ double translation/ Imitation/ Grammar by induction.	Latin gives access to classics regarded as guardian of "culture".	L1 is used in double translation.	Style/ stylistic variation.
Montaigne	Latin/Greek and other languages learnt primarily for communicative needs.	Communicative skills through direct contact with L2 and ludic activities.	L2 (other than Latin and Greek) as access to K of ways and customs of L2 country # to access to high culture..	L1 not taught or used in schools.	Use of L2 for authentic communicative purposes except for Latin and Greek..
Locke	Recognition # purposes for learning requires # teaching approaches.	1/L2 for communication = speaking + reading (no formal grammar) 2/L2 for perfection and style = formal grammar.	L2 learnt for communicative purposes not strongly associated with valuable cultural content.	L1 not taught or used in schools but recommends it should be.	L2 should be learnt through practice. Formal grammar not essential but necessary when contact with native speakers not available.
Comeniuss	L2 should be learnt to fulfill real communicative needs with foreigners. Latin and greek reserved to special needs.	Spoken and written. Illustration (images) + e xamples must precede learning of rules. Use of all senses to teach and ludic activities.	L2 as access to everyday culture not just "antique" culture from the classics.	K of L1 seen as support to learn L2	Teaching of spoken language linked to concrete visible world (ie: illustrated vocabulary)

**Table 1.2: Approaches to language teaching 16th - 17th Centuries**

The inductive approach also implied then that a second language was best learnt in the way a first language was learnt (Kelly 1969:39), that is without any formal teaching of grammar. The inductive approach, as understood in this period of language teaching history, suggested that a second language had to be "used" and not just "learnt as rules of writing" to be acquired. The teaching of grammar was not excluded altogether from the language teaching curriculum but it was delayed to more advanced studies of language.

### 1.3.1 Ascham

Ascham (16th century) advocated the use of double translation and imitation for an inductive teaching of grammar (Germain 1993:71-72). He saw the teaching of Latin in its purest form as a way to promote style in both spoken and written expression. As a supporter of the inductive approach, Ascham was a progressive thinker in his time but overall he was still preaching for an education in the classic, humanist tradition giving most importance to the teaching of Latin as access to high culture.

### 1.3.2 Montaigne and Comenius

Montaigne, on the other hand, as early as the 16th century promoted very strongly the idea that second languages ought to be taught primarily to acquire communicative skills. In the case of languages other than Greek or Latin in Montaigne's view - shared by Comenius in the 17th century - (Germain 1993:71-98) second languages ought also to be learnt to gain access to knowledge of ways and customs of a foreign culture. This was an innovative idea at the time since "culture" until then had been only associated with the study of selected written texts. Thinkers like Montaigne expanded the concept of "culture" as a valuable body of knowledge from culture as found in the classic authors to include culture as found in the customs of a foreign people. Moreover this "other" form of culture was to be acquired through communication with the speakers of a second language.

Apart from the recognition of customs/ways of life as valuable cultural content, Renaissance thinkers such as Montaigne and Comenius also intuited the distinction Widdowson (1978) was later to make explicit, between "usage" of language as knowledge of forms and "use" of language as the ability to use the target language for communicative purposes.

Comenius, who was famous for introducing the use of images in the



language classroom as visual aids for the learning of vocabulary, also insisted on the importance of using all of the learner's senses to optimize language learning (Germain 1993: 85-98). In a seed form Comenius' ideas suggested that language learning was not a solely intellectual activity. It involved an engagement of the learner as a physical and non physical entity. This is a view we share and will elaborate on further in our discussion.

### *1.3.3 Locke*

Locke's ideas on language teaching in the 17th Century add to those we have mentioned above in that he recognised the need to develop different language teaching approaches to suit the varied purposes learners might have for learning a language. For example, learners seeking to achieve communicative competence in a second language (the majority of learners in his view) should learn through using the language by speaking and reading it. In Locke's view knowledge of grammar for communicative competence was absolutely unnecessary.

In the 16th and 17th Centuries, learners' first language was largely used to support the learning of a second language either by way of translation or through explanation in learners' first language.

Comenius like Montaigne suggested the use of ludic activities to teach languages including role-plays to promote learners' use of the target language (Germain 1993:93).

### *Summary*

During the 16th and 17th Centuries Latin in Western Europe was still the main second language taught in schools. The Renaissance movement had sought a strict interpretation of the classical authors and had given emphasis for the first time to the teaching of decontextualised grammar that is,

teaching grammar as separate from the teaching of literature. Languages other than Latin were not widely taught in schools. Learners' first language was used more in the language classroom than it had before mainly through translation exercises. Very little emphasis was given to the teaching of spoken skills.

Some prominent thinkers of that period however, like Montaigne, Locke and Comenius went against the main current and promoted the teaching of languages, Latin and other languages, for communicative purposes. They also recognised the value of studying a second language to access culture as it is embedded in the customs and way of life of a foreign people. This awareness represented a first step towards the conceptual linking of culture to language as everyday verbal interaction. How this linking operated was not clear at the time but at least there was an awareness that learning a foreign "spoken" language was a key to culture as experienced in the customs and ways of everyday life.

Progressive ideas such as those of Montaigne, Locke or Comenius, would have to wait several centuries before there were taken up again or rediscovered by educationalists with an interest in language teaching. During the 18th and most of the 19th centuries language teaching was yet to sink into more restricted views of what constitute valuable language and culture learning.

## **1.4 Approaches to language teaching in the 18th, 19th and early 20th Centuries (see table 1.3 below)**

### ***1.4.1 The Grammar-Translation method***

In the 18th century, the Grammar-Translation method started to become the mainstream model for the teaching of dead languages such as Latin and

Greek and of living languages such as French, Spanish etc... (Germain 1993:101). It is also during this period that the use of the learners' first languages to explain the grammar and syntax of Latin or other second languages taught in schools became widespread (Kelly 169:43-44).

The aim of the Grammar-Translation method was not primarily to teach learners to speak in the target language. Focus was given to the learning of grammar through the study of linguistic forms and the practice of translating, writing and reading skills (Stern 1983:454). As learning a language was mainly associated with learning a dead language (ie: Latin) by definition not a language of use, learning a language was mainly perceived as an intellectual training of the mind (Larsen-Freeman 1986:44). Learning spoken skills was not essential and, as Kelly (1969: 122) has noted, for that reason dialogues, which had been used extensively in previous periods, were excluded from the language classroom in the 19th century. Their disappearance from the language classroom was a statement that the teaching of spoken skills was not to be given any attention.

	Purpose of SLT	Main skills emphasized and approach to teaching	Links between L2 and culture	Role of first language	Aspects of spoken language emphasized
<b>18th-19th century</b>	Teaching of Latin (dead lang) as a model to teaching of all other languages. Aim: to read literature and translate.	Reading and writing. Grammar-translation: grammaire/ thème and then version/ grammaire. Learning L2 = learning rules.	Written lan. linked to culture only and "high culture".	L1 is used as a reference system in the acquisition of L2. L1 is used in class for explanations and instructions.	Oral expression and comprehension has low priority and status.
<b>Gouin (end of 19th C)</b>	Humanitarian purpose: to communicate with foreigners,	Spoken and written skills. Semantic ordering of items. Focus on sentence rather than word. Imitation of natural approach to lang. learning as in L1.	Strong interest in teaching lang of everyday activities. Unclear if this is recognised as valuable "culture".	Strong analogy between learning of L1 and L2.	Perfect pronunciation not essential in early stages of lang. learning. Learning of spoken lang. should precede learning of written lang.
<b>End of 19th C start of 20th C</b>	Communicative purpose. Direct exposure to L2. Direct method)	The 4 skills but priority given to oral skills. Direct method = automaticity emphasized, Use of pictorial illustration and association rather than explanation. Vocabulary more important than grammar.	Study of L2 culture = everyday life + history, geography etc...	No recourse to L1. No translation into L1.	Phonetics/Correct pronunciation important from start. Conversing in L2 is important but mainly through use of question-answer exercises in the context of "situations:" (ie: "at the post-office").
<b>1920's</b>	Training in reading comprehension seen as the most practical attainable skill in schools.	Reading strategies and introduction of graded material.	No special focus on linking reading in L2 and culture.	Use in translation.	Introduction to L2 is oral with focus on pronunciation to support "inner speech" as an aid to reading comprehension.

**Table 1.3: Approaches to language teaching in the 18th, 19th early 20th Centuries.**

In the Grammar-Translation method, written language alone was linked to culture, and to 'high culture' only. The learners's first language was used as a reference system for the acquisition of the target language. That is grammar of the learner's first language was used to guide the selection of what ought to be taught in the target language. Teaching a foreign language was largely a comparative exercise of L1 and L2 grammars.

### 1.4.2 The Direct method

Towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, dissatisfaction with the Grammar-Translation method became widespread. Various new methods appeared at that time which can all come under the label of "Direct method" for they shared much in common (Stern 193:456). The French reformist Gouin for instance in his book *L'art d'enseigner les langues* (Gouin 1880) put forward some of the main features of the direct method to teaching a second language: spoken skills should be taught before writing and reading skills, the target language alone should be used in the language classroom and translation should be avoided at all cost. In Gouin's theory, focus was given to the description of "activities" in the target language not of the mechanics of communication. Gouin promoted the linking of forms to meaning and hence proposed that the teaching of sentences was more useful than the teaching of decontextualised words. He did not show however any awareness of the cultural component embedded in daily verbal interaction nor did other advocates of the Direct method in this historical period. Gouin's main merit is that he tried to base his teaching methodology on some sort of self-made theory of both the nature of language and language acquisition (Stern 1993: 153). The attempt of basing language methodology on a theory of language and language acquisition (regardless of whether it was well-founded or not) was new at the time. Gouin's work was therefore innovative in this respect too.

The main aspects of spoken language emphasized by most supporters of the direct method were: correct pronunciation from the beginning of language instruction, focus on "automatic" use rather than analysis of the target language, emphasis on sentences rather than words and on vocabulary over grammar, practice of questions and answers and some authentic

conversation.

In the direct method, the teaching of culture was associated with but not part of language learning. Culture, as adjunct knowledge to language, meant studying both the fine arts and people's daily lives.

### *Summary*

In many ways the Direct method did not conceptualized many new ideas on language teaching rather it applied many ideas which had already been proposed by thinkers such as Montaigne, Locke or Comenius (ie: learning through direct contact with second language, illustration rather than translation of vocabulary, inductive learning of rules, culture as way of life). The main merit of the Direct method was to have reacted against the downgrading of the teaching of spoken skills by the grammar-translation method. It promoted oral communication as the primary purpose of language teaching as opposed to language teaching as an intellectual-exercise.

## **1.5 Approaches to language teaching in the 20th Century (see table 1.4 below).**

In the first quarter of the 20th century, different developments in language teaching took place in Europe and the United States. Marked differences in language teaching developments within the same historical period illustrate the confusion, or more positively viewed, the ongoing search in the language teaching profession for what ought to be taught in the language classroom and how it ought to be taught.

For example in France, after the first world war and under governmental instruction, a softer version of the direct method was implemented in

schools labelled "La méthodologie active" (Puren 1988). Although this new "active methodology" was no more than a return to the teaching of forms as in the Grammar-Translation method, it still gave some focus to spoken language. As in the direct method it emphasized correct pronunciation through imitation. Its "innovative" development was to allow again the use of the learners' first language in the classroom to explain new vocabulary and grammar. The French active methodology recognized (or re-recognised) that reflection on the target language structures was essential for successful learning outcomes. It rejected the strict use of automatic learning of the Direct method.

Meanwhile, during the same period in the United States, language teaching was taking a different direction in some aspects. In 1924 the results of a long term study on the outcomes of language learning in high schools and universities indicated that not enough time was allocated to language classes to produce satisfactory learning outcomes (Brown 1980). Consequently, it was recommended that schools aimed at reaching "attainable goals" in the language classroom. Reading and the learning of grammar were perceived as attainable goals and this led to a return of the Grammar-Translation method (Brown 1980:241). The teaching of spoken language was no longer a priority except for the teaching of pronunciation. In our historical survey of language teaching we have noted over and over again that when spoken language is not given a priority in the language classroom, the only spoken skill which always receives some attention is the teaching of correct pronunciation.

Both the French "active methodology" and the American "reading approach" despite their differences were essentially conservative reactions against the Direct method.

In the 20th Century, apart from early differences of orientations in language teaching between Europe and the United States what is important to note is

that from the period of World War II onwards language teaching on both continents was going to be associated with the linguistic sciences. This period marked the beginning of the scientific era for language pedagogy (Germain 1993:137). Language educators and linguists from that time on were going to try to engage in a dialogue trying to give a scientific basis to the teaching of languages.



	Purpose of SLT	Main skills emphasized and approach to teaching	Links between L2 and culture	Role of first language	Aspects of spoken language emphasized
<b>1940-1960's</b> American Army method (ASTP) led to Audiolingual method	Military needs to teach L2 for oral aural communicative aims in the 40's.	Focus on oral/ aural skills. Pattern drills of syntactic structures./ Use of lang.labs. Lang.learning = habit formation. Verbal and non-verbal stimuli used.	Culture = information on way of life in L2 presented as adjunct K to language. Not culture as embedded in L2.	L1 is used as a reference point/ comparison with L2 structures. L1 should not be used in lang.class.	Correct pronunciation and syntactic patterns. Focus on linguistic forms but no explanation of them.
<b>1950's</b> The situation method	Oral communication.	Priority to oral skills. syntactic structures. in "situation".	Culture = everyday behavior in L2	No use of L1 in classroom. No translation	Graded teaching of grammar and syntax taught in some context.
<b>1950's-1970's</b> Audiovisual method (SGAV)	Teaching spoken language for everyday communication	Aural/oral skills. Aural comprehension should precede oral production. L2 is taught in some simplified social context. Still focus on forms.	Focus on social nature and situational embeddedness of lang. Awareness that culture is embedded in lang but culture still presented as adjunct information.	L1 is used as in audio-lingual method.	Focus on global understanding of spoken text/ correct pronunciation/. No analysis of linguistic forms.. Non-verbal lang. taken into account.
<b>1960's</b> The Silent way (Gattegno 1962-1972)	To teach learners to express personal thoughts/feelings in L2. Also focus on learning t learn.	Four sills but priority given to oral skills. Focus on grammatical correctness is important.. Visual aids	Culture = daily activities but L2 is not taught in social context. Use of artificial situations.	L1 used for first instruction of method and as a reflective tool for learning	Fous on pronunciation (including rythm/ intonation) forms and vocabulary.
<b>Mid 60's</b> Suggestopedia (Lozanov 1979)	Freeing of mental potential to activate L2 learning for communicative goals	Primary focus on oral expression. Focus on meaning and non-verba language..	Culture = lifestyle in L2 + arts, music etc....	Translation into L1 is used to get meaning of new linguistic items across.	Focus on vocabulary and grammar. Written dialogues as starting points.
<b>Mid 70's /80's</b> Communicative language teaching	Teaching L2 as an instrument of social interaction.	Focus on four skills and meaning rather than forms. Teaching of forms within functions (usage + use of lang.)	Culture = lifestyle of everyday life. No clear point of articulation bw lang. and culture.	L1 can be used for explantion with discrimination	Focus on spoken lang. as social interaction.
<b>Total Physical Response</b>	To ensure learners enjoy learning L2.	Focus on listening skills . Actions used to convey meaning. Drills avoided.	Culture = lifestyle of people in L2.	L2 is used for instruction.	Understanding of meaning through listening and actions.
<b>90's</b> Intercultural communicative language teaching	Intercultural communicative competence	Focus on all skills. Link between skills and content emphasized	Links all forms of lang. expression to cultural codes. Language is culture.	1st lang. used as a tool for reflection on interculturality.	Focus on pragmatic norms and norms of interaction in oral texts.

**Table 1.3: Approaches to language teaching 20 th Century**

### *1.5.1 The Audio-lingual method*

In the U.S.A in the 1940's, structural linguistics played a major role in the establishment of what was going to become the Audio-lingual method (Stern 1983) in the mid-fifties. The Audio-lingual method spread to Europe and remained the dominant approach to language teaching up until the 1960's.

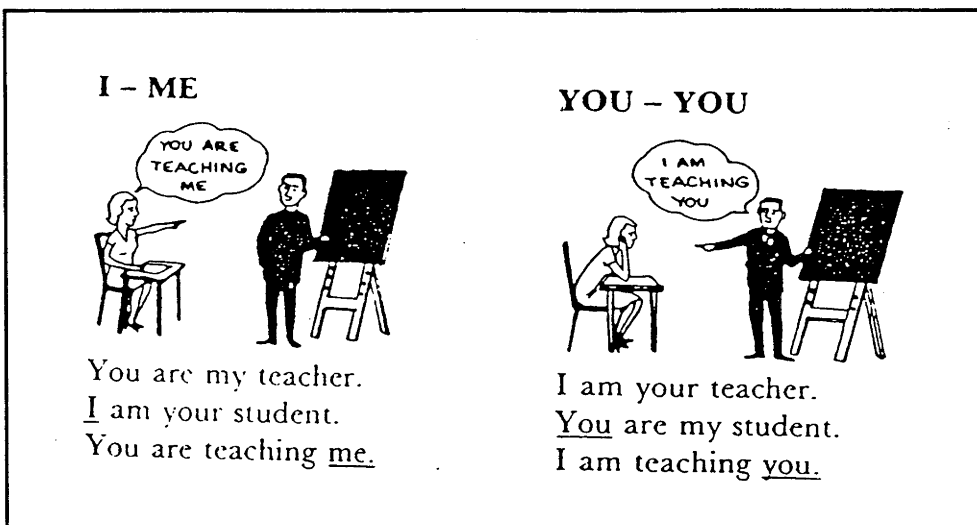
Essentially, the new aspects to the teaching of spoken language introduced by the audio-lingual method were the use of language laboratories for the practice of oral/aural skills through pattern drills. The Audio-lingual method was based on a behaviourist learning approach. The focus was on drilling language patterns rather than on meaning. For our concern it did not bring any substantial new understanding of the nature of spoken language. Culture in the audio-lingual method was still treated as an adjunct unit to language. The merit of the Audio-lingual method however was to have attempted to base language teaching material on a descriptive analysis of language. In English the work of Fries (Stern 1983:159) was particularly important for providing a structured description of English which could be used for pedagogical purposes. In France, similar descriptive work on the French language took place in the early 50's with the development of "Le Français fondamental" which was an attempt to deliver a summarised version of the essentials of French grammar and vocabulary for an easy and uniform diffusion of French language teaching throughout the world (Boyer 7 Pendanx 1990).

What stands out is the idea of basing language teaching on a description of language use. The problem is that the linguists or language educators who worked on the description of language for pedagogical purposes did so at that time with a preconceived idea of what language use was. What they

found was, therefore, limited by what they were looking for. Although the audio-method was based on a description of language use, the influence of structural linguistics at the time made this description only elicit the forms of language, forms as in grammatical structures or as in phonetic descriptions of the target language.

### 1.5.2 The Situation method and the Audio - visual method

Between the 1950's and the mid 70's many new methodologies were to be explored in the language classroom. Some methods such as the Situation method or the Audio-visual method attempted to present language in context. They did so by using pictorial "situations" or "scenes" which illustrated unrealistic models of verbal interaction, mainly to present linguistic forms or vocabulary with a more lively presentation than had been done before. Example A below shows an extreme example of inauthentic language contextualisation from a Situational English student's textbook used in the late 60's and early 70's to teach English to recent migrants to Australia:



**Example A: Teaching of personal pronouns using a Situational approach to language teaching<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Extract (p41) from "Situational English for Newcomers to Australia Part 2 - Students' book. Australian Government Publishing Service Canberra 1973.

In example A, the short verbal interactions presented show correct English sentences. The problem is that those sentences do not correspond to sentences likely to be found in an authentic verbal interaction between a teacher and his/her student. In this sense, they do not represent a valuable model of conversational exchange for learners of English as a second language. The situation method did what it attempted to avoid. It taught grammar outside of a real context.

Example B, is an extract from a French language textbook which uses an Audio-Visual approach. This textbook was still used in the mid 1980's in the international French language school the *Alliance Française*. Learners were meant to first develop their listening skills before they started speaking. Learners listened to an inauthentic dialogue from an audio tape trying to grasp meaning by looking at pictures which give the physical/social context of the interaction. In this example the verbal interaction given as an example of French greetings is totally static mainly aiming at presenting some lexical items involved in the act of greeting.

* Jacques :	Bonjour, madame Lenoir, bonjour, monsieur Lenoir. Ça va ?
Le concierge :	Ça va. Et vous, monsieur Martineau ?
Jacques :	Ça va. S'il vous plaît monsieur Lenoir, quelle heure est-il ?
Le concierge :	Il est dix heures !
Jacques :	Merci !
* Jacques :	Bonjour, monsieur l'agent.
L'agent :	Bonjour, monsieur Martineau.
* Jacques :	Salut, François. Comment ça va ?
François : (le coiffeur)	Salut, Jacques. Ça va. Et toi ?

**Example B : Teaching of French greetings using  
the Audio-visual approach<sup>2</sup>**

In chapter 2 we discuss at more length what has been missing in the past and is still missing today in models of verbal interaction as presented in

<sup>2</sup> Extract from "Sans Frontières 1" - Clé International 1982.p 8.

language textbooks. Our point for now is that historically when some awareness of the need to teach spoken language in context arose, the assumption that language was mainly a set forms and vocabulary together with the lack of research on the nature of spoken language prevented language educators from seeing or understanding the dynamic links between language and context.

### *Other new methodologies*

Other new methodologies were developed in the 60s and 70's as ways to improve language teaching , including the Silent way, Suggestopedia, Community Language Learning and Total Physical Response. These methods gave priority to the learning of spoken language, but they were not based on a new understanding of the nature of spoken language. Their merit was in exploring new pedagogical approaches to enhance learning outcomes. They mainly tried to involve learners more actively in the learning process, taking into account their personal thoughts and feelings (ie: Communicative language teaching) or freeing learners' mental potential (ie: Suggestopedia). These new methodologies contributed to making the language teaching profession more aware of the intrinsically human aspect involved in language learning.

We will now briefly review the essence of the four methodologies we have mentioned above as they have been presented by Larsen-Freeman (1986: 72-138).

#### *1.5.3 The Silent Way*

In the Silent Way, focus is given to linguistic structures starting with the phonetic system of the target language. Grammar is not taught formally,

language items are used in different situations created by the teacher. The learning of linguistic structures is done through constant recycling of new knowledge. Translation into learners' mother tongue is avoided. Meaning is somehow "arrived at" by sharpening learners' perceptions. Learners are encouraged to use language to express themselves creatively. Language drills are avoided. Learners are made responsible for their own learning.

The underlying philosophy of the Silent Way is that learners learn language by formulating rules to understand and create novel utterances in the target language. Language learning is therefore a product of rule formation rather than habit formation (Larsen-Freeman 1986:51). In the Silent Way, learners are encouraged to be independent from the teacher in order to have the mental space to create their own rules. Language teaching is meant to be subordinated to the learners' "learning processes" rather than the other way around.

#### *1.5.4 Suggestopedia*

The key idea in the Suggestopedia approach is that learners will make a better use of their mental reserves to learn a language if they do not fear failure. Language learning should take place in a relaxed environment and be an effortless and enjoyable endeavour. Imagination is used extensively to assist learning. Learners also assume new identities to reduce inhibition. Suggestopedia in many ways is a language teaching approach which attempts to reduce what Krashen (1978) has called "the affective filter" that is all the attitudinal variables which can prevent learning such as lack of confidence, inhibition etc...

In the Suggestopedia method, the teacher presents new grammar and vocabulary. Meaning is clarified through translation in the mother tongue.

### *1.5.5 Community Language Learning*

In this approach great emphasis is put on developing a group dynamic which will reduce learners' affective filter to language learning. Learners must be in control of their learning. Focus is on speaking and understanding using learners' first language when necessary. Grammar and other language items are studied as they emanate from learners' oral production during structured tasks. Learners take responsibility for generating the curriculum.

### *1.5.6 The Total Physical Response method*

This method differs from the others mentioned above in that its main focus is on listening skills as a first step to language learning. Actions are used to convey meaning and the target language is presented to learners in chunks rather than words. Language drills are avoided. Learners *must enjoy* the experience of using a foreign language. Again in this approach the teacher must attend to the reduction of learners' affective filter to maximize learning.

### *Summary*

The common trend in the four "alternative" language methodologies we have briefly reviewed above is the focus they give to learners. They all express genuine attempts to make language learning non-threatening and enjoyable. In all four methods the human feature of language learning is given priority over the cognitive aspect. Teaching culture means teaching about the lifestyle of people who speak the target language. No direct links are made between language use and culture.

In the 70's in the midst of language teaching methodologies, a slow

“revolution” was taking place in linguistic sciences and pedagogy which Brown (1980:243-244) has summarized as having four main aspects. Firstly there was a recognition that no single teaching methodology would ever satisfy the needs of all learners therefore it was thought language teachers should engage in an informed selection of approaches which work for the particular needs of their students. Secondly, language teachers should look not only to linguistics, psychology or education as worthwhile disciplines to inform the teaching of languages, they should also seek insight into the nature of language and those aspects of human behavior and pedagogy which are specifically relevant to language teaching. Thirdly it was recognized that the language learning process was not uniform amongst learners and therefore language classes should account for different learning styles. The fourth aspect of the 70’s “revolution” in language pedagogy was the growing body of research in second language acquisition (referred to as SLA hereafter). Ellis (1985:4-18), having made the point that language learning is highly variable, suggests that the value of SLA research is in that it attempts to identify aspects of language learning that are “relatively stable and hence generalizable, if not to all learners, then, at least, to large groups of learners” (Ellis 1985:4). The main merit of SLA research is to try to understand what learners do when they acquire a second language and the connection between learning and acquiring a language. SLA research outcomes, for those reasons, can potentially enlighten language teaching. In chapter 3 we explore in more detail how SLA research can assist the learning, acquiring and teaching of spoken language and culture.

Another branch of applied linguistics which became more prominent in the 70’s and is highly relevant to the teaching of verbal interaction and culture is research in discourse analysis. For our particular concern, it is important to note that research on spoken discourse has now evidenced one essential twofold obvious truth which is at the basis of our whole argument: a) everyday verbal interaction is complex and context-dependent, b) the study



of verbal interaction is essential to understand any given society as it is through the study of language use that we can access “culture in use”.

The last language teaching approach we will explore in this chapter is Communicative language teaching. We are giving it a broader focus than any other approach as it is an approach which is still currently widely used in many different language teaching contexts.

### *1.5.7 The Communicative Approach*

The Communicative Approach or Communicative Language teaching represents a variety of trends in syllabus design rather than the development of a new methodology (Brumfit 1979). It is difficult to trace where and when exactly it originated. Richards and Rogers (1986) suggest that it first appeared in the late sixties or early seventies in Great Britain as an answer to the failures of the Situation method. Melrose (1991) on the other hand proposes a less precise origin. He suggests that it is “with a change in the status of meaning in linguistics” that a new approach to language teaching emerged (Melrose 1991:2). Both Melrose (1991:2) and Germain (1993:202) agree that it is initiatives taken following instructions by the Council of Europe in 1972 to develop new language courses for adults which prompted a review of language teaching pedagogy and resulted in the emergence of the Communicative Approach.

From our point of view what is most important is that the proponents of the Communicative Approach “tapped into” the collective mind of researchers in linguistics and related fields who from the seventies onwards had centered their efforts on understanding the mechanics of human verbal interaction.

Wilkins (1976) laid down the foundations of the Communicative Approach with the first Notional Syllabus which presented language use to learners in

terms of “communicative functions”. The focus was therefore no longer on the teaching of forms exclusively but on forms within the functions of language use. The Notional Syllabus was soon to be criticised as it tended to present functions of language use as fixed language items, hence portraying language use as static rather than as a dynamic creative force (Melrose 1991:9).

After Wilkins (1976) first attempt to develop a communicative syllabus, many other developments were to take place. Germain (1993: 201:218) summarises the main aspects of Communicative Language Teaching as it is known today as follows:

- Language is primarily conceived as an instrument for social interaction.
- Communicative competence is the goal of language teaching (see below further discussion on the topic).
- Meaning in verbal interaction is the product of negotiation between interactants.
- Focus on the particular teaching of one of the four language skills (speaking/listening/reading/writing) is given according to learners’ needs.
- The teaching of culture refers to the teaching of daily life activities in the target language.
- Language learning is an active process which involves reflective skills on the part of the learner. The process of communication is as important as what it produces.
- Language teaching should mainly happen in the target language. Use of learners’ first language is however tolerated to assist in the comprehension of task instructions and for other explanations deemed necessary for the successful conduct of the language class.

Most of the key concepts of the Communicative approach are concepts we endorse except for one: that of the teaching of culture as being exclusively

the teaching of daily life activities in the target language and not culture as being also an integral part of the communication process. As pointed out by Liddicoat (1997) to succeed in the achievement of its goals, the Communicative Approach needs to be "a fully cultural approach" to teaching language. Instead it has taught culture as adjunct knowledge rather than as a central intrinsic component of it. Liddicoat does recognize however that the Communicative Approach did revolutionize language teaching in that it understood the necessity to teach learners more than linguistic forms, but as he noted the revolution went only so far. In particular, it did not recognize the full consequences of using communicative competence as the target for language teaching.

Before we elaborate on this point we will examine two models of Communicative Competence which have largely influenced Communicative Language Teaching in the 1980's: Canale and Swain's model (Canale & Swain 1980) and Bachman's model (Bachman 1990). We will discuss whether these models are adequate models to inform the teaching of verbal interaction and culture.

### *1.5.8 Canale and Swain' model of Communicative Competence*

Canale and Swain (1980) defined communicative competence in terms of three main components:

- 1/ Grammatical competence
- 2/Sociolinguistic/Discourse competence
- 3/Strategic competence

Grammatical competence refers to knowledge of the linguistic forms of language use such as grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation.

Sociolinguistic competence comprises sociocultural rules and rules of discourse with more emphasis given to the former. Strategic competence refers to all strategies verbal and non-verbal use by interactants "to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence" (Canale and Swain 1980:30).

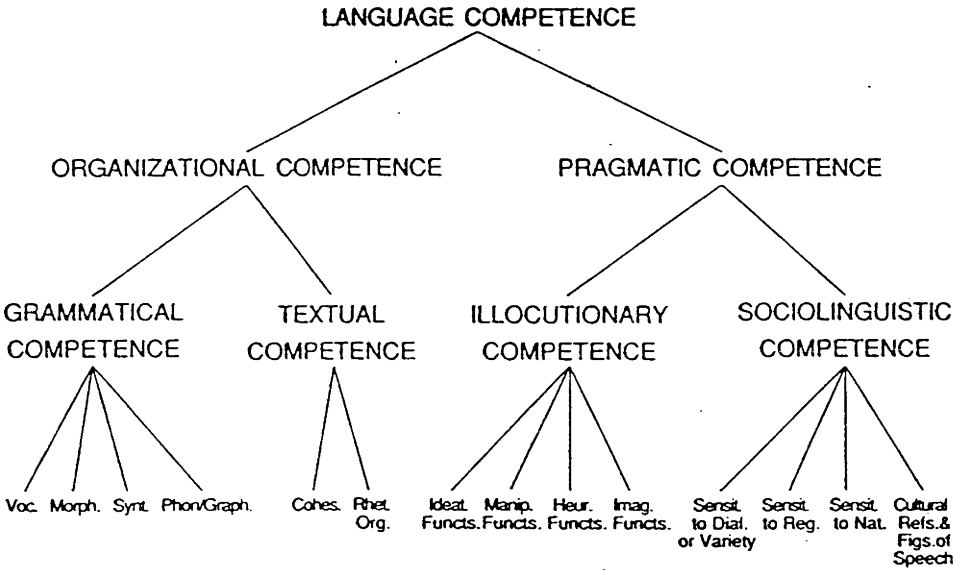
The main problem with Canale and Swain's model is that it includes culture only in its definition of sociolinguistic competence under the label "sociocultural rules". "Socio-cultural rules" is a very general concept which does not make transparent the full extent of the pervasive nature of culture in language use. In chapter two we argue that culture is embedded in not only sociocultural rules of language use but also in spoken grammar, familiar lexicon, gestures and prosody. Hence the distinction between grammatical competence and sociolinguistic competence is not necessarily of great value in an approach to the teaching of spoken language which takes as its premise that language is culture, all aspects of language. Canale and Swain's definition of strategic competence does not discuss enough the "strategies" learners have to use to cope with breakdowns of communication caused by inappropriate use or non-use of sociocultural rules and rules of discourse. It does not explore therefore the competence learners need to cope with the intercultural dimension of communication. It is not enough for learners to know about the cultural codes of the target culture, they also have to know what to do with those codes and more precisely what they wish to do with cultural differences. Knowing what to do and how to be in a foreign culture requires personal enquiry into the impact of the intrusion of foreignness into one's sense of identity and world view. In other words interacting successfully in a foreign culture is complex and goes far beyond knowledge of other cultural rules. Canale and Swain model of communicative competence was a first sketching of what communicative competence might be. Its shortfall is in not having integrated enough the role and impact of culture in communicative performance.

### *1.5.9 Bachman's model of Communicative Competence*

Bachman (1990) expanded the components of communicative competence laid down by Canale and Swain (1980). He first defines communicative language ability as having three components: language competence, strategic competence and psychological mechanisms (Bachman 1990:107). We will first comment on the last two. Strategic competence according to Bachman relates to the ability to use language appropriately. It performs "assessment, planning and execution functions in determining the most effective means of achieving a communicative goal" (Bachman 1990:108-109). Psychological mechanisms represent the auditor and visual channels as well as the receptive and productive modes in which competence is actualised (Bachman 1990:109). One must bear in mind that Bachman developed his communicative language ability framework for language testing and not language teaching purposes. Strategic and psychological competences in his model mapped out cognitive abilities inherent to communicative competence. This is interesting background knowledge for language teachers but not of direct relevance to the practice of language teaching. Bachman's detailed description of what he means by "language competence" is however of more relevance to us. We have reproduced his framework for a description of language competence in Table A below.

By organizational competence, Bachman refers to learners' abilities "to use" grammatical knowledge. He further sub-divides this competence into: grammatical and textual competences. Grammatical competence is again split into four categories of language knowledge which include: vocabulary, morphology, syntax and phonology. Textual competence includes cohesion - knowledge of the conventions for joining utterances to form a text - (Bachman 1990:88) and rhetorical organization which refers to the general discourse structure of a text and is related to the effect of a given text on the

language user (Bachman 1990:88). Bachman also recognises that conversational competence is part of textual competence. Conversational competence includes for example conventions to establish, maintain and terminate conversations.



**Table A: Bachman’s Components of language competence**  
**(Bachman 1990:87)**

By pragmatic competence, Bachman refers to learners’ ability to use utterances to perform acts and functions appropriately in the target culture. He further sub-divides this competence into illocutionary and sociolinguistic competence. Illocutionary competence is the ability to convey the propositional content of one’s own utterances in ways appropriate to the context in which such utterances are produced. Illocutionary force is then divided into four macro-functions of language use which are: ideational, manipulative, heuristic and imaginative. The illocutionary competence of a language learner when using the ideational function of language is expressed in his/her ability to produce meaning in utterances related to

his/her experience of the world. The manipulative functions of language use are those functions we use to make an impact on the environment we live in. It refers to the use of language to get things done. Speakers use the heuristic function of language to expand their knowledge of the world in such acts as teaching, learning, problem solving etc... (Bachman 1990:93). The imaginative function of language use refers to for instance telling jokes, creating fantasies or metaphors.

Under the label Sociolinguistic competence, Bachman refers to learners' ability to use the numerous language functions in a way which is appropriate to the context in which they are used:

*"Sociolinguistic competence is the sensitivity to, or control of the conventions of language use that are determined by the features of the specific language use context"* (Bachman 1990:94)

Bachman then elaborates the different "sensitivities" to the context of language use learners need to become competent speakers. He mentions sensitivity to differences in dialect or variety of language according to geographical circumstances. Sensitivity to differences in register between, for example, spoken and written language or between different social groups (ie: male footballers on a playing field do not speak like English ladies having tea). Sensitivity to naturalness refers to learners' ability to use language in a "nativelike way". Finally Bachman refers to the ability to interpret cultural references and figures of speech. By cultural references he means those language items in language use which make reference to general sociocultural background knowledge. For example for a second language learner to understand the French utterance: *Elle est aussi vieille que Jeanne Calmant* "She is as old as Jeanne Calmant" he or she would have to know that Jeanne Calmant refers to the name of a famous French woman who lived to the age of one hundred and twenty.

Bachman's description of language competence is fairly comprehensive and can certainly assist language teachers in understanding the nature of language competence. However what we find is missing, as in Canale and Swain's model, is the explicit impact of the cultural component in communicative competence. Bachman is still too vague in his capturing of the essential role of culture in verbal interaction. Only in his description of "sensitivities" to language use does he give us an insight into the cultural nature of language use. In Bachman's model, culture does not have a major role nor is it viewed as a dynamic creative power underlying all aspects of language use. It does however provide a good starting point for understanding Communicative competence, but it needs to be reviewed from a point of view which takes language as being an essential rather than an anecdotal expression of culture.

This is what the post-communicative approach to language teaching is in the process of doing. With the emergence of Intercultural Communicative Teaching in the 1990's, language use has come to be viewed primarily in terms of language as the expression of culture. We elaborate on the essential aspects of Intercultural Communicative Language teaching in chapter three.

Canale and Swain's and Bachman's models of Communicative Competence were viewed as the prototypes of a theoretical framework for the elaboration of communicative syllabuses. We have shown that although still valid in many respects their biggest downfall is not to have integrated and appreciated the impact of culture in communicative competence.

Liddicoat (1997) has pointed out that culture in a second language cannot be "picked up" by the language learner by osmosis. Culture in language use is not easily accessible. It needs to be explicitly taught to language learners (Crozet 1996).

McMeniman and Evans (1997) have also questioned the contribution of



language learning to the development of cultural understandings. Their argument is that for language learning to lead to genuine cultural understanding "culture must be understood and taught on a much deeper level than is currently the case" (McMeniman and Evans 1997).

We argue that culture has been understood on a deep level by researchers in discourse analysis since the beginning of the century. The problem is that this knowledge has not impacted enough on language teaching as yet. This is perhaps because, as Stern (1992) has pointed out, culture as 'everydaylife' is still poorly documented: "it has not yet formed the subject of sustained and systematic research" (Stern 1992:222). Stern infers rather than makes explicit that culture as found in everydaylife is accessible through the study of language use. The relevance of his point is that he acknowledges the necessity of teaching culture as it is embedded in language and not as a formal course in social and cultural anthropology. Stern refers to the need to access culture through "an informal and personal entry" (Stern 1992:222). In other words what is required to improve language teaching are studies of "informal" culture as found in "familiar" everyday verbal interaction. "Informal" and "familiar" are words which are charged with political meanings. With reference to language teaching, we have shown at different points in our historical survey that what is "informal" and "familiar" with reference to language has not been favoured as valuable educational content.

We argue therefore that it is not just the lack of transfer of knowledge between discourse analysis and language teaching or the shortfalls of models on communicative competence models which have prevented the teaching of culture as found in everyday verbal interactions. It is rather our traditional and perhaps conservative collective view of what valuable culture learning has meant to us so far. Liddicoat, Crozet, Jansen and Schmidt (1997) see the emergence of a new paradigm in language education which seeks to ground language in context and culture and will challenge

more and more traditional perceptions of what language teaching ought to be. Shifts in perceptions of what constitutes valuable language learning are not solely a product of advances in our understanding of the nature of language which linguists and applied linguist have delivered to us until now. We perceive any body of knowledge according to what we value about this knowledge. Kramersch (1996) has suggested that what is needed in the language teaching profession today is not so much new methodologies or new principles but rather different ways of seeing what we are doing and why we are doing it. We suggest more specifically for the sake of our argument that for further significant change to happen in language teaching we need "to see" the value of teaching everyday language for in particular its extensive ability to carry the foundations of culture in society.

### *Summary of language teaching in 20th Century*

Language teaching in the 20th Century has explored many different approaches in the hope of improving language learning. It has done so especially from the 1950's onwards. The second world war had pointed out the importance of efficient communication between speakers from different cultures. The impact of this realization was to change the rationale for language learning in the Western world for ever. Ever since the 1950's, all language teaching approaches which were going to be created gave priority to the teaching of spoken language.

We have argued however, that for significant changes to happen in the teaching of spoken language, a better understanding of the nature of language and its relationship to culture and a better understanding of language learning as well as language acquisition had to happen. "Movements" in those directions started to be felt between the 1970's and 1980's with the onset of SLA research and the communicative approach. We have concluded however that in the language teaching profession, a full

appreciation of the meaning of communicative competence has only come to light in the 1990's. Until then, language and especially language as found in everyday verbal interaction, was not acknowledged as being primarily an expression of culture. The lack of full recognition that socio-cultural context is an integral part of language has been the main flaw underpinning all new language teaching approaches including the communicative approach.

## **Conclusion**

A brief review of language teaching history starting as far back as 5000 years ago, shows that the teaching of spoken language has tended to receive far less attention than the teaching of written language. It has been so at least until the 20th century and more specifically up until after the second world war. Only one feature of spoken skills has been taught constantly throughout the ages which is the correct pronunciation of mainly the written form of the target language. The notion of "culture" when associated to language teaching overall has meant the teaching of "high culture" through the reading of sacred texts in antiquity and literary works thereafter. Culture has always been associated to "the written word".

During the Renaissance avant-garde thinkers, such as Montaigne and Comenius promoted the teaching of second languages for communicative purposes. They also saw and valued culture as it manifests in the daily activities of a people.

It was not until the 20th century however that spoken language has come to be regarded as an important part of language teaching. The direct method in the late 19th century, despite its shortfalls, put spoken language on the map of language teaching. From that period onwards up until the 1970's, spoken language has received more attention than ever in the past but over focus was given then to automatic language learning or pattern drills (ie: the audiolingual, situation and audio-visual methods). In the 1970's many

“alternative” language teaching approaches such as the Silent way and Suggestopedia explored the more human aspect of language learning over purely cognitive concerns.

Rote learning, repetition and imitation were the main approaches to language learning from antiquity to the 19th Century when the Grammar-Translation method introduced the explicit teaching of grammatical rules. The teaching of linguistic structures over the teaching of meaning remained up until the 1970’s, 1980’s. The Communicative Approach attempted to move away from the exclusive teaching of forms by teaching forms within “the functions” of language. The intent was to teach language more in the various socio-cultural contexts in which it occurs.

We have argued however that from antiquity up until the 1990’s, that is past the Communicative Approach, culture in language teaching has either meant “high culture” or “way of life/daily activities”. Our point is that it has always been taught as separate “adjunct knowledge” to language. No direct links were made between language and culture.

The “invisible” nature of the links between language and culture has made it difficult for the language teaching profession “to see” culture as an integral part of language. We will show in our next chapter that for language, and especially verbal interaction, to be taught as an expression of culture, the cultural web in which language is embedded needs to be made visible before it can be taught and learnt.

The Communicative Approach to teaching language, despite its shortcomings, improved language learning significantly in that it promoted the teaching of “meaning” as important as the teaching of linguistic forms.

We suggest that any language teaching approach which wishes to focus on spoken language needs to be informed by research on spoken discourse and in particular research on conversation analysis, pragmatics and cross-

cultural communication. However, we did not explore in more detail in this chapter how discourse analysis can inform the teaching of spoken language since our focus was on the past and not on what could/ought to happen in the future which is what we explore in subsequent chapters. Moreover, the relationship between applied linguistics research and language teaching is complex and deserves an in depth analysis. As Kramsch (1995) has recently pointed out, the dialogue between the two has never been easy nor necessarily a productive one. Historically, it has therefore not been a reality that research outcomes in applied linguistics (discourse analysis and other areas) have flowed directly or indirectly into language teaching. Kramsch (1995) gives one main reason to explain this situation, that of different professional discourses - which also reflect different interests - used by both sides to communicate ideas.

In the 1990's, Intercultural Communicative Language Teaching has taken on the full implications of teaching language as the expression of culture. It has moved the boundaries of language teaching as much if not more significantly than the Communicative approach has done in its time

## Chapter 2

### *A conceptual framework for the teachable components of verbal interaction*

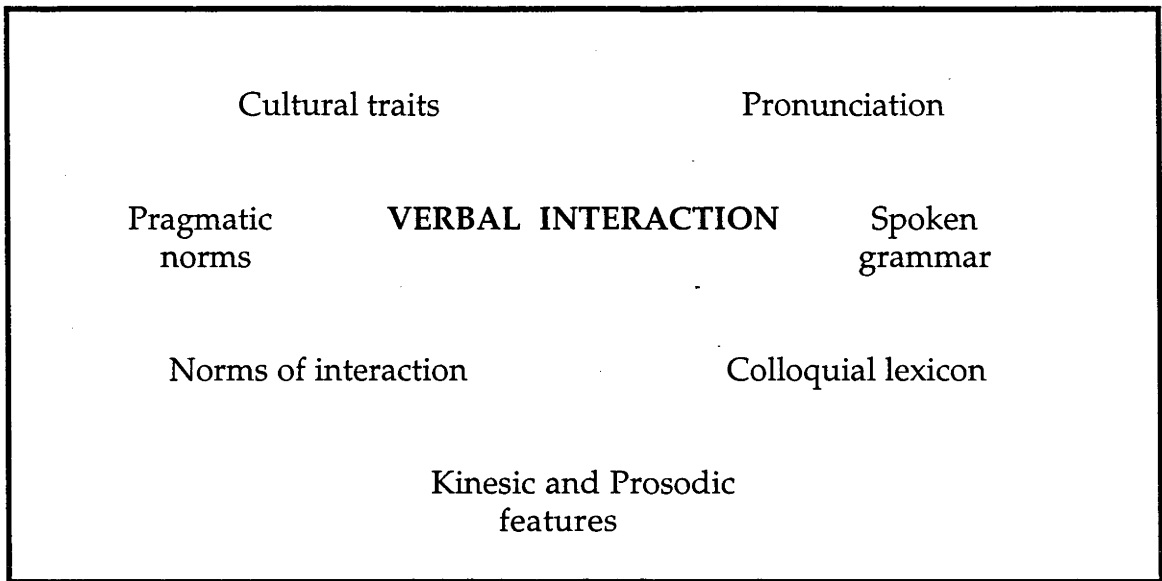
#### **2.1 Introduction**

Recent work in second language acquisition has shown that explicit teaching focussing on sources of trouble in learners' performance has a positive impact on language learning development (Long 1991, Lightbown and Spada 1990). These sources of trouble for learners of verbal interaction in a second language go far beyond grammatical correctness (see chapter 1). They stem from the complex and varied links between linguistics forms and cultural norms. Language teachers need to break down the complexity of those links into identifiable items. In other words before they embark on new approaches to teaching verbal skills (see chapter 3) teachers need to review or perhaps discover for the first time what the linguistics forms and cultural characteristics of the spoken language that they are meant to teach actually are. In this chapter, we will show how language teachers, drawing from different sources, can make the often intangible features of spoken language tangible or in Krash's (1995b) words how they can "make the invisible visible" to themselves and their students.

#### **2.2 The conceptual framework**

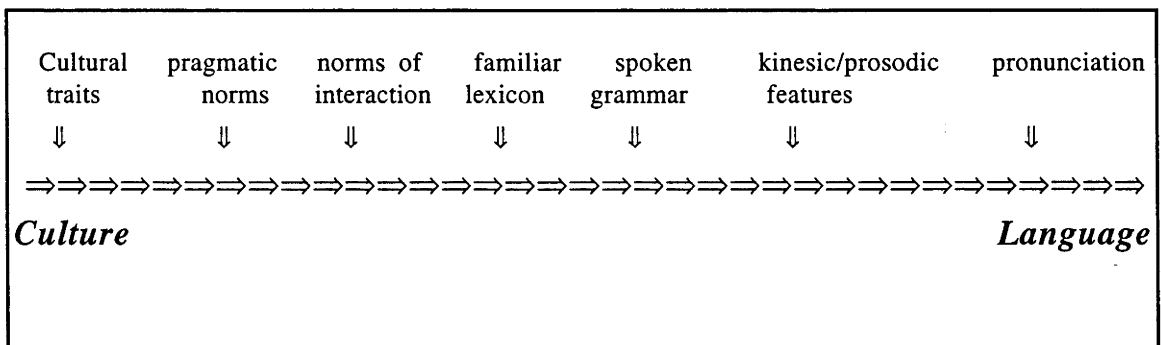
The conceptual framework presented and discussed below consists of seven teachable components each representing a potential source of trouble for students learning to interact in culturally appropriate ways in the target language. Those seven components are: typology of cultural traits, pragmatic

norms, norms of interaction, kinesic and prosodic features, grammatical variations in spoken language, colloquial lexicon, pronunciation (see Table 1).



**Table 1: Teachable components for spoken language and culture**

The seven variables can be placed on a continuum showing their relative distance from more contextual cultural content to more verbal language features ( see Table 2).



**Table 2: Continuum from culture to language**

The value of splitting verbal interaction into distinct groupings is primarily to satisfy the teacher’s intellectual need to cognise the parts which form a whole system. The term “cognise” is used here to refer to the mental processes by which one can distinguish the different parts which form a

whole system. In that sense, taken for the purpose it proposes to fulfill in language teaching, the conceptual framework presented here should not be seen as an undermining of the interconnectedness between the seven selected components. The intrinsic organization of verbal interaction can be conceptualized as a system of ultimate building blocks (ie: seven components) each being in essence a set of relationships (or sub-systems) reaching outward to the others. The origin of those ultimate building blocks lies in their interconnectedness with the whole system, hence no definite boundaries can fully encompass each of them. This approach to understanding spoken language, which has been borrowed from quantum physics (Wilber 1985:37), is taken up again in chapter three where the integration of the various features of spoken language is put forward as the premise for successful teaching.

Bearing in mind the rationale mentioned above for the adoption of seven split components of verbal interaction as teachable items, the following is a description of the content of each item.

### ***2.2.1 Typology of cultural traits***

In language use socio-cultural norms along with grammatical rules and any other linguistic items do not exist for mere conventionalism. They exist primarily to support the expression of *meaning* in human interaction. With the notion of *meaning* comes inevitably the notions of *ethos* and *worldview*. Seen from this perspective cultural traits as found in verbal interaction can be interpreted as the expression of *meaning behind and with the word*. Defined more precisely, cultural traits in spoken language can also be understood as the expression of the different values members of a given society attach to the concepts of "self" and "other" as well as the expression of the values they attached to the relationship between "self/other" and physical and societal environments. It is in this sense that the embedding of



cultural traits in language use reflect - substantially if not completely - both the ethos and worldview of a society.

The relevance of teaching cultural traits in a course on second language verbal interaction is to give students the tools which will enable them to discriminate between what in spoken language constitutes culture and what does not. We will argue through the following presentation that a common characteristic of most of the items discussed is that they are all different forms of linguistic devices used in the target culture as what Wierzbicka (1991:282) calls: "*... networks of conspiracies aimed at common cultural targets*".

We suggest that those common cultural targets can be made explicit to students by the teacher. They can be presented as a "typology of cultural traits" at the onset of a course. This typology will serve as a constant frame of reference to both teacher and students as they explore together through various classroom activities the complexity of the links between spoken language and culture (see chapter 3).

Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1994:63-112), drawing on different sources of research on the study of cross-cultural communication, offers an approach for describing what she refers to as "the communicative profile" of speech communities or in more sophisticated terms: "*la typologie des ethnolectes conversationnels*" ("the typology of conversational ethnolects"). Speech community is defined for our purpose as in Hymes' (1974:51) terms:

*"....a community sharing knowledge of rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech. Such sharing comprises knowledge of a least one form of speech, and knowledge also of its patterns of use".*

Kerbrat-Orecchioni's (1994) approach can be used by language teachers to help them structure their research on the typology of cultural traits in the language they teach. She proposes four different "axes" or principles along which the communicative profile of any given speech community can be described. Those axes are:

1. *The importance placed on speaking in the functioning of a society* ("Place de la parole dans le fonctionnement de la société").
2. *Approaches to inter-personal relationships* ("Conception de la relation personnelle").
3. *Approaches to understanding politeness* ("Conception de la politesse").
4. *Level of ritualisation* ("Degré de ritualisation").

Below is both a more detailed explanation of what each of those axes are as well as illustrations of how they can be used to make the general cultural traits of a society "visible" in courses on verbal interaction. A particular focus is given to the illustration of French cultural traits.

### **1 - The importance placed on speaking in the functioning of a society:**

This axis refers to the level of verbosity which is regarded as desirable in a given culture. That is how much time, or how little time people spend talking to each other and the importance they give to silence.

Under this category speech communities can be recognized as having either a high or low acceptance of verbosity. Hymes (1974: 32 ) makes the point that:

*"The distribution of required and preferred silence, indeed, perhaps most*

*immediately reveals in outline form a community's structure of speaking".*

A frequently quoted example of a community with an extremely low level of verbosity is that of the Paliyans of south India who according to Gardner (1966:398):

*"...communicate very little at all times and become almost silent by the age of 40. Verbal, communicative persons are regarded as abnormal and often offensive".*

The Paliyans, with regards to verbosity, can be sharply contrasted with the French who are reknown for their love of talking. Collett (1993:174) describes the English perception of French verbosity as "unnecessary". To English person, French people spend too much time talking for its own sake. To illustrate his point, Collett further quotes André Maurois who wrote to a French friend about to visit England, warning him of the difference in degree of verbosity between England and France:

*"Do not talk too much until you have found your depth. In France it is rude to let a conversation drop; in England it is rash to keep it up. No one there will blame you for silence. When you have not opened your mouth for three years they will think: "This Frenchman is a quiet nice fellow".*

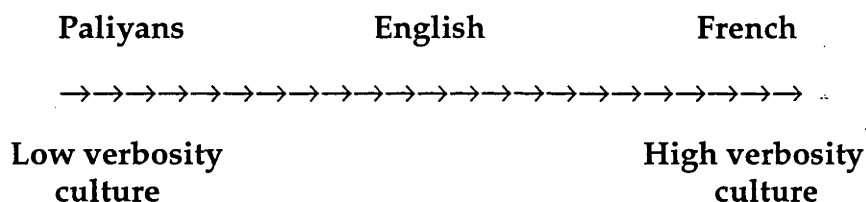
The French high level of verbosity can be partly explained by the importance French people give to expressing one's opinion on everything in every day life. Béal (1992:90) in her study of cultural norms of interaction between French people and Australians reports the following comment made by one of the Australian person she interviewed:

*"It seems important that French people have an opinion on just about every*

*topic that there is you know, I'll have, I must have an opinion on what's happening in Russia, I must have an opinion on, you know, Paris, whether I like it or I didn't like it, why I don't like it, it's all set, you know, euh... of what I think of London, the English people, what's happening in Australia and the political situation..."*

For the French, expressing one's opinion on anything is one of the expected rules of social behaviour. Silence is a threat. Daily social encounters to be successful must be filled by a continuous flow of conversation (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1994:65).

On the axis of verbosity, Paliyan, English and French people can be placed in the following order:



The above diagram shows that “verbosity” as an attribute of humankind exists in the three cultures referred to (Paliyan, English and French). What makes “verbosity” a potential marker of cultural identity however is that it can be used in different ways by different societies. It is, as often the case, the difference in usage of a common attribute which creates a cultural trait.

## **2 - Approaches to inter-personal relationships**

This axis refers to the way different societies conceive and express interpersonal relationships. It is a highly complex and culture specific area of human interaction. Speech communities can be split into three groups

according to the type of ethical tendencies they express through their handling of human relationships (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1994:72-87):

- a/ Societies valuing proximity versus distance
- b/ Societies valuing hierarchy versus equality
- c/ Societies valuing consensus versus conflict

### **a- Proximity versus distance**

Two markers according to Kerbrat-Orecchioni can be used to identify whether the socio-cultural norms of a society express proximity or/and distance between individuals:

- the degree of physical contact allowed between people interacting.
- terms of address: distinction between a polite and a familiar second-person pronoun / different address forms (ie: titles and names).

Morris (1977) divides European societies into three categories according to the proxemic conventions of each country. France is among the most tactile cultures along with Italy, Greece and Turkey. French people tend to engage their bodies a lot in conversations. Greetings such as "Bonjour" are usually accompanied by two to four kisses (depending on the geographical location) on the cheeks in semi-formal and familiar interactions. In familiar conversations, more often than not, kisses alone are used for greetings (Traverso:1993).

In a speech community, the use or non-use of a formal versus familiar second person pronouns as well as when and how they are used all indicate how this community regulates personal relationships. Second person

pronouns combine with names and titles. Together they express precise pragmatic values. A general outline of how terms of address are used in the culture studied will prepare students for a further, more complex inquiry. It will give them an introduction on how proximity and distance are monitored through verbal interaction. In France for example, variables such as age and context will largely influence the choice between "tu" and "vous" and whether a title plus surname or a first name alone will be used. For instance, in a work environment more and more people use a first name (meaning we know each other well) with "vous" (meaning we are not friends) while between two close friends first names plus "tu" will be used. With regard to the use of "tu" and "vous" pronouns, there also seem to be discrepancies between speakers of different generations. Béal (1992b) distinguishes three age groups which could be used as a guideline for a student to know when to use or not to use "tu":

- with individuals below 25 years of age "tu" is used in most circumstances.
- with the "post sixty- eight generation", that is with people now aged below fifty "tu" is used more widely.
- for the older generation, "tu" is normally restricted to relatives or intimate friends.

### **b- Societies valuing hierarchy versus equality**

A hierarchical society or high power culture is characterized by the large number of what Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1994:74) calls "taxèmes" that is hierarchy or social status markers. "Taxèmes" constitute all types of verbal and non-verbal behaviour which speakers use to position themselves socially when they interact. All speech communities have "taxèmes". The intercultural difference lies in the different categories and number of "taxèmes" available in a given culture which in itself reflects the degree of importance speakers attach to them.

Hijirida and Sohn (1986) for example, in their study of cross-cultural patterns of honorifics in English, Japanese and Korean, notice that all three languages have extensive sets of address and reference terms that are sensitive to social stratification, but that English has a much more restricted set. This difference can be explained by the lesser degree of importance English national culture gives to hierarchical status than Japanese and Korean societies.

Generally speaking, societies with a high egalitarian ethos such as France, Australia, or America use hierarchical markers but they do so less obviously (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1996:80).

### c- Societies valuing consensus versus conflict

Speech communities value consensus and conflict differently. For example it is widely recognised that the main trait of Japanese communicative style is that it emphasizes *omoiyari* "empathy" over explicit verbal communication (Clancy 1986:213). For Japanese people overt expression of conflict is a threat to social harmony. Indirectness in verbal interaction is widely used as a linguistic device to avoid potential conflict. On the other extreme side of the spectrum Israeli society uses argument as a form of sociability. According to Schiffrin (1984:311) Israelis enjoy disagreeing constantly. They love to compete for turns in conversations and be out of alignment with each other. This is for them a way to show solidarity and to protect their intimacy.

French people are at a mid-point some way in between the Japanese and Israeli with regards to aversion versus taste for conflict:

*" ... chez nous, le consensus est généralement jugé trop "mou", et la conversation vire facilement à la discussion, ou règnent le "moi je..." et l'esprit de contradiction" ( ... in our country, consensus is usually considered*

too "soft" , and conversation easily turns into discussion, where the "me, I ..." and the tendency to contradict rule" (Kerbrat-Orrechioni 1994:85).

Kerbrat-Orrechioni further mentions that French people even find *pleasure* in disagreeing with each other.

Béal (1993:102-3) identifies the differences in the acceptance of conflict between French and Australian people as a cause of negative stereotyping from both communities. Australians find the French style of overtly defending one's opinion ridiculous and conversely the French find the "non-committal" Australian behaviour hypocritical.

### 3. Approaches to understanding politeness

The rules of politeness in a second language are not easy to recognize. They pervade all verbal interactions and their transgression can lead to serious communication breakdown. Teachers and students can both benefit from a general introduction to a theoretical framework which will help them to uncover and understand the rules of politeness in the language they teach or study. The rules of politeness we refer to here must be distinguished from what is generally meant by politeness that is table manners, appropriate ways of dressing and so on. What we are primarily concerned with here is linguistic politeness that is what people do in a given speech community to ensure verbal communication remains harmonious.

The most highly recognized theory of linguistic politeness has been elaborated by Brown and Levinson (1987). It can be used, as a starting point, in any language to understand how politeness functions. Brown and Levinson introduced four basic notions:

a) the *notion of "face"*: every individual has two "faces". The "*negative face*"



corresponds to one's need to protect her/his own territory. This can refer to personal space, time, possessions, and anything a culture might consider private (ie: someone's income). The "*positive face*" corresponds to one's need to project a positive image of her/his self when interacting with others.

b) *the notion of "face threatening act" (FTA)*: A face threatening act corresponds to any form of verbal behaviour which is a potential threat to either the negative or positive face of interactants (ie: insults, indiscreet questions, orders etc...). Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1996:53) opposes FTAs to FFAs (*Face Flattering Acts*). This distinction can be useful for teachers in developing language activities with clear goals, as it allows a differentiation between speech acts which have essentially a negative effect on an interactant (for example an insult as an FTA) and speech acts which have a positive effect (for example a compliment as a FFA).

c) *the notion of "face want"*: this is the overriding principle in any interaction which tends to make any participant in a conversation protective of one's own face and of others. "*Face want*" is *the natural desire* to protect one's face from potential external threats and to prevent the face of others to be threatened.

d) *the notion of "face work"* relates to *all the strategies* interactants use to protect the faces of all involved in a conversation. This notion depends on three main variables such as the gravity of the FTAs, social distance and power relation between speakers.

With reference to the four notions presented above, and in particular with notions (a) and (b), language teachers can investigate (aided by available research) the general tendencies underlying the rules of politeness in the target language. Speech communities can be placed on a continuum from

between those with a preference for negative politeness (ie: high respect of personal space, softening of FTAs) to those with a preference for positive politeness (ie: high production of FFAs).

France, for example, is a society like most western societies, where respect for one's individual territory is very important. Obviously this varies in degree between western countries. English people for instance are far more protective of their "privacy" than the French are.

In France along with negative politeness, positive politeness is also highly valued, hence the profusion of compliments in every day conversations (Traverso:1993) or "overdone" expressions such as "merci mille fois" (literally "thank you a thousand times" meaning "thank you so much").

In everyday verbal interactions, Béal (1992b:280-284) has noticed some interesting differences between French people and Australians with regards to the protection of one's face. She suggests that Australians focus on preserving face in the short term (that of the duration of the interaction) where French people are more concerned about long-term preservation of face. This difference in preservation of face would explain why Australians prefer to say anything to avoid conflict or displeasure at the time of the interaction in order to maintain harmony between interactants "at all costs". On the contrary, the French, focusing on the maintenance of the long term aspect of human relationships, prefer to be more upfront with their thoughts or emotions, to be "sincere". They prefer to lose face in the short term if it will protect the relationship in the long term. To illustrate cultural differences in the handling of face Béal (1992b:282) quotes an Australian journalist who very colourfully commented on the "frankness" of many European countries:

*"Many European races, on the other hand, are astonishingly frank. "You have a rump like a horse in that skirt" a Dutch friend once announced.*

*Unfortunately, she was right and I may have cried and kicked for a week but I did exchange the skirt"... and to conclude "She may not have been able to crack a career as a diplomat, but in the end I found Annelies as refreshing as summer rain" .*

- **4. Level of ritualisation.**

This last principle which can help describe the communicative profile of a speech community refers to societies where the socio-cultural behaviour of interactants follows a strict observance of rituals and routines, as opposed to societies where conversational rules are not so strictly adhered to, giving more ample room to the individual to accommodate common rules to her/his personal taste (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1996:82). France for example belongs to societies with a low degree of ritualisation compared to some Arabic societies where the dominant religion, Islam, governs all aspects of daily life (for instance the obligation of praying five times a day and strict observance of *Ramadan* - a month of fasting). French culture not only allows for deviation from socio-cultural codes, it also praises eccentricity as a marker of a personalized way of showing friendliness. To be too conventional can be interpreted as "insincere" hence not genuinely caring (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1994:110).

#### ***Summary of teachable cultural traits***

The communicative profile of a speech community can be presented to students as a sum of the dominant cultural traits which are relevant to the understanding of culture in verbal interaction as illustrated in table 3 (with reference to the teaching of French cultural traits). Each individual teacher can build in the communicative profile s/he presents traits which are of a particular relevance to the understanding of cultural differences between the

target language and the learners' native culture(s). The communicative profile of French culture presented below should not, in that sense, be read as a rigid framework but rather as an example of how cultural knowledge can be organised to be more depictable for learners.

Level of verbosity	Interpersonal relationships	Rules of politeness	Level of ritualisation
High level of verbosity. Seen as a marker of successful interaction. Aversion to silence.	Highly tactile society. Egalitarian ethos overrides need for strong hierarchical markers. High acceptance of conflict. Enjoyment of verbal confrontation. Importance of asserting one's opinions.	Both negative and positive politeness. Abundance of FFAs.	Low degree of ritualisation. Variation from socio-cultural codes can be praised.

**Table 3: Communicative profile of French conversational ethnolects living in France**

The different ways and classroom activities which language teachers can use to introduce their students to the communicative profile of the language they teach is discussed in chapter four. A few additional comments however need to be made regarding the structure proposed above for describing the typology of cultural traits of any given speech community. The following points need to be made explicit to students at the onset of a course on verbal interaction in a second language:

- The cultural traits of a society fluctuate with time, space and social class. Variables such as age, sex and personality can distort or cancelled the culture-specificity of a particular form of behaviour. For example a very introverted French person might not display the high-level of verbosity expected from most of her/his compatriotes.

- Language teachers should always discuss the cultural traits of a given speech community in comparison with those of some other societies (especially the dominant native culture of students and other cultures if students in a same class are of multi-ethnic origins). Cultural traits described in terms of degree rather than absolute truths can help students avoid negative stereotyping of either their own native culture or the culture they are studying.
- Presenting a typology of cultural traits in a second language classroom is not meant to simplify the understanding of culture. It is meant to introduce students to one particular perspective on cultural context which is highly relevant to understanding verbal interaction. Obviously the whole culture of a people cannot be reduced to a typology of cultural traits.

In chapter five we will see how a course on verbal interaction and culture needs to be supported by different approaches to teaching culture. Teaching a typology of cultural traits is hence made to serve as initial tools for students to use to unpick the complex webs which structure verbal interaction and culture. The teaching of cultural traits is an attempt to follow Hymes' (1972) advice when he advocates that: "*The key to understanding language in context is to start not with language but with context*" (Hymes 1972: xix).

To the first "introductory tools" given to students to explore culture in spoken language can be added other more refined sets, such as the study of pragmatic norms as a second teachable item in the conceptual framework proposed earlier.

### **2.2.2 Pragmatic norms**

Kasper (1996) argues that only when learners have achieved sufficient pragmatic knowledge in the target language can they make contextually

appropriate choices of strategies and linguistic forms of language. Pragmatic knowledge refers to the rules (pragmatic norms) which regulate the relationship between utterances and the socio-cultural context in which they are used. There is a big overlap between pragmatic norms and norms of interaction in the sense that they both depict the socio-cultural construct of the ways speakers use language for communication. However, the distinction between the two is valuable for language teachers for the following reason: as we will see further, norms of interaction describe speakers' organisation of sequences in conversation where pragmatic norms describe how speakers express intent in specific speech situations.

Speech situations in pragmatics are usually referred to as *speech acts* (Austin 1962 and Searle 1965). Speech acts are what people *do* with language -ie: requests, politeness, complimenting, thanking, teasing, congratulating, swearing etc... This "doing" with language can be very culture specific, hence one speech act in a culture might not have an equivalent in another - for example *thanking* in English - does not have an equivalent in Japanese (Wierzbicka 1991:157-158) because the concept of "thanking" as understood by native speakers of English does not exist in the same way in Japanese.

Taking Wierzbicka's point into account, from the perspective of language teaching, the study of speech acts can be differentiated as follows. It can include:

a) The cross-cultural comparison of the same speech acts between the learner's native tongue and target language when those speech acts are sufficiently different in the way they are performed to warrant interest. This cross-cultural study will minimize negative transfer of pragmatic knowledge from learners' first language (Kasper in 1996). For example Béal (1992b) has shown that in both Australian-English and French the speech act of "request" exists. This means that both cultures recognize the same communicative need but the French are far more direct and/or impersonal, depending on the context, in the way they perform requests

than the Australians are. In a French workplace environment for instance, an employer can request an employee to do something by using an impersonal and direct verbal expression: "Il faut faire ça tout de suite" - literally meaning "One must do this now", where the English equivalent form of request in the same context would be personal and indirect ie: "Could you do this for me now".

b)The study of speech acts which have no equivalence between the learners' native tongue and target language and vice-versa. For example the English "thanking" for a Japanese learner of English is worthy of teaching because the explanation of why "thanking" does not fit in the grid of Japanese socio-cultural codes is an opportunity to explore cross-cultural differences in the classroom including strategies to deal with them. In this case what would be of particular interest for learners to know is what Japanese people do in situations where English speakers use the speech act "thanking". Wierzbicka (1991:157-158) explains that for English speakers to *thank* someone is to express how *good* one feels towards a person who has done something good to them. In Japanese culture however where obligatory repayment of all favours is of importance, a natural reponse to someone's favour is to show how indebted one feels towards the provider of the favour (hence how *bad* one feels). This indebtedness is conveyed through expressions such as *sumimasen* (ie., *I am indebted to you*) far removed from the meaning of the English *thank you*.

Following the suggestions made above, to establish a taxonomy of speech acts which are worthy of teaching in a second language, language teachers need to identify potential areas of both *positive* and *negative pragmatic transfer* between their students' first and second languages. They can have recourse to research in interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) in the relevant languages. ILP looks at the intersection between pragmatics and second

language acquisition (Kasper in 1996). The term "interlanguage" first used by Reinecke in 1935 (Larsen-Freeman & Long 1991:74) and later made famous in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research by Selinker (1972) refers to learners developing knowledge of a target language. ILP added to SLA research in the late seventies the study of comprehension, production and acquisition of pragmatic knowledge in second language learners.

To identify pragmatic transfer in learners' interlanguage Kasper (in 1996) suggests looking at the outcomes of transfer in relation to the target language rather than relying entirely on a contrastive analysis of L1 and L2 pragmatics. She defines positive and negative transfer along the following lines:

a) *positive pragmatic transfer* refers to learners' production of the culture-specific features of a same speech act when those features are the same in L1 and L2. For example in both Australian-English and French greetings when people meet, at the very beginning of the interaction, they inquire about each other's health without expecting a real answer to the question (ie: How are you? answered by "fine" in Australian-English and "Ça va?" answered by "ça va" in French- see Traverso (1993) for further references on greetings in French). The inquiry about health is not a universal feature of the act of greeting, but it is a ritualised question/answer formula specific to both the learner's first and second cultures then positive transfer is likely to occur.

b) *negative pragmatic transfer* occurs in a learner's interlanguage when s/he produces a culture-specific feature of a speech act in L1 which does not exist in L2. For example both English and Japanese have "the expression of gratitude" in their repertoire of speech acts. Japanese however may use the routine formula *sumimasen* "I'm sorry" to express gratitude (Kasper in press) which would be totally inappropriate in English where an expression such as "thank you so much" might be used. A cultural difference between L1 and L2 in the performance of a same speech act is subject to negative



transfer in SLA.

Although highly relevant to language teaching, the problem of interlanguage pragmatics research is that it is a fairly new field of SLA inquiry. It cannot as yet substantially respond to language teachers' need for interlanguage pragmatics knowledge. Teachers can however take a first step in a new direction by starting mini-research projects with their students on the cross-cultural comparison of some speech acts. Looking at the vast body of research on cross-cultural pragmatics, suggestions can be made for the study/teaching of a list of speech acts which are likely to present culture-specific features in a wide number of languages:

- Greetings
- Requests
- Invitations/offers
- Acceptances/refusals
- Complimenting
- Joking
- Thanking/responses to thanking
- Swearing
- Excuses
- Apologizing

Speech acts cannot be studied outside the variety of situational frames (Coulmas 1979) in which they occur. Those frames are what Kasper (1996) refers to as the resources interactants use to give their relationship a particular identity:

*"...in performing a particular linguistic act, interlocutors choose from a variety of strategies and forms which convey the same illocution but vary in their relational meaning. Therefore, "resources which express relational*

*meaning" needs to be added to the notion of pragmalinguistics" (Kasper in press)*

This is where a more extensive knowledge of politeness strategies available in the target language becomes relevant to second language learners. Politeness markers as we saw earlier, can for instance, create distance or proximity between speakers. A speech act such as "thanking" can be performed more or less politely depending on the "flavour" of the relationship between speakers at the time of the interaction.

Beyond politeness markers, the performance of speech acts involves other *shared constitutive rules* which are part of linguistic competence (Schiffrin 1994:60). Those rules can include knowing about social obligations in a particular context (for instance knowing *when* to thank as opposed to just *how* to thank). They can also call upon a wider general knowledge about the target culture. This is particularly true when native-speakers perform linguistic acts such as joking or humour .

Knowing how to perform speech acts in culturally appropriate ways involves therefore knowing how to respond to the variability of the situational frames in which they may occur. Contextualising the study of speech acts in the language classroom is in this sense a means to capture variability in human interaction.

A principle of the communicative approach in language teaching has been to decontextualise the study of "functions" (for example: "asking for information", "apologizing" etc...) depriving learners of access to the socially variable construction of context (Kramsch:1993:21). Teaching learners the cultural features of speech acts in L2, along with their relational meaning, bridges the gap between linguistic forms and context giving a communicative curriculum a better chance to succeed in terms of students' learning outcomes.

### 2.2.3 Norms of interaction

Bachman (1990) divides communicative competence between two main components. One is *pragmatic competence* (knowledge of pragmatic norms) which we have just described, the other is what he refers to as *organisational competence* which entails knowing how to sequence linguistic material to communicate successfully in verbal interaction.

Everyday conversation as was argued earlier is at the basis of all other forms of verbal interaction (see chapter 1). When we first learn to speak in our mother tongue as young children, we learn conversational skills for everyday talk within the family circle. We then go on to applying those conversational skills to other forms of interactive talk such as institutional talk which is the spoken language we use in more formal settings such as school, government offices or service encounters etc... In the language classroom we aim to teach verbal interaction from everyday more private conversation to more institutionalized forms of talk. We will hence refer to "ordinary conversation" as encompassing all forms of everyday interactions. Linguists and other language researchers have now been interested in the study of conversation for a few decades. They have discovered that ordinary conversation could be examined in terms of conventionalised or institutionalised structural organisations (Heritage:1989). Linguistic inquiry into the structure of ordinary conversation can provide language teachers with new knowledge which will help them change the traditional assumption of what teaching conversation is. Barraja-Rohan (1997) argues that too often teaching conversation in the language classroom equates with simply making students talk, in her terms:

*"...teaching conversation results in a hotchpotch of activities with no real structure and theoretical base. However teaching conversation does not simply involve creating activities to get learners to talk in class. Rather, it is*

*also about explaining what actually happens in a spoken interaction, what rules govern conversation, how the latter is structured and what participants do as well as making explicit the sociocultural norms of spoken interaction" (Barraja-Rohan 1997).*

The relevance of teaching how conversation is structurally organised is made obvious in cross-cultural communication research. Béal (1993:47) for example noticed that the difference in the turn-taking system between Australian-English and French people caused a lot of frustration between the two groups, Australian people often resenting being "cut off" by their French colleagues before they had a chance to finish what they had to say. Like most people in any culture Australians and French people are not aware that when they speak casually they are using norms of interaction which are specific to the culture of their mother tongue. Cultural norms are like an internal filter into which speakers feed events and ideas for interpretation (Sani 1995). This internal filter represents the cultural conditioning of interactants in their mother tongue. Breakdown of communication can occur even when two speakers speak a common language because speaking a foreign language does not require a speaker to alter her/his internal cultural filter. In Sani's words:

*"Since people arrive at meanings through the influence of culture, successful communication, i.e, where meaning is not lost or misinterpreted, cannot be assumed even when there is a common language for the articulation of ideas" (Sani 1995:251).*

This is why, for example, a French person with a good command of Australian-English (at least at the level of grammar, syntax and lexicon) but with an inadequate knowledge of Australian interactional norms (ie: internal cultural filter) will fail at being a completely successful

communicator.

In a course on verbal interaction and culture, we propose the study of "norms of interaction" as an embodiment of the basic structures in ordinary conversation. The terminology "norms of interaction" is borrowed from Hymes (1974) who first used it to describe the patterns of communication that are part of socio-cultural knowledge and behaviour. These norms of interaction, unlike other linguistic constraints operate largely below the level of consciousness (Gumperz 1972) and scrupulous analysis of language in use is necessary to depict the unconscious norms of verbal behaviour. The norms of interaction have been studied in detail by conversation analysts who have closely analysed patterns of interaction in English using authentic data and have encoded norms of interaction into specific basic categories - eg: turns and sequences within which other conversational structures are found such as openings (Schegloff 1972), closings (Schegloff and Sacks 1973 and Button 1987) and adjacency pairs (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974), etc... The norms of interaction which require special attention in language teaching are those which have highly culturally specific components. A selection of teachable interactional items would include:

- turn-taking organisation - including acceptable patterns of interruption, overlap and silence across cultures.

- adjacency pairs which are highly context sensitive for example congratulation sequences, greetings, phatic exchanges, etc...,

- openings and closings - research in different languages has shown that strategies used by speakers to start and end conversations are culture dependant (Liddicoat 1995a, 1997c: 58-66 and McCarthy 1994:114).

- discourse markers - single words or short phrases which fulfil different functions in conversations. For example in English "you know" is a discourse marker to show shared knowledge, "but" and "so" are used to indicate shifting of topic etc...

-feedback tokens - verbal and non-verbal devices used by listeners to show understanding and continued interest in a conversation,

-organisation of information/framing of topics,

-repairs - coping with communication breakdowns.

For a more detailed discussion of teachable interactional items see: Kramsch (1981), Slade and Gardner (1986), Hatch (1992), and McCarthy (1994).

The rationale for teaching the socio-cultural norms native-speakers use when they communicate is that the knowledge of those norms is necessary both to understand native speakers when they speak and to engage successfully in conversations with native-speakers (Liddicoat 1997c, Crozet 1995). In this sense understanding and being able to reproduce native-speakers norms of interaction gives learners an entry point into the appreciation of the target culture through language use.

Kramsch (1993:1) has pointed out that culture is in the background of language learning from day one. This suggests that splitting language and culture and delaying the teaching of culture until advanced levels of learning is bound to foster deprived language learning. Culturally appropriate norms of interaction should not only be an integrated part of language courses but they should also be taught from beginners' levels.

One problem for language teachers is that they cannot rely on their intuitive knowledge to identify the norms of interaction in the language they teach. As we have seen, those norms are unconsciously produced. Language teachers need to have recourse to research in discourse and conversation analysis to find accurate descriptions of the socio-cultural codes of the target language. Once identified, those codes can be integrated as new course content.

By way of illustrating the importance of relying on research in conversation analysis to teach accurate descriptions of language in use, we are proposing the following comparison with regards to two approaches (ie: text-book based versus research based) to teaching a highly formulaic adjacency pair:

"greetings in French in an informal environment". We have selected two textbooks: *Sans Frontières 1* (1982) edited in France (referred to below as SF1) and *Communicating in French* from Shaun's Foreign Language Series (1991) edited in the United States (referred to as CFS).

In SF1 (p8) the following dialogue is presented to students as a model of informal greetings between French native-speakers:

- 1⇒ Jacques - Salut, François.
- 2⇒ Comment ça va ?
- 3⇒ François - Salut, Jacques. Ça va. Et toi ?
- 4⇒ Jacques - Ça va !

In CFS (p3) as an example of informal greetings we find a similar dialogue as in SF1:

- 1⇒ Salut, Pierre.
- 2⇒ Salut, Claude. Ça va ?
- 3⇒ Ça va bien, et toi ?
- 4⇒ Pas mal, merci.

Both SF1 and CFS greetings present "salut + first name" as the preferred choice to start a French greeting sequence followed by an immediate inquiry about health (ie: "ça va") either in the first speaker's first turn (Line 2 in SF1) or in the second speaker's first turn (line 2 in CFS). The answers to the different health inquiries are either positive (SF1 line 3 and 4 and CFS line 3) or downgrading (CFS line 4). So according to both SF1 and CFS informal greetings in French are fairly simply sequenced: "salut + first name + one health inquiry" answered by "salut + first name + response to health inquiry".

We can now compare French greetings as presented in two textbooks with the findings of conversation analysis conducted by Traverso (1993) on French greetings in the informal environment of friends or relatives visiting each other. We will summarize below some of her findings to make our point. Traverso found the following:

1) Either *Bonjour* or *Salut* are used. No apparent pattern of distribution for the use of one or the other form was noted. More importantly in informal contexts the choice between "Bonjour" or "Salut" does not seem to depend on the degree of social distance between the interactants. Presenting to students (as in SF1 or CFS textbooks) "Salut" as the one and only form found in informal greetings appears therefore to be giving inaccurate input. What is important to tell learners however is that there is a contextual difference between *Bonjour* and *Salut* but this contextual difference is only relevant in formal context ie: only *Bonjour* can be used in a formal context and not *Salut*.

2) *Bonjour* or *Salut* are usually accompanied by a handshake or an exchange of kisses. In many cases observed, where *Bonjour* or *Salut* do not seem to systematically occur, kisses are on the contrary a recognized norm of interaction in greetings. A failure to kiss calls for a repair (Traverso 1993:69). Neither SF1 or CFS textbooks mentioned the importance of physical contact in French greetings.

3) With regard to inquiries about health, Traverso (1993) noted two types of *ça va*. She calls the first *ça va* used by a speaker in the sequence of greeting: *ça va 1* which is purely ritual calling for a short positive answer (ie: *ça va*). *Ça va 2*, a reiteration of *ça va 1* by a same speaker is a genuine inquiry about health and calls for a genuine response (Traverso 1996: 72).

Inquiries about health are common in greetings in many cultures and the way those inquiries are structured into greetings can also be the same from a culture to another (for example this is the case between French and Australian greetings). The commonality of an interactional norm however does not make this norm a universal feature of interaction. With reference to greetings, in Chinese for example inquiries about whether someone needs to eat is part of greetings (Günthner 1993). Culture need not be taught



exclusively when it appears as a cultural difference against the native culture of the dominant group of learners in a classroom setting. As long as a feature of verbal interaction is sufficiently culture specific it needs to be taught.

4) French informal greetings can involve a succession of turns where more than *Bonjour* or *Salut* and inquiries about health are present. Excuses or reference about the weather can also be included as in the following example:

Example:

C- salut ça va

L- ouais

P- la grosse angoisse... i pleut (inquiry about the weather)

C- non mais il a pas plu aujourd'hui

P- non... je

C- si c'matin... p'têt un p'tit peu... j'sais plus

(kisses)

L-ça va

C- ouais

Traverso's (1996) findings on informal French greetings as partially illustrated above are enough to show that teaching greetings in French involves far more than the two textbooks we referred to may lead students to believe.

Teaching the norms of interaction in a second language constitute an essential part of teaching language as it is used by native-speakers, as opposed to how it is too often ill-presented in language textbooks.

#### ***2.2.4 Kinesic features and Prosodic features***

Gassin (1994) has suggested that interlanguage theory should include kinesic and prosodic modes of behaviour because they are woven into the various

linguistic and cultural components of verbal interaction. Moreover it has been demonstrated that competent bilinguals have absorbed the kinesic system of their second language (Gassin 1994). Gassin argues that inappropriate use of kinesic and prosodic modes can impede the second language learner in his/her development of oral skills. From this hypothesis, we can deduce that the explicit teaching of kinesic and prosodic features, as any other identifiable features of language, will in some ways benefit the language learner.

Gassin (1994) defines kinesic behaviour as including gesture, posture, stance, facial expression, eye contact, gaze, haptics and proxemics (appropriate distance between speakers) as well as the rhythmical body motions attached to speech. Prosodic features refer to *accent* (ie. articulatory force, stress), *intonation* (ie: tone, pitch contour) and *rhythm* (ie. speed, pause).

Too little research has been done so far in the acquisition of non-verbal forms of behaviour for language teachers to be able to decide which particular aspects of kinesics and prosody need to be explicitly taught. Nonetheless, it is clear that language teachers should know about the different layers of kinesics and prosody, however, primary focus should be given to non-verbal expression which contain overt culture-specific elements as they are likely to be the ones which can impede appropriate non-verbal behaviour. These include the following:

a) common emblematic gestures which can be read by people of different cultures in many different ways<sup>3</sup>. Such gestures have a meaning on their own but they can be taught along with the colourful lexical affiliates (colloquial expression) which often accompany them. For example the French gesture illustrated in table 3 from Calbris and Montredon (1986) is accompanied by the lexical affiliate "C'est nul" - literally meaning "It's naught" ie: "It's bad". The same gesture in Australian-English culture for instance has a totally different expression, it means: "it's great".

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<sup>3</sup> See for example the work of Morris, Collett, March and O'Shaughnessy (1979) on European gestures in 29 countries.



**Table 3: Illustration of the emblematic gesture "C'est nul" (Calbris and Montredon 1986: 21)**

- b) negotiation of space between speakers and place, amount and frequency of physical contact allowed.
- c) appropriate eye contact in verbal interaction.
- d) acceptable levels of pitch.
- e) facial expressions.

Ekman (1989) distinguishes between facial expressions which are conversational signals (for instance brow raising or lowering which may be used as back-channel devices) and facial expressions which express emotions such as fear, anger, surprise and happiness etc... Although the research on the topic is not conclusive (see Ekman 1989) for a review on this topic) evidence suggests that the components of facial expressions tend to be universal with cultural differences in the way they are managed. Cultural differences in the management of facial expression can lead to mis-

communication or discomfort. As illustrations, in France i) "smiling" expresses happiness where in Japan it may express uneasiness, nervousness or even anger (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1994:23) and ii) "screwing up the nose" is used extensively to express dislike or disgust. To a non-native speaker of French the frequent use of "screwing up the nose" might come across as a very "unpleasant" feature of French interaction which should be avoided.

f) usage of intonation contours to vary meaning in commonly used expressions or verbal routines - for example the French *oh la la* can express surprise, pleasure, disgust or compassion depending on the different intonation contours speakers use it with. In the same way, the English "how are you?" can be part of greeting routine or a genuine inquiry about someone's well-being according to not only when it is placed in the conversations but also to the "way" it is said.

The teaching of at least some aspects of non-verbal behaviour is empowering for students as non-verbal expression is constantly used in verbal interaction as positive or negative reinforcers of what speakers want to say and mean (Ellgring 1984). In the traditional language classroom, Maley & Duff (1982) note that students are given very little support to express non-verbal language and in particular when it comes to the expression of emotions:

*"... it is very necessary from the very start to express disapproval, surprise, enthusiasm, and so on. Nothing is more difficult than to work with second-hand feelings derived from texts or dialogues, yet most students are given no more than a few innocuous exclamations ('What a pity!'...'How nice!'...) to cover all their emotional needs in the language"* (Maley&Duff 1989:11).

Giving students support to engage their bodies in conversations and to help

them do so in culturally appropriate ways is one way to acknowledge the multimodal activities involved in face to face communication.

### 2.2.5 *Spoken grammar*

The proposal to study spoken grammar in a course on verbal interaction and culture is based on the assumption that teaching “grammar” in the traditional sense is desirable. Brazil (1995) argues that there is a division between language teachers who favour a communicative approach and dismiss the necessity of teaching grammar to all language students (either grammar in their first or second language) and teachers who stress the importance of teaching the grammatical mechanics of language. Brazil suggests that the two groups could be reconciled if they could rethink their definition of a “purposeful” grammar. He refers to the teaching of traditional grammar (ie. that of the written language) as “sentence grammars”:

*“Sentence grammars, deriving as they do from an act of abstraction away from potential use, pose questions about the organization of language that seem to have little to do with those engaging the attention of people who are involved in communicating with others (Brazil: 1995:239).*

Brazil further suggests that a non-traditional approach to teaching grammar that is an approach which shows the role of grammar in human interactions could reconcile differences.

Traditionally, the grammar taught in language courses has been based on the grammar of the written language. Although there is an overlap between the written and oral forms of language, a vast body of research has now shown that there are significant grammatical and syntactic variations between planned (written) and unplanned (spontaneous talk) forms of language expression - see Ochs (1979) and Hatch (1992) for a review of this

research. These variations can be split into two categories with different implications for language teaching.

The first of these grammatical constructions which are the natural features of spoken language output. Learners need not learn them as they will reproduce them naturally but they need to recognise that these features are the appropriate norms of spoken language delivery and feel free to use them accordingly. These variations include for example the abundant use of repetitions and incomplete sentences considered as "bad" grammar but unavoidable in verbal interactions where thinking and speaking happens simultaneously leaving no time for speakers to plan "correctly" formed sentences. Another variation of spoken language under this category is the disruption of the canonical word order found in written language (ie. in English subject-verb-object) used to create varied informative effects. For example front-placed objects are used for foregrounding or contrast (McCarthy 1994:113) as in "*well, my husband, he is never home*" or "*cheese? but ... you know it's not good for you*".

The second are grammatical variations which are the results of rule-governed behaviour. These variations are not naturally reproduced by learners hence they need to be taught explicitly. For example a course on spoken French would teach about the preference for the personal pronoun *on* instead of *nous* for the first person plural - as in *nous voulons y aller* ⇒ *on veut y aller* "I want to go there". It would also teach the omission of the *ne* particle in negative expression - as in *je ne veux pas* ⇒ *je veux pas* "I don't want to" the dropping of the pronoun *il* in impersonnel expressions - as in *il ne faut pas* ⇒ *faut pas* "one does not have to" etc.

What is important for learners is to be given opportunities to notice variations (natural and rule-governed) between spoken and written forms of language and to be allowed to use these variations. This will help

deconstruct their perception of language as being structurally static by expanding parameters of correctness. Teaching the grammatical variations of verbal interaction is giving support to learners to produce appropriate forms of spontaneous language expression.

### 2.2.6 *Colloquial lexicon*

Every language teacher knows how difficult it is for students to understand authentic or near authentic conversations. What students are often lacking is access to colloquial vocabulary and expressions. Language learners need to know enough colloquial lexicon to both understand and speak the language used in informal contexts by native-speakers. This knowledge includes knowing how native speakers manipulate the use of familiar language to fulfil different social functions. For example Béal (1992a:24) notes that one of the devices used by the French to reduce social distance and claim common ground is to use colloquial language.

Geneviève (1986) in her two volumes on colloquial French reminds students that:

*“ a language is not just an accumulation of words but also a key to the spirit and to the character of the people who speak it ”* (Geneviève 1986: 1).

She argues that familiar lexicon, slang and colloquial expressions reflect cultural tendencies in social behaviour. So for example French people's notorious obsession with food is reflected in the abundant colloquial expressions and lexical items containing references to food, for example: *va te faire cuire un oeuf* literally translated as “go and cook yourself an egg” meaning “get lost”. Exploring with students the meaning and use of both colloquial vocabulary and idioms offers them a point of entry into the culture, an advance into more secret territory (Levieux 1993). For instance,

tracing the contextual origin of the expression *va te faire cuire un oeuf* can not only illustrate the importance of eating in France but it also gives learners an insight into traditional gender roles in this culture. Traditional French males until recently have depended on their wives or female partners for their meals. Casual talk about the inability of French men to cook when their wives are away often mentions that “all he can do is cook himself an egg” indicating incompetence with cooking leading to a meagre meal. It is easy to see how in the French psyche a person alone cooking eggs for a meal can be equated to undesired exclusion with grave consequences. Because of this contextual background the expression *va te faire cuire un oeuf* could acceptably come to mean “get lost”.

The French obsession with food is so strong that it pervades all registers and forms of language. It is often apparent in metaphors such as in the writing of French academics. Pondering on the difficulty of analysing communicative competence they write:

*“...cette compétence de communication ... révèle trop de composantes subtiles et diverses pour imaginer qu'elle puisse se monter comme une mayonnaise...”* - *“...communicative competence... involves too many subtle and diverse components for one to imagine that it can be whipped up like a mayonnaise...”* (Baylon&Mignot 1994:317).

Boyer, Butzbach and Pendax (1990) stress the importance of the lexicosemantic component in the teaching of ethno-sociocultural competence. Galisson (1987:128) explains how the “cultural added value”, the meaning of a word or expression, acts as a signal of recognition and complicity between members of a same speech community. Language learners need to be taught the “cultural added value” of a sufficient number of key words and familiar verbal expressions in the target language to understand native-speakers and later to communicate more “colourfully”. Failure to do so will often exclude



them from being able to fully participate in conversations with native-speakers.

The importance of teaching the familiar language is generally accepted by language teachers and, as shown above, it provides access to cultural knowledge. However teachers' opinions differ regarding the necessity to teach all socio-cultural levels of familiar lexicon and expressions. They disagree for example as to whether "slang" in the target language should or should not be taught explicitly. This is a contentious issue which cannot be ignored, as slang is very powerful in shaping human relationships. Slang also often depicts racist and sexist attitudes or touches on heavily tabooed subjects (ex: bodily functions, sexuality). For these reasons it is not included as course content in traditional language courses as it raises ethical issues about what constitutes "acceptable" language teaching.

As was argued for the teaching of gestures, slang which is commonly used needs to be taught, as it is an integral part of verbal interaction, but it should be done with caution especially in the early stages of language learning where appropriate choices, between different levels of register are difficult. To decide *whether or not* or *how much* slang should be taught in a language class, language teachers need to review the political orientation of the courses they teach and decide for themselves what is the appropriate course content - with reference to slang - for the learning outcomes that are sought after by the institutions they are committed to. For instance teaching French slang in a religious school might be seen as undesirable for the proper development of teenagers' morality, but it could be desirable to teach it in a tertiary environment where there is more urgency for adult learners to have access to all levels of language registers for them to fully understand the socio-cultural construct of the language they are learning.

### 2.2.7 Pronunciation

Pronunciation is a component of verbal interaction that no course on the spoken language can ignore. The issue is how important is it?. Historically, when the teaching of the spoken language gained major impetus after the Second World War, primary focus was given to the teaching of pronunciation. Students spent hours in language laboratories repeating the vowels and consonants and later the stress patterns of the language they were learning. With a few exceptions, language teaching approaches have long departed from this tedious mode of teaching pronunciation. Now no single model for teaching pronunciation exists but language courses especially at beginners' levels may include a short introduction based on the contrastive analysis of the sound system of the learners' native language and the target language. This is followed by on-going corrective feedback of pronunciation during oral tasks.

An essential point needs to be borne in mind in establishing a rationale for the teaching of pronunciation. Most learners who learn a foreign language wish to learn to speak it well but without losing their cultural identity. Retaining a foreign accent in the target language is the most visible identity marker (Brown and Yule 1983). For this reason, too much emphasis in a language course on the production of native-like pronunciation has the potential to generate identity distress in learners as well as feelings of failure which can inhibit verbal production. Furthermore, it is possible that adult learners experience difficulty in attaining native-like pronunciation due to variables such as age. No research has reached conclusive results so far to ascertain that age has an impact on the development of native-like pronunciation (Lightbown and Spada 1993) but the doubt remains, so language teachers must take this variable into account and not "force" adult learners into potentially unattainable native-like pronunciation.

In summary, pronunciation needs to be given attention in a course on

verbal interaction but only when it prevents listeners from understanding what speakers say. Illustration and noticing of the new sounds in the target language plus corrective feedback during oral tasks is an effective way to address the issue. Native-like pronunciation however need not be the target for learners. Rather the target should be pronunciation which enables the second language learner to be understood effortlessly by a native speaker, in other words a quality of pronunciation which does not impede the natural flow of conversation.

### *Conclusion*

To teach language learners how to communicate in culturally appropriate ways, language teachers need to identify the verbal and non-verbal rules which govern cultural behaviour in the target language. In this chapter we have tried to show how it is possible to access those rules through an analysis of language in use which recognises verbal interaction as a multi-modal activity. The seven components of verbal interaction discussed above represent entry points into the target culture which make explicit the multiple ways speakers use to express socio-cultural choices.

The identification of teachable components of verbal interaction defines the type of input learners need from language teachers to develop interactional skills. In the following chapter, we present a pedagogical approach which allows learners to learn and use appropriately the language and cultural codes of verbal interactions with the view of becoming better participants in conversations.

## Chapter 3

### *Definition of pedagogical principles for the teaching of verbal interaction and culture*

#### 3.1 Introduction

In chapter two we described the components of verbal interaction which can be taught. This represented tangible new input, new content for language teaching. We are now turning to the understanding of the processes involved in teaching and learning verbal interaction and culture in view of identifying pedagogical principles to guide verbal interaction instruction.

This chapter is divided into three main parts. In part one we will discuss what we mean by *communicative competence* which is the goal of a course on verbal interaction. In part two we will seek to extract insights, from research in *second language/culture acquisition and instruction*, which are directly relevant to the teaching and learning of verbal interaction. In part three we will define pedagogical principles in the light of all our previous discussions.

#### 3.2 What is communicative competence ?

Since the early eighties, language teaching for communicative use has become the widespread norm in most countries, so naturally restatements of the goals and objectives of language teaching have tended to centre around redefinitions of what *communicative competence means*.

In the 1960's Hymes was the first to reject Chomsky's model of linguistic analysis - which was predominant at that time in Linguistic theory - and gave overfocus to the analysis of *competence* (ie. tacit knowledge of grammar) to the exclusion of the analysis of *performance* (ie. active use of

language rules). He instead suggested that focus be given to the analysis of *communicative competence* (Schiffrin 1994:140) which in simple terms refers to *how* something is said and not just *what* is said (Hymes 1972:59). Hymes was the first to proclaim that everyday verbal interaction is socially and culturally patterned and hence the study of language use must incorporate the study of both form and content if it is to lead to a genuine understanding of the human ability to speak (Hymes 1972:59).

Scholars after Hymes, such as Widdowson (1978), Canale and Swain (1980) and Bachman (1990) explored the notion of communicative competence for language teaching purposes. Using slightly different frameworks, they have all pointed out the importance of teaching the socio-cultural context of language use and contributed in this way to the shaping of the principles behind Communicative Language Teaching which has flourished in the 1980's. However, as we have shown in chapter one, the failure of Communicative Language Teaching has been to overlook the implications of teaching language use as an expression of culture.

The shortcomings of Communicative Language Teaching has recently led scholars in second language instruction to redefined the goals and objectives of communicative competence in terms of cross-cultural understanding, intercultural and critical communicative competence (Buttjes & Byram 1991, articles in Kramsch 1995, articles in Tickoo 1995). We will draw from the new paradigm these scholars offer to identify in what ways the redefinition of *communicative competence* as *intercultural competence* calls for new language pedagogy.

Byram (1995:25) defines the attributes of a competent intercultural speaker in the following terms:

*"An intercultural speaker is someone who can operate their linguistic competence and their sociolinguistic awareness of the relationship between*

*language and the context in which it is used, in order to manage interaction across cultural boundaries, to anticipate misunderstandings caused by difference in values, meanings and beliefs, and thirdly, to cope with the affective as well as cognitive demands of engagement with otherness"*

Zarate and Byram (1994) distinguish four types of knowledge and skill necessary to attain intercultural communicative competence:

- Attitudes/Values/Savoir Etre
- Ability to learn/Savoir Apprendre
- Knowledge/Knowing that/Savoirs
- Skills/Knowing How/Savoir Faire

For the sake of our argument we will retain and later comment only on the essential aspects of the four types of knowledge and skill mentioned above. The page numbers in brackets refer to quotes from Byram's article mentioned above.

#### *Attitudes/Values/Savoir Etre*

This type of knowledge refers to a second language learner's ability to reject ethnocentric tendencies and misperceptions towards otherness as well as the cognitive ability to create and maintain connective links between native and foreign cultures (p25).

#### *Ability to learn/Savoir Apprendre*

"Knowing how to learn" in the context of foreign verbal interaction study refers to a learner's ability to create for her/himself a system of references (which includes interpretative strategies) which will enable her/him to

access and unlock previously unknown cultural meanings, beliefs and practices, in either a language she/he already knows or in a new language (p26).

### *Knowledge/Knowing that/Savoirs*

This third type of intercultural knowledge has two aspects: a) it suggests that a framework of cultural references is necessary for the language learner to be able *"to structure the implicit and explicit knowledge acquired in the course of linguistic and cultural learning"* (p26) and b) this framework of cultural references must take into account *"the specific needs of the learner in his/her interaction with speakers of the foreign language"* (p27). According to Zarate and Byram, the shaping of the framework in question should include native-speakers' as well as foreign speakers' perspectives on the different cultural references incorporated in the framework for *"it is important to emphasise that intercultural competence involves comprehension not only of how we understand others but also of how others perceive us"* (p27). Knowledge from academic disciplines, regarding cultural references, is not thought of as necessarily essential.

### *Skills/Knowing How/Savoir Faire*

This fourth type of knowledge is about a learner's capacity to integrate the three different categories of knowledge described above *"in specific situations of bicultural contact"*. This fourth knowledge implies the ability to reuse - in a non-educational environment where intercultural communication occurs - the knowledge, skills and attitudes which have been acquired in the language classroom. (p27).

*Comments on Zarate and Byram's (1994) definition of intercultural competence:*

Zarate and Byram (1994) offer a comprehensive definition of intercultural competence. They have articulated polished ultimate goals which have a value in that they can offer language teachers a vision of what intercultural competence might look like. The big question however remains: how do we get there?

Although Byram included "linguistic competence" as part of his definition of "intercultural competence", the four types of knowledge he, along with Zarate, describes thereafter relate more closely to behaviour through language use and cognitive aptitudes than language production (primary goal of language teaching) *per se*. For example, "to relinquish ethnocentric attitudes" has to do with socio-cultural behaviour through arguably in part language use and "production and operation of an interpretative system..." or "framework of cultural references" has to do with some sort of cognitive abilities and extralinguistic content. Interestingly, the predominance of behavioural and cognitive objectives over other objectives in the teaching of intercultural communication has also been noted by Stern (1992) who examined other "listings" - by language teaching researchers - of the goals of intercultural communication instruction (see Stern 1992:212-215 for further references on this issue).

Language teachers can take on board the recasting of *communicative competence* into *intercultural competence* and adopt Zarate and Byram's (1994) vision of what it means. There are, however, several issues to clarify here: firstly should language teaching alone be responsible for the development of students' intercultural competency or should it be shared by all teachers in all subjects across the curriculum and this at all levels of education? Secondly how does Zarate and Byram's vision of interculturality



transform into pedagogical principles, course content and teaching methodology for a course on verbal interaction?

We will not offer a comprehensive response to all the points mentioned in the two issues, especially regarding the first issue. Instead we will limit ourselves to responses which are immediately relevant to our argument.

Descartes (1637/1972) had already defined the goals of interculturality teaching in terms which echo Zarate and Byram's (1994) vision:

*"Il est bon de savoir quelque chose des moeurs de divers peuples, afin de juger des nôtres plus sainement, et que nous ne pensions pas que tout ce qui est contre nos modes soit ridicule, et contre raison, ainsi qu'ont coutume de faire ceux qui n'ont rien vu. (It is advisable to know something of the customs of various peoples in order to better judge our own and to ensure that we do not think that anything contrary to our own practices is ridiculous and unreasonable, as do those who have never seen anything"* (Discours de la Méthode: Descartes 1637/1972:32).

Nowdays, very few educationalists would question Descartes' advice.

Concrete solutions to implement the teaching of interculturality are however still scarce. Historical and political developments are often pre-conditions to the realisation of visions created by philosophers or scholars. Currently for example, countries in the European Union, guided by the new "European Charter for a Plurilingual Education" (Bressand 1995), are reviewing the content of their educational programs to prepare the new generation of Europeans to cope with cultural differences as they will have to deal with foreignness in the near future more immediately and concretely than the previous generations had to. Interestingly, the new trend in some European countries, like France, is to spread interculturality across all subjects in the school systems (Mariet 1991), that is the teaching of

intercultural competence is not seen as the sole responsibility of foreign language teaching. This approach links up with other recent proposals in education which suggest spreading the content of language teaching by teaching mainstream subjects (for example history or science) in a given target language (Mohan 1986).

Intercultural competence has become a wide ranging concept which tries to encompass all the strategies and approaches any given person might use to shift from a monocultural to a more multicultural view of any subject matter be it history, mathematics or language. In this sense, intercultural competence is more related to the development of specific cognitive abilities and behaviour of the type Zarate and Byram (1994) described and arguably learning a foreign language is only one way among many which can be used to deconstruct a monocultural interpretation of knowledge. For example a given event of European history - ie: the deportation of Jews during World War Two - can be taught in one given language without being biased. Learning about history in one language does not have to equate to a culturally biased interpretation of historical events. What matters here is not so much the language as a teaching medium but the content and the way the content is treated in class.

With the many different perspectives on intercultural competence now emerging, what language teachers have to do is to define concretely for themselves what is their participation in developing the common vision of interculturality which is starting to be recognized by some as the desired common denominator in the teaching of all subjects within educational systems.

One starting point for language teachers is that whatever they do in their classroom they have to do it through the teaching of a foreign language in whatever forms this may take. Hence, a vision of intercultural competence to be of value to second language instructors must not only clearly outline

what socio-cultural behaviour and cognitive aptitude are required to arrive at the goal. It also has to give insights into concrete approaches for developing *intercultural competence through language learning* and these approaches need to be implementable within the context of classroom teaching. If the primary reality of the language classroom is the learning of language then a definition of intercultural communicative competence must remain very closely linked to language teaching issues.

Kramersch (1995: xxiv) offers a redefinition of the teaching of communicative competence which does not exclude the visionary definitions of Zarate and Byram (1994) but makes it more concrete and closer to the realities of language teaching classroom. In Kramersch's words, teaching communicative competence is:

*"teaching language as an explicit cultural practice in which the learners' native culture(s) and the culture(s) of those who speak the language are made visible, so that they can be identified, interpreted, and put in relation with one another"* (Kramersch 1995:xxiv)

Kramersch (1993:1) sees culture as inseparable from language:

*"Culture in language learning is not an expendable fifth skill, tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is always in the background, right from day one, ready to unsettle the good language learners when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard won communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them"*

It is the very inclusion of culture as an integral part of verbal interaction which forces language teachers to review their approaches to teaching

language. Culture as it is embedded in language use is not easily describable as for example decontextualised grammatical forms are. We saw however in chapter two how it is possible to identify the expression of culture in verbal interaction. Hence, the difficulty of teaching culture as part of language use might not be so much in the fact that culture is not easily accessible but that culture is primarily *variability*. This is the core of the problem for language teachers. To make culture visible is one thing to make its variable nature graspable and teachable is another.

Boyer, Butzbach and Pendax (1990:17-86), distinguished three different sources of variability (which they call "diversity") in language use. We elaborate below on some of their definitions:

a) geographical diversity: for example in France to refer to the three daily meals "breakfast, lunch, dinner" speakers from the south of the country use "déjeuner, dîner and souper" where in the northern regions "petit-déjeuner, déjeuner and dîner" are used.

b) sociocultural diversity: that is language variation related for instance to age, socio-economic group (ie: upper, middle and lower classes), gender and sexual identity . For example a speaker's explicit identification with one expression of sexuality - hetero; homo - or transexuality might produce a particular form of oral discourse (Nilan 1996).

c/ circumstantial diversity: that is language variation related to the particular circumstances at the moment an interaction take place. This includes events with a highly ritualised component such as weddings, funerals etc... or for example professional encounters which are bound by professional codes of verbal behaviour.

Having defined potential sources of variation in language use Boyer, Butzbach and Pendax (1990) note that language teaching until recently has

always avoided teaching learners that in language use within the same culture there are often different linguistic expressions of the same information. This would come from the common belief among language teachers that learners especially at *ab-initio* levels need to be taught a "minimal version" of the target language. That is a version which excludes variation as described above. Language teaching has tended, in its obsession to make a foreign language accessible to learners, to oversimplify language. A simplistic or reductionist approach to teaching language looks by extension for finite, neatly describable content (ie: syllabuses based on grammatical forms or functions). Moreover, what we might call "minimalist language teaching" objectivises language study because it presents language as if it were a static tangible object deprived of the intangible subjectiveness so apparent in language use. By separating language from its cultural and sociocultural variable content it separates *language* from *the users of language*.

In a sense the study of verbal interaction by necessity needs to be literally "subjectivised" if we, language teachers, are to give learners access to "maximum" rather than "minumum" versions of language use. This "subjective" aspect of language use is what Kramsch and McConnell-Ginet (1993:4) refer to as "the full-blooded communicative force" living people give to the forms of language to express what they mean.

Putting culture, geographical, social and cirucumstantial variations of language use on the map of language learning both destabilises and enlightens the language teaching profession. It destabilises language teaching because integrating culture and language variations into the study of language in use makes language learning a complex - as opposed to simple - task from the first class. Referring to the work of Resnick (1979) on language and thought processes, Liddicoat et al (1997) argue that:

*"...language learning requires higher order thinking processes and successful language learning will only result if the language programme stimulates this higher level thinking. That is language teaching needs to incorporate complexity from the very beginning and the process of decoding complex messages using limited resources both draws on and stimulates higher level thinking" (Liddicoat et al 1997:23).*

Both the variability and complexity of language use have to be taught to students from day one rather than avoided. In their first language, learners "live" the variability and complexity of everyday language use. They therefore already know perhaps not consciously but certainly at the level of experience, that verbal human communication is complex. Learners' experiential knowledge of the variability and complexity of language use can be articulated in the second language classroom. It can be turned into new metaknowledge on the nature of spoken language which will prepare students to expect variability and complexity from day one in second language learning. In fact many language teachers would have noticed that second language learners at a beginner's level are seldom satisfied with reductionist approaches to language teaching. They are very often impatient to ask the socio-cultural question which teachers hate because it destabilises their neat, simple, "uncomplex" but also not quite complete explanation of language use. Learners want to learn the full version of language use because they want to be full participants in verbal interactions with foreigners. Learners want their first attempt at uttering a few words in a foreign language to be a successful experience. They know it will not be so if their words are just grammatically correct but socially and culturally inappropriate. No one likes to make a fool of him/herself especially in foreign territory.

Teaching language and culture as an inseparable whole can potentially

enlighten second language teachers for different reasons: firstly because - as suggested earlier with reference to second language learners - teaching foreign verbal interaction involves that language teachers understand their own culture as expressed through everyday conversations, and secondly it involves knowing about the target culture and understanding how it relates to language use.

Recognizing the complexity of learning/teaching a second language based on an understanding that culture and linguistic variability are an integral part of language use calls for a teaching approach which is, as eloquently stated by Kramsch (1993:2):

*"... an approach which is more interested in fault lines than in smooth landscapes, in the recognition of complexity and in the tolerance of ambiguity, not in the search for clear yardsticks of competence or insurances against pedagogical malpractice".*

We suggest, like Kramsch, that clear yardsticks of what constitutes communicative competence are not necessary for the improvement of language teaching practice, they might confuse rather than guide practice by splitting communicative competence into too many sub-competences. Scholars work with their intellect when they try to understand a phenomenon (ie: intercultural verbal interaction). The natural impulse of the intellect is to split into bits what is always in reality not only a whole but also often 'a not so definable whole'. Language teaching on the other hand is only in part an intellectual activity which if it is successful is bound to be practical -ie: integrative in nature - that is it is bound by the primarily need to make learners *practice* the language they are learning. Interestingly, classroom research has shown that a language teacher might want to devote a class on the development of one skill or learning of one linguistic item,

however in the very process of teaching this skill or item other skills are used and other items covered. Moreover these other skills and items are taught just as prominently as the skill or item which had been reserved exclusive focus in the teacher's class preparation (Nunan 1995:3). For example a class, in a language program, might be devoted to "writing skills" but during the real happening of the so called "writing" class activities, learners are actually "reading" and "speaking" in the target language just as much as they are "writing".

Practice defies intent or plans, it integrates where often intent/plans/theory divides. What is important is that language teachers practice what we may call "conscious teaching". This is an approach to teaching which constantly cultivates an awareness of what is actually happening in the classroom as opposed to what the teacher has planned to happen. In our next chapter we will show how the methodology we propose for the teaching of verbal interaction and culture is largely shaped by pedagogical knowledge directly derived from conscious teaching practice. In this case, practice has shown that in a course which intentionally focuses on spoken language, all other language skills are effectively used in support of learning in the one particular skill. That is to say language teaching practice can "succeed" in focusing on one skill when it does not exclude all others. It is when *continuous* overfocus is given to one language skill at the expense of other skills that the overall language learning experience can be deprived. This statement echoes familiar comments from second language learners such as: "I know all my verbs but I can't speak" or "I can read all the text, I understand the language but I don't understand the meaning" etc...

With reference to the teaching of verbal interaction and culture, a teaching approach which would split too sharply the teaching of culture on the one hand and the teaching of language on the other would soon see the emergence of students' comments such as "I understand the culture but I can't see how it relates to the language people speak".



This brings us to the core of a useful definition of communicative competence for language teaching practice. Communicative competence, we agree, is about the development of appropriate intercultural communicative behaviour as defined by Zarate and Byram (1994). The addition of the notion of interculturality to communicative competence implies that language teaching can no longer be conceived as the teaching of skills alone. It endows language teaching with more far-reaching educational goals than it had before. Learning intercultural competence involves both learning about one's culture and the culture of another. The danger however is that learning a culture can remain abstract knowledge. New language pedagogy which aims at developing intercultural competence must ensure, therefore, that the learning of culture happens through language use in order to enable the learning process to concretely and actively challenge the learners' monolingual views of the world. It is only through a rigorous teaching of language as a manifestation of culture that learners will benefit from the development of other competences or abilities such as "the ability to relinquish ethnocentric attitudes" or "the ability to develop an interpretative system to compare L1 and L2" etc... If as Kramsch suggests *language is culture* then communicative competence is not about linguistic competence on the one hand and socio-cultural competence on the other. Communicative competence is the sum of both as an unsplit whole, as *one* and only *one* competence. A definition of communicative competence based on the recognition that language and culture/context are one and hence, by extension that language is not just a set of skills but content itself, calls for a complete reconceptualisation of what language is in the first place. The implications of such a renewed understanding of what language is are enormous for language teaching.

Researchers such as Ochs, Schegloff and Thompson (1996:4) for example blur the traditional distinction between grammar (language) and context (culture):

*"Grammars are deeply socio-cultural and integral to cross-cultural analysis because they illuminate how humans structure the world"*

They also remind us that Hymes (1962) thirty years ago contested Chomsky's famous sharp split between competence and performance (Ochs et al 1962:6):

*"Hymes called for reconfiguring the competence-performance distinction by encompassing communicative as well as grammatical competence and concomitantly shrinking the bounds of what was considered mere performance"*

In the future, linguistic analysis interested in the study of talk in interaction (ie: Conversation Analysis and Pragmatics) is likely to propose new understandings and descriptions of language in use which will transform and expand our conception of the role of grammar in language. It will do so as a result of seeing grammar and syntax as being encompassed in interactional and pragmatic organisations which are the primary driving forces of language performance (Ochs, Schegloff and Thompson 1996).

Teaching communicative competence - as redefined for language teaching practice - expands the teaching of language forms from the teaching of grammar (in the traditional sense) to the teaching of all other structures which are part of the resources speakers call upon when they interact with each other (ie: interactional and pragmatic structures). To the teaching of linguistic structures (ie. phonetics, grammar and syntax) and the socio-cultural organisation of language (ie. norms of interaction and pragmatics) *per se* , it also adds the teaching of bodily practice and other non-verbal devices (for example prosody).

## Summary

Communicative competence redefined as intercultural competence broadens the goals of language teaching. It sees language learning as integrating the learning of language, culture and intercultural behaviour.

This integration, as it blurs the notions of competence and performance as well as skills and content, calls for a redefinition of the nature of the language to be taught. It also calls for a new language pedagogy which aims to make the constraints on the individual and the society more transparent, questionable and solvable (Borrelli 1990). We will return to the discussion of this new pedagogy in section four of this chapter.

Having explored a definition of communicative competence for language teaching practice, we now propose to turn to Second Language Acquisition Research to see how it can inform the teaching/learning of verbal interaction and culture.

### **3.3 Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research and the teaching/learning of verbal interaction.**

Hatch, Flashner and Hunt (1986) have pointed out that language acquisition, comprehension and production are mental processes which as such are not easily accessible for study. In order to understand those mental processes, researchers in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) can therefore only study what is accessible to them that is: learners' production of language (Ellis 1985), also commonly labelled "performance data" (Firth and Wagner (1997:286). Only hypotheses and not certainties can be derived from the study of the product of a process that applied linguists try to understand. The product in our case refers to learners' verbal production. The process refers

to the "how" learners arrive at any verbal production in a foreign language. It is complex and hidden. Learners speak a foreign language while making use of their "full being" which includes cognitive abilities, emotions, personality and body . Our point is that language acquisition as a process can only ever be understood partially because we view language (and by extension language acquisition) as being intrinsically linked to the intangible notion of "being human". However, we do not exclude partial understanding of a phenomenon as being useful provided it does not pretend to be a complete, irrefutable explanation. SLA research offers arguably an important aspect of language acquisition which is the role of cognition in language processing and production.

Looking at the product - that is learners' verbal production - which is about trying to understand better - on the basis of what we can see - what learners actually do with language when they are learning foreign verbal interaction, can be of immense value to language teachers.

The form of language most studied by SLA research is that of spoken language (ie: utterances). As a result of the influence of traditional linguistics assumptions that grammar is the driving force of language production so far the vast majority of SLA studies have mainly centred around the acquisition of grammar and more specifically around the acquisition of morphosyntax in second language learners. This type of research is of considerable but limited value to language teaching. Some SLA researchers have recognized that learners' interlanguage cannot fully be described in terms of a systematic/orderly acquisition of forms/morphosyntax alone for the very nature of interlanguage is that it is variable and that this variability depends on various contextual factors. Ellis (1985:97-98) suggests that learners are constantly bringing their interlanguage closer to a native-like standard by *trying out forms in different functions*. Learners' interlanguage, therefore, like native speakers' language, is context

dependant. More recently Firth and Wagner (1997) have called for a reconceptualization of SLA core concepts. They have argued that SLA research favors cognitive-oriented theories which do not take into account that language is primarily acquired *through interaction*. In their view, future SLA research has to integrate the interactive and cognitive nature of second language acquisition if we are to see substantial advancement in the field. They advocate "the need to work towards the evolution of a holistic, bio-social SLA" (Firth and Wagner 1997:296).

Not surprisingly, the contextual and cultural features of "interlanguage use" have been thought too difficult to grasp and too variable in nature, in short too resistant to conventional/scientific SLA inquiry, hence they have largely been ignored (Saville-Troike 1985). It is only recently that some SLA researchers have proposed to expand the boundaries of SLA research to include the study of the acquisition of a second culture as an integral part of interlanguage processing. This expansion of SLA research tends to explore the acquisition of a second culture in either a) more general reflective terms (for example see the work of Kramsch, Byram, Zarate and many other eminent scholars) or b) it focuses on the acquisition of a specific aspect of second culture acquisition through verbal interaction - this is the case of SLA research done on the study of *pragmatic competence* in second language learners which Kasper (1996) defines as Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP). ILP research and any other research covering aspects of language/culture acquisition - although still limited in amount- are resources language teachers can use to gain insight into *at least some aspects* of the acquisition of culture as found in verbal interaction.

In view of our earlier proposition that language teaching need not split grammar and context/culture, we suggest that insights from form-focused

SLA research can be of value to the teaching of verbal interaction especially if those insights are supplemented by Second Language/Culture Acquisition research. We have chosen five main recurring themes in SLA research for their particular relevance to language teaching practice and because, in our view, each of these themes is somehow relevant to the acquisition of both forms and language/culture.

**1/Language teaching should follow the *natural development* of second language acquisition.**

*a- Language teaching and the acquisition of forms:*

Pienemann (1989:53) argues that a central claim in first and second language research - often ignored by language teaching practice - is that every learner builds his or her own grammar (interlanguage). Moreover, all language learners, in the process of building their own grammar would go through general natural stages of acquisition. Following from those claims, it ensues that language teaching is effective only if it supports the *natural order* of language acquisition. Pienemann further suggests that teaching linguistic items to learners who are not ready for them is potentially harmful to the language acquisition process, in his words:

*" This 'storing up treasures in heaven' approach to learning, far from promoting acquisition, can actually produce disturbances in the acquisition process" (Pienemann:1989;72).*

Different issues emerge for language teachers from the claims Pienemann and other SLA researchers have made (see Corder 1967 - Burt, Dulay and Hernandez-Chavez 1975, Wode 1976, Clashen 1984). One is that curriculum and syllabus designers, as well as language teachers, in order to base their course content and grading on their students' natural order of acquisition of

the target language, must know in the first instance what this natural order is. Unfortunately SLA research which has identified these stages of acquisition is available only for a very few languages. The second issue is that when stages of acquisition have been identified by SLA research, those stages refer to the acquisition of morphosyntax only, hence informing language teachers about one aspect of language production, although admittedly an important one. The question of the extent to which other aspects of language acquisition are staged remains unanswered.

We suggest, however, that the SLA research claims we have just discussed, despite their shortfalls, need to be taken into account by language teachers for the *general insight* they offer into the language acquisition process. The highly valuable essence of those claims is that a learner does not automatically acquire what is taught to him/her. Therefore language teachers always need to be attentive to what learners do with the language input provided to them in order to be able to adjust course content and teaching approach to their students' natural processing of the target language, rather than trying - as is often the case - to cover at all costs some arbitrary course content and graded steps.

The SLA claims we put forward are valuable for their call to language teachers to be in tune with their students' natural processing of all aspects of language learning, be it the learning of forms or more contextual and cultural features of language.

***b- Language teaching and the acquisition of a second culture:***

No strictly defined stages of culture acquisition have been identified by SLA research as has been the case for the acquisition of morphosyntax. However what we might call *observations* about second culture processing have been made and we suggest that they can be of value to language teachers - see for instance Nostrand (1966), Adler (1972), Condon (1973), Brown (1980) Byram

(1993) and Kramsch (1996).

Brown (1980) can be considered as a prototype of the most commonly made observations about culture acquisition. Brown suggests that first of all language teachers should identify *the context* in which the second culture learning takes place ie: the second language is learnt within the second culture of that language (second language learning) or the second language is learnt within one's own culture. The context of the second culture learning will determine the extent of what Brown calls *acculturation* (the process of becoming adapted to another culture). In the case of foreign language learning (our main interest), different degrees of acculturation can be noted as learners' motivations in learning a foreign language can vary enormously (for example a language can be learnt to enhance career prospects, for general curiosity, to fulfil a foreign language requirement for entry into a course, etc...). Brown further notes, however, that generally foreign language learning is *more heavily culture loaded* than second language learning - regardless of motivation issues - since, not having direct access to the second culture, foreign language learners are in acute need of understanding the people of the *other* culture.

Endorsing the importance of recognizing the different degrees of acculturation due to differences in teaching/learning contexts and motivation for language learning, we suggest that, in a course on verbal interaction and culture, teachers and learners in all contexts can benefit from knowing about general phases of acculturation. This knowledge can potentially help any teacher/learner cope with the challenges s/he will face in the process of teaching/learning another culture but it will also help all teachers/learners feel empathy towards foreigners (for example migrants in one's own country) who are experiencing the symptoms of acculturation.

Brown (1980:132-133) proposes four phases of acculturation which correspond to a successful case of second/foreign culture learning:



- 1) A "*Period of excitement and euphoria*" in discovering the new culture.
- 2) Culture shock emerges as the individual starts resenting the impact of cultural differences on his sense of self and security.
- 3) A period of culture stress marked by vacillation between accepting and resenting differences between the first and second culture.
- 4) Assimilation or adaptation to the other culture - confidence in the "new" person that has developed in the second/foreign culture. In the case of adaptation, this is what Kramsch (1993:12 ) would refer to as finding one's own voice in a foreign language, a presumably comfortable place between the first and second culture.

When a foreign language and culture are taught within a classroom environment, learners obviously are likely to experience different degrees of acculturation depending on the amount/intensity of exposure and involvement in the foreign culture which is required of them.

Focusing on the type of cognitive activities involved in the acquisition of a foreign culture, Kramsch (1996) approaches the understanding of acculturation from a different angle when she speaks of stages of "metaphorization" in language learners. Each learner, when exposed to a cultural difference between L1 and L2, would produce 'metaphors' of the target culture in terms of his/her own culture in order to understand the message. As the process of making sense of messages in the foreign culture becomes more abstract learners move from less to more cognitively complex stages of metaphorization. As pointed out by Liddicoat et al (1997), the crucial point of this process is that learners use metaphors for all texts whether they are linguistically simple (ie: slogans or advertisements) or complex texts. This statement sends us back to the observation made by Kramsch (1992:1) that language and culture learnt as an inseparable whole is a complex endeavour and it is so from day one.

Other inquiries into the acquisition of a second culture include the understanding of what constitutes “pragmatic competence”.

Kasper & Schmidt (1996) have made the following interesting observations:

a) There is no order of acquisition for Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP) comparable to morphosyntax.

b) According to studies conducted by Schmidt (1983), Ellis (1992) and Sawyer (1992), in the initial stages of pragmatic competence learners use some already made, formulaic expressions which they do not analyse. At a later stage they are capable of “decomposing” those formulaic expressions (or routines) and use them more productively in more complex sentences. Ellis (1985:168) argues that unanalysed routines or formulaic speech is common in early SLA because it alleviates the learning process while increasing communicative competence.

c) Learners need both to develop a repertoire of pre-patterned routines for specific pragmatic functions in the target language and they also need to understand and create new utterances to be able to both decode and express meaning outside the conventional norms.

d) How learners develop the two abilities described in “c” is to date unclear.

Research in Interlanguage pragmatics offers language teachers some useful insights into some aspects of second culture acquisition. Firstly there is no order of acquisition in ILP which suggests that the teaching of pragmatic norms in a target language can be included at any stage in the learning process. Moreover learners’ ability to use formulaic speech increases in the early stages of SLA and helps the development of communicative competence.

This implies that language teachers can greatly help learners by teaching them explicitly formulaic speech in the target language.

## Summary

Whether they have been clearly or not so clearly identified, there seem to be stages/phases all learners go through in the process of acquiring both the forms and culture (in the general sense) of language use. We suggest that language teaching practice should take into account SLA research which provides insight into cognitive stages and/or insight into more general behavioural patterns of language and culture acquisition.

One recurrent problem however with scholarly reflection on stages/processes involved in second language or second culture acquisition is that this reflection tends to overfocus on the role of *cognition* in learning a second language and culture to the expense of other aspects of language learning such as personality, motivation, learning situation etc. Focus on cognition relates more to *how* a language is acquired where focus on other factors, as just mentioned, relates more to *why* a second language is or is not acquired by a learner (Firth and Wagner 1997). This last comment leads us to the next very relevant issue for language teaching practice: that of differential success among second language learners.

## 2/ Differential success among second language learners

Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991:152) noted that:

*"The major conundrum in the SLA field is the question of differential success" ... and further ... "Unfortunately, language mastery is not often the outcome of SLA".*

According to the above comments, language teachers who are mainly interested in their students' mastery of the target language might benefit more from inquiry into what makes learners learn a language than from inquiry into how they acquire it.

Larsen-Freeman and Long have listed the following explanations for different rates of success in language learning: age, language aptitude, socio-psychological factors, personality, cognitive style, hemisphere specialization,

learning strategies. We will discuss below only the themes we find of particular interest to the teaching of verbal interaction and culture. Learning strategies and cognitive styles are discussed as a separate sub-section.

### *Language aptitude*

Quoting Carroll (1981:105), Larsen-Freeman and Long describe language aptitude as encompassing four different abilities in learners:

- a) The ability to identify distinct sounds and form associations between them,
- b) The ability to recognize the grammatical functions of words,
- c) The ability to learn associations between sounds and meaning,
- d) The ability to infer or induce the rules governing a set of language materials.

We see two problems with this description of language aptitude markers. Firstly it reflects a view of language learning which focuses on the learning of sounds and grammar to the exclusion of the socio-cultural variability of language use and secondly it reduces language learning to a matter of cognitive ability (ie: recognition of grammatical functions, association between sounds and meaning etc..).

There seems to be a marked tendency among scholars in second language instruction/acquisition to over-emphasize the role of cognition not only with regards to the learning of forms but also to the learning of a foreign culture. It is interesting to note that just as linguistic studies have tended in the past to split language from the speakers of language, SLA and second language instruction research tends to disconnect the language learning process from the learners of language. It often seems to be forgotten that learners of a language are people, human beings who cannot be understood solely in terms of their "cognitive abilities". Language teachers know this only too well. When they stand in front of a class they are facing people in flesh and blood who have minds but also bodies, feelings and emotions.

Second language learning is primarily the story of human relationships between a teacher and learners, between learners and between teacher/learners of a culture with people of another culture. If we recast the context of second language learning in terms of human relationships we can then see why the relevance of non-cognitive abilities becomes very acute in the specific case of learning to interact verbally in a foreign culture. Learning to interact in a second culture is learning how to be a different human being through successful communication with others. It is in this sense that it is a transformative process which can incite the learner to review his/her sense of self and perception of the world.

This transformative process does, without doubt, involve cognitive abilities but it also involves feelings such as feelings of frustration and resentment when confronting difference, feelings of rejection often before acceptance of otherness, feelings of insecurity and temporary or permanent loss of self-esteem in the process of learning how to speak and to be in a foreign culture. Both feelings and cognition are really intermingled in second language learning. This is true with regards to the learning of cultural differences as much as with the learning of grammatical differences. When a learner, for example a native English speaker, is confronted with the obligation of using the subjunctive mood in French s/he is totally unfamiliar with, the exposure to grammatical difference in this case may cause frustration if not rejection, until the object of difference is mastered. Mastering the use of the subjunctive in French, involves acceptance of another way (another verb system) to express oneself. It disturbs and challenges the learners' culturally conditioned view of verb systems just as much as differences in rules of politeness would. Apart from having to cope with the acceptance of grammatical difference, which involves feeling open to otherness, obviously learning the French subjunctive is also a matter of cognition when it comes to knowing how to conjugate verbs in this mood. Our point

is that in fact there is doubt as to whether it is wise to split cognition from feelings as the two are so intimately related. Damasio (1994:159) argues that:

*"feelings are just as cognitive as any other processing image, and just as dependent on cerebral-cortex processing as any other image"... and further..."Feelings offer us a glimpse of what goes on in our flesh, as a momentary image of that flesh is juxtaposed to the images of other objects and situations: in so doing, feelings modify our comprehensive notion of those other objects and situations"* .

Both the importance of feeling and thinking must be considered in an attempt to understand how language learners acquire/learn language.

To sum up, aptitude in language learning is linked to cognitive abilities and a general willingness to move beyond feelings which impinge on the learning process.

### *Attitudes in second language learning*

Of particular relevance to language and culture teaching practice are two different attitude variables:

a) The teacher's general attitude to learners is likely to affect the quality and quantity of learning. Brown (1980:135) for example, when referring to stages of acculturation, advises teachers to be sensitive and perceptive to learners' feelings of frustration, anger and the helplessness they might experience in the process of learning another culture. One challenge for the teacher of language/culture is to compare the target culture with the learners' culture in a non-biased way. This requires judicious preparation of items from the course content which are likely to trigger highly emotionally charged responses. For example if a native French teacher chooses to explore cultural

stereotypes in between her/his culture and that of Australian learners s/he cannot, for instance, announce bluntly as a matter of truth that "Australian males are incapable of showing feelings due to their cultural conditioning while French males are far more affectionate due to the importance of non-verbal language in French culture". Australian male learners could be offended either because they do not personally identify with the stereotype or because they do not perceive non-verbal language as having supremacy over other forms of showing feelings. They could also be offended simply because their own culture/self is being criticised and presented negatively. Cultural stereotypes have to be presented as potential untruths. They can be positively explored by a teacher without offending learners if the teacher knows how to uncover the origin of the stereotype through a non-biased analysis of language use and behaviour.

Other attitudes such as a teacher's trust in learners' abilities but also vigilance towards learners' attitudinal weaknesses all will have an importance in terms of learning outcomes.

b) The learners' attitudes towards the learning situation will affect the degree of learning success. For example if learners resent a teacher's approach to teaching, regardless of their initial openness to language learning or of cognitive abilities, they are likely to behave uncooperatively in the tasks the teacher proposes. This would represent a case where learners display in Krashen's (1978) terms a high "affective filter". According to Krashen, learners must have a low affective filter (be open, not on the defensive) for language learning to happen effectively. This point will become highly relevant later in our discussion of appropriate methodology for the teaching of verbal interaction and culture. Part of second-language teaching is to teach learners about the processes (cognitive and affective) involved in language learning and in so doing the teacher needs to expose openly the rationale for choices of tasks in order to help learners break through any potential initial

aversion to a given task. When the learners' aversion to a task is obviously too overwhelming, alternate solutions have to be found on the spot. For example, a teacher in a class practicing French emblematic gestures should not require a very introverted and shy learner to over expose him/herself in front of a whole class by asking this learner to demonstrate French gestures in a role play with another learner who is highly confident with his/her body language. This is an illustration of what we called earlier the human aspect of the language teaching/learning relationship.

### *Personality in second language learning.*

Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991:187), summarizing research on the topic of the impact of personality in SLA, note that it "leaves intact the intuitively appealing link between extroversion and language learning" especially in the case of oral performance. The relevance of this comment to language teaching practice is that in a class on verbal interaction where learners will have to engage extensively in oral production the language teacher should demonstrate sensitivity and support to learners not naturally at ease when required to expose themselves through verbal means. Oral activities for example can be adjusted and monitored by learners to suit their level of ease with regard to speaking in class. Some very introverted learners for instance might need to read role-plays they have prepared rather than perform them until they feel confident enough to gradually move towards more genuine and spontaneous modes of verbal expression.

Besides the extrovert/introvert nexus, another personality variable highly relevant to the teaching of language as culture is the tolerance of ambiguity. Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991:191) note that throughout the process of language learning, learners are constantly exposed to new linguistic items, forms of language use and cultural content which are



ambiguous. Clear understanding of new language forms and use might not come immediately, and learners who are not very tolerant of ambiguity can feel frustrated and not perform as well because of that.

Learners with low tolerance of ambiguity tend to look for neat infallible explanations of phenomena in language use. They seek understanding of all the language items in a text and for that reason they are also not easily satisfied with understanding only the gist of a text whether oral or written. Such learners are usually highly frustrated by the intangibility of spoken language and cultural phenomena. In a case where a learner is extremely intolerant of ambiguity - especially if such a learner disrupts the functioning of the class - the language teacher's role is to help this learner accept the ungraspable. There exists no infallible recipe to deal with this problem but what is of foremost importance for a teacher in this situation is to have fully acknowledged to her/himself that teaching tolerance of ambiguity is part of the content, purpose and value of language teaching and therefore due attention and time spent in class dealing with this issue need not be perceived as wasted.

### *Empathy and second language learning*

Finally the last personality variable of importance in teaching foreign verbal interaction is that of empathy.

Empathy is definable as a learner's ability/willingness to see, feel and accept someone else's perceptions, interpretations and verbal expression in any given situation. Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991), after surveying research done on the issue of empathy in SLA, admit that there are no conclusive results on the topic. The problem, as is often the case in SLA research, is that results vary according to what exactly is being tested and the definition of what is being tested. Also the impact of one variable can be counteracted by another variable rendering the end results of the research quite obscure. For

example empathy can arguably affect the quality of pronunciation in a foreign language, but is it wise to consider a native-like pronunciation the most important marker of empathy? Learners can retain or not retain a foreign accent for all sorts of reasons often dependant on personal issues or issues related to the wider context in which a foreign language is learnt. For example a second language learner might feel pressured into adopting a native-like accent in order to obtain work where such an accent is required. This type of pressure might produce the immediately wanted outcome but it is doubtful that it would indicate an empathy towards members of the second culture.

We suggest that empathy has to be understood in very general terms to be considered as a potentially useful behavioural trait which language teachers can help learners develop. Guiora (1972) proposes such a general definition of empathy. He refers to empathy as "*the permeability of the language ego boundary*", that is, a learner's ability/willingness to step out of her/his familiar culturally conditioned identity markers not only to embrace otherness but also be changed by it. Empathy in this sense is an essential asset for successful intercultural communication.

### **3) Different cognitive styles and learning strategies.**

Knowing about cognitive styles and learning strategies can inform the teaching of verbal interaction.

#### *a) Different cognitive styles in language learners*

The most studied difference in cognitive style in SLA research is referred to in the literature as field independence versus field dependence . A field

independent learner tends to see particular items as separate from the whole they constitute. S/he thinks analytically about the discrete elements of a given field. With regard to language learning, a field independent learner is likely to seek mastery of individual grammatical items before s/he will attempt to use these items in verbal or written expression. A field independent learner looks for rules and clear yardsticks, s/he sees language as a system of codes which are tangible and separable items. A field dependent learner on the other hand focuses more on the whole or field before s/he looks at discrete items. This type of language learner is more likely to attempt using the target language without having fully mastered all grammatical rules, s/he will let herself more easily be driven by *meaning* rather than "*correctness of language*" in oral production. With regard to the more human aspect of verbal interaction, differences between field independent and dependent learners might also emerge. The connection between cognitive style and social behaviour is however hard to prove.

What is important to remember is that learners do not choose between cognitive styles, rather they tend to have more of one or the other as part of their innate abilities. Language teachers need to remember that different cognitive styles exist and they must cater for those differences in their approach to teaching and the variety of tasks they offer. They cannot change learner's cognitive styles.

In non-traditional classroom settings where students learn about and practice foreign verbal interaction we can assume that learners need to call upon both field independent and field dependent cognitive styles to become successful spoken language learners, regardless of their more personal mode of perception. Learning to interact successfully in a foreign language and culture requires all the qualities which are attributed to both field independent and dependent learners, that is learners need to be able to focus on discrete items ranging for instance from verb tenses to pronunciation as well as rules of politeness which, as we saw earlier, are more to do with the

ability to interpret in culturally appropriate ways the power balance between interactants. In this sense it is more related to the human side of language production than verb tenses. Both verb tenses and rules of politeness however are part of the act of interacting. Focus on both tangible and more intangible aspects of language use are necessary to communicate successfully. This is a recurrent duality in language practice which language teachers need to constantly address. Striking a balance between two apparent opposites is not an easy task. For this reason, with reference to field independent versus dependent learners we suggest that the division between the two different cognitive styles can be thought of as two sides of the same coin. Language teachers can ensure they propose activities which integrate different learning approaches to *satisfy* all learners and the desired outcomes.

#### *b) Learners strategies in language learning*

As pointed out by Nunan (1995:171) the relevant issue for language instructors with regard to learning strategies is to ascertain whether so-called good language learners share some strategy preferences. Nunan investigated two different groups of *good language learners* (foreign and second-language learners) in the hope of finding out whether they shared some of the same learning approaches. Results from the first group indicated that nearly all learners wished they had received more formal instruction of grammar while learning a second-language. Those learners also recognised that motivation, risk-taking and determination to use the target language outside classroom settings were part of their language learning success.

For the second group, Nunan (1995:175) summarises his research results by listing items mentioned by learners from most to least useful in their language learning success. We will reproduce below the two lists of 'most

useful items' and 'least useful items'. From the many course evaluation questionnaires we have read over ten years of experience in language teaching we recognize Nunan's lists as representing the most common comments learners make about the ways they wish to learn a foreign/second language.

*Things that helped most ((from most to least frequently nominated):*

1. Conversation with native speakers/in groups
2. Finding opportunities to practise outside class
3. Accessing media - radio, television, newspapers
4. Formal classes/learning with a teacher
5. Motivation
6. Reading
7. Grammar rules/drills
8. Listening
9. Pronunciation
10. Vocabulary

*Things that helped least (from most to least frequently motivated)*

1. Learning grammar/drills
2. Lack of opportunity to use English outside class
3. Poor teaching
4. Being criticised/punished
5. Practising with L2 speakers/poor L1 speakers
6. Classes too big/too many levels
7. Use L1 too much
8. Accessing media
9. Fear of making mistakes
10. Lack of motivation
11. Childish materials, e.g. picture books

12. Lack of audio-visual facilities
13. Rigid timetables and programmes
14. Reading aloud in classroom
15. Memorising
16. No time to study
17. Writing

Items 1, 2 and 3 on the first list relate to learners' needs to have direct exposure to the target language as well as authentic practice at using the language. Item 4 (formal classes etc...) and item 7 (Grammar rules/drills) both touch on the issue of the value of formal instruction in language learning. Interestingly 'grammar rules/drills' were mentioned (admittedly with a different ranking preference) in both the lists of "Things that helped most" and "Things that helped least" (Nunan 1995: 175-176). We can interpret this data as reflecting learners' contradictory or at least confused perceptions of the use of learning grammar as part of language learning. It is possible that learners' "natural" need for grammatical knowledge was not satisfied by their teachers' traditional approach to teaching grammar. To remedy this problem, Nunan (1995:176) in his book further suggests that language teachers make more visible the links between grammar instruction and achievement of communicative objectives. Long (1991:47), who sought to determine whether grammar instruction had an impact on language performance, came to the conclusion that learners attained higher levels of second language acquisition if they received - during language instruction - a systematic but non-interfering focus on form. By "systematic non-interfering focus on form" Long refers to teaching grammar in context, that is teaching grammar rules as the need for them arises during class activities which were not primarily designed to focus on forms.

Research and discussions on the role of formal instruction in language acquisition/learning are extensive. All recognise the importance of teaching

grammar but opinions differ as to how to approach grammar instruction (for further references see, Bialystock 1981, Long 1983, Ellis 1985, McKay, S 1987, Ur 1988, McKay, P 1994). For our argument what is relevant for us at this point is that learners' natural need for grammatical knowledge matches the outcomes of research on the role of formal instruction in language acquisition. Both learners and researchers acknowledge the importance of learning grammar in some formal, explicit way.

Item five on Nunan's first list (motivation) seems to be applicable to all learning situations: the more motivation one has to master knowledge of any kind the more likely one will succeed.

For item 6 (reading) Nunan does not give any details of the type of reading activities he is referring to. Reading can encompass many different language activities and again depending on the teacher's approach to teaching this language skill, learners' perceptions of its usefulness will vary. Listening ranked number eight on the list which is interesting, "when conversation with native speakers" was ranked number one. One can depict here a perhaps erroneous perception of learners' appreciation of what "conversing" involves. "Conversing" in a foreign language necessarily involves "speaking" as well as "listening" to the foreign language.

In the traditional language classroom speaking and listening activities are often treated as skills which are acquired separately so naturally learners might not be consciously aware that when they are practising "conversation - as speaking" - and this inside or outside the classroom environment - they are in fact also practising "listening". In a course on verbal interaction, we regard "conversing" as involving two inseparable language skills: "speaking" and "listening". Furthermore, language teachers in their approach to teaching verbal interaction need to make learners aware of the distinction between what Richards (1987) has called "conversational" versus "academic" listening". Conversational listening involves a "two-way" - hence more active - listening process where academic listening involves

only a "one way" - hence more passive - listening process. Liddicoat (1997:43) summarizes research in conversational listening in those terms:

*"...conversational listeners need to project what it is a speaker is saying and to monitor what they are saying for a possible point of completion.*

*Conversational listening then is not a matter of processing propositions after an oral message has been delivered, but rather of guessing what a speaker is doing in speaking to be complete".*

Language teachers need to distinguish between the different kinds of listening "genres" learners can be exposed to during classroom activities in order to ensure that their teaching covers the specific features of the different listening skills (ie. conversational and academic listening skills).

Pronunciation ranked as item nine on Nunan's (1995) list. Again Nunan does not give any explanation as to what his learners meant by mentioning pronunciation as "helpful" in language learning. What is interesting however is that learners did not mention it as a priority in their learning development. This in turn could be interpreted as matching our suggestion in Chapter two that language teachers should not overfocus on having learners produce native-like pronunciation as this could lead to discouragement and go against the learners' desire to retain a foreign accent as an identity marker.

Vocabulary ranked as the last item on Nunan's list. Again this data is hard to interpret. It is surprising however that learners in Nunan's study did not perceive the learning of new words as a priority in their language learning. It is possible that these learners, by ranking the learning of vocabulary as a low priority, indirectly commented on the unuseful way they had been taught vocabulary in class rather than a genuine misappreciation of the importance of learning vocabulary.



To sum up the relevance, for our argument, of Nunan's study on learners' strategies we can see that language teaching practice which follows the natural development of language/culture acquisition is likely to have a positive impact on language learning. Integrating language learners' experiential knowledge of what makes them learn a language successfully is in turn a way to tune in with learners' "natural" learning strategies which we can assume are reasonably align with "natural" processes of language/culture acquisition. There are however some reservations to be made to this last statement. One is that learners' perceptions of what constitutes good learning strategies can reflect the inadequacies of the teaching approaches their teachers use (see discussion above). These perceptions are therefore not necessarily "natural" strategies. They can be more accurately described as the product of learners' "natural" responses to the teaching/learning environment in which they are placed. In examining learners' perceptions of what constitutes good language learning, language teachers should therefore be open to these views as well as critical of them by trying to interpret them within the learning context which shaped them. With regard to the particular case of teaching verbal interaction and culture, we saw that learning a language as an expression of a particular culture is a complex endeavour which challenges commonly held views of what language use really is. We saw for example that exposure and interaction in the target culture is not enough for a learner to depict differences in cultural patterns which are likely to cause communication breakdowns. Metaknowledge which makes visible the links between language and culture is necessary for learners to be able to spot the cultural differences and intercultural behavioural skills are needed to negotiate those differences. Learners' views about what constitutes good language learning are therefore unlikely to incorporate the particularities attached to "language as culture learning" as those particularities are not readily observable. We suggest therefore that taking into account learners' perceived best language learning

strategies is advisable as long as it does not preclude the expansion of the language learning experience to new realms of knowledge. One final comment on Nunan's research findings is that learners seem to know intuitively that both formal instruction and interaction in the target language are necessary ingredients for successful language learning (see lists above). Learners' intuitive knowledge on both issues matches interestingly some common concerns among SLA researchers on the type of input which is required for successful language acquisition and on the necessity for learners to produce output. We will examine those last two issues under our next heading.

#### **4/Input and output in second language and culture acquisition/learning.**

Research on the role of input and output in SLA has led to the conclusion that the linear model INPUT  $\Rightarrow$  BLACK BOX  $\Rightarrow$  OUTPUT cannot account for second language acquisition (Larsen-Freeman 1985). One main implication of this statement which cannot be ignored by language teachers is that what is taught is not automatically reproduced by learners. In this regard studies of target language input and output are of particular interest to language teachers because these studies take into consideration two of their primary concerns that is the *learning process* and *the learner*.

One area of consensus in SLA research is that input is necessary. The issue is what form and delivery of input is recommended for best language learning outcomes. Long (1985) argues that very few studies have considered the importance of the linguistic environment on SLA. We add to Long's comment that even fewer studies have included the importance - in language/culture acquisition - of the intercultural environment in which learners engage in foreign verbal interaction.

Long investigated the impact of adjusted speech from native-speakers (Foreigner Talk) on learners' comprehension of the target language. He concluded that there is "*an indirect causal relationship between linguistic*

*and conversational adjustments and SLA*". This finding echoes Krashen's (1985) theory of comprehensible input. One implication for language teaching practice of the positive impact of adjusted speech on SLA is that exposure to "authentic" texts (oral or written) - that is non-adjusted texts - might not be the best form of input, presumably more so for beginners in the target language. The issue however might not be so much related to the authenticity of texts but rather to a need to redefine what is authenticity or to consider authenticity for what purpose. A native-speaker who adjusts her/his speech to be understood by a non-native speaker who is learning her/his language has one very *authentic* goal: to communicate successfully by any means with another human being. Like the native speaker, the language teacher does no more than adjust her/his speech to be understood by students. Does this imply those language teachers teaching in the target language have always been in tune with SLA research (without consciously knowing they were) that is they have always practiced negotiation / promotion of meaning - another label for adjusted speech - to foster comprehension?

One of the arguments against the validity of teachers' adjusted talk is that it provides students with a distorted form of communication (Ellis 1990) as the teacher-learner relationship is not "real world" communication. This argument is only valid if it is based on a strict definition of what "real world communication is". The teacher-learner relationships inside a classroom environment is different from native-speaker/learner relationships outside the classroom environment. Both forms of relationship are different as they serve different purposes but one is just as *real* as the other. The downgrading of classroom environments as "unreal worlds" where genuine communication cannot take place calls for a review of what can be reasonably expected of language teaching in a classroom. This review could start with a statement of what language teaching in a classroom *is* rather than what it *is not* or *ought to be*. Cowley and Hanna (1997:1) in the context

of a discussion on genre theory and language/culture teaching noted that the language class constitutes a genre in itself which imposes certain pedagogical requirements and which in turn can make difficult the introduction of other genres teachers might try to introduce in the classroom.

This is an issue we will discuss further in our next chapter.

The notion that negotiation of meaning in the case of communication breakdown facilitates language acquisition links up to another notion put forward by Long (1983), that of the use of *corrective feedback* while teaching language forms in context. To sum up Long's view on input and SLA, we can say that through interaction where meaning is negotiated learners receive comprehensible input which facilitates language acquisition. *Corrective feedback* which involves learners explanations on language forms/vocabulary when the need arises during classroom tasks is a form of negotiated input.

Hatch (1978) has challenged the primary role of input in SLA. She argues that it is through the practice of conversation that learners develop new syntactic structures. It is through conversing that learners learn how to converse as noted by Nunan's (1995:170-178) subjects. Long (1981) and Gass and Varonis (1985) speak, respectively, of "participation in conversation" and "active involvement" as necessary conditions for second language acquisition to occur. Swain (1985:252) also argued for the importance of what she called "comprehensible output" in SLA and defines this as:

*"... output that extends the linguistic repertoire of the learner as he or she attempts to create precisely and appropriately the meaning desired. Comprehensible output is a necessary mechanism of acquisition independent of the role of comprehensible input".*

Although Swain suggests that output and input are two different mechanisms which contribute separately to acquisition, it can be argued that the acquisition of language through production of output amounts to *self generated* input. Hence input and output although two separate processes also "feed" on each other.

For language teachers, the essential point regarding the issue of input/output is that both are needed for successful language acquisition. In a classroom environment, and especially at beginners' levels some form of input has to be provided to learners before they can start talking in the target language. No SLA researcher would deny this basic truth. One useful framing of the input/output issue for language teaching practice is to see input and output as intimately related, with no necessary rigid order of preference in the way they happen in the classroom. Depending on learners' knowledge of the target language and the nature of tasks, input and output can either happen separately or simultaneously. Both the mode of input delivery and output production can also vary depending on the nature of the content covered in a particular class.

Having acknowledged the need for both input and output in language learning, language teachers still have to decide on the actual content and approach to their teaching. In chapter two, we have proposed seven teachable items as appropriate content for the teaching of verbal interaction and culture. These items amount to a form of input. We will now advocate a mode of delivery for this input which should target both conceptual and experiential learning. In teaching spoken language as culture, input and output are best thought of as one on-going creative phenomenon where input and output feed on each other. Initially though - and especially at beginners' level - learners need to receive new input on different aspects of language use through some form of instruction. Instruction can take different forms, from a more formal presentation of new input to a more interactive form of input delivery such as when learners are induced to

discover/notice new linguistic items or cultural features of language use. Different forms of input instruction can also happen at once. For example, during formal *but* interactive mini-lectures learners can be introduced to new metaknowledge and metalanguage about language use. Learners can listen or watch a sequence of verbal interaction trying to understand the gist of the message. They can then be invited to zoom on and notice visible features of language use using transcripts which reproduce faithfully items such as spoken grammar and colloquial vocabulary. For the more invisible features of language use, the introduction of new concepts and metalanguage is necessary before (or as) successful noticing can happen. The noticing of an invisible feature of language use (for example pragmatic norms) and the naming of this feature actually go together, as argued by Tannen (1986):

*"It is easier to conceive of something if we have a word for it; we instinctively feel that something for which there is a word really exists...In this way, knowing the terms "frame", "metamessage" and "conversational style" makes it easier not only to talk but also to think about how ways of talking shape communication"*

Getting learners to think about how ways of talking shape communication is exactly what language teachers need to achieve in a course on verbal interaction and culture. "Ways of talking" include all forms of verbal/non verbal expression (from grammar/syntax to prosodic features and gestures) and cultural/personal variables.

For language teaching purposes we can redefine input as encompassing all aspects of language use (see chapter two) as well as metaknowledge and metalanguage related to how human communication works. Forms of input delivery can involve three ways of learning: passive, interactive and reflective learning. This approach to teaching also leads to the blurring

during class activities of the four traditional language skills: listening/speaking/writing and reading (Liddicoat 1997).

Teaching language as culture is particularly conducive to reflective language learning. It is this reflective element which turns upside down many traditional views on language teaching and learning. Apart from questioning the need to teach language as separate skills - hence adopting a content rather than skills driven pedagogy - the teaching of language as culture sees language learning as including the formation of new concepts to support new experiences (ie. successful intercultural communication). According to Vygostky (1962) concept formation is a creative process regulated in part by the experimental task. In other words concept formation does not result from purely passive learning. That is formal instruction on the links between language and culture would not be sufficient to ensure the learning of foreign verbal interaction. This is where output or experiential learning becomes relevant to our argument. Vygostky (1962:54) referring to Ach's work on concept formation argues that "the regulating effect of the determining tendency" lived through "experiencing" as opposed to just "thinking" is essential in the formation of new concepts. Ach's "determining tendency" is a sum of operations on a continuum which leads to a final goal. We will see further that the methodology we propose for the teaching of foreign verbal interaction is a series of operations or steps leading to the final goal of making learners into better intercultural communicators.

Before closing our discussion on SLA and second language instruction research, we need to comment on two final issues which have appeared in recent literature on our topic of interest. We refer here to the role of learners' first language in language/culture learning and on the questioning of native-speaker language as the norm to be achieved by the second language learner.

With regard to the first issue Blyth (1995) urges language teachers to think of the classroom environment as a multilingual community where learners use a minimum of two languages (their first and target languages) to achieve different learning outcomes. Instead of imposing the target language as the only legitimate medium to learn the target language (a key notion in the Communicative Approach), Blyth suggests overtly authorizing learners to use their first language (see also on this issue Boyer, Butzbach and Pendants 1990:197-198, Kramsch 1995:xxi). Learners - as a matter of fact - have always used their first language regardless of their teachers' approval. So the issue is not to propose yet another new component to language teaching but to describe a familiar practice in a new way (Kramsch 1995) and for previously unsuspected and/or unvalued purposes<sup>4</sup>.

In the teaching of language as culture, learners might arguably need to use their first language to discuss new concepts but also feelings related to the learning of a new culture. We suggest however that the use of learners' first language - especially in a foreign as opposed to second language learning context - should be monitored to a certain extent. Learning language as culture should not amount to learning *about* the target language and culture at the expense of learning through using the new language. The use of first language in the foreign language classroom environment has - without any doubt - a role to play in the learning process but it needs to be monitored by the language teacher to avoid possible negative imbalances in the overall language learning process.

Closely related to the issue of first language use in foreign language instruction is the question of whether learners should attempt to reach native like competence in the target language. There is consensus in the recent literature which suggests that native-like competency is an inappropriate norm for language learners as native-like competency is virtually unattainable and possibly undesirable. What we need to argue for

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<sup>4</sup> In our next chapter on verbal instruction methodology we will comment in more detail on learners' usage of code-switching between their first language and the target language.



are both *a perception norm* and *a production norm*. Learners need to be able *to understand and interpret* the target language and culture which is different from being able *to express oneself appropriately* in foreign territory. We suggest that the overriding principle in teaching language and culture, should be not to turn learners into parrots of the target language and culture. The aim is rather to support learners in creating a space for themselves between their first and target language/culture, a space in which they feel unthreatened to explore linguistic and cultural differences in view of becoming not only efficient but “happy” bilinguals - see articles in Kramsch 1995b and Buttjes & Byram 1990. Language teachers can support language learners in more appropriate ways if they consider learners for what they are - or in the process of becoming - that is bilingual speakers. The bilingual speaker’s language performance rather than the native speaker’s performance might therefore be a more realistic and comfortable norm for the language learner.

***Summary of the relevance of SLA and foreign language instruction for the teaching of verbal interaction and culture.***

Lightbown and Spada (1993) rightly propose that knowing about findings and theories of Second Language Acquisition research can make language teachers better judges of teaching material and teaching methods. It can also help them develop “new” teaching approaches and materials which are likely to promote positive learning outcomes. The relationship between pure applied linguistic research and language teaching practice is however unclear. Chaudron (1988:180) summarizes the dilemma of this professional relationship from a language teacher’s point of view:

*“... We will always need to interpret the clues (of SLA research) with the help of commonsense based on our practical experience of what works and*

*does not work in the classroom. In this way we can avoid becoming consumers of research and instead build our own theories of how learning takes place through instruction"*

In chapter four, where we propose a methodology for the practice of teaching verbal interaction, we will return to Chaudron's concerns.

Now, from the insights gained in our discussion in parts one and two of this chapter we will propose a summary of pedagogical principles which can assist verbal interaction instruction .

### **3.4 Definition of pedagogical principles for the teaching of verbal interaction and culture.**

A definition of pedagogical principles for a course on verbal interaction and culture is an attempt to capture all the issues teachers would need to bear in mind in preparing such a course. It is an attempt to find a model or a theory which can assist the practice of teaching spoken language as the expression of culture.

Brown (1980: 245-253) who reviewed different *models of language teaching and learning processes*, warns of the danger of "mechanical models" which, under the mask of "creative construction", do not capture the multifaceted interaction of second language teaching and learning variables. The way out of this dilemma is to conceptualize models of pedagogical principles in terms of a framework of references rather than an infallible model of absolute truths (ie. a set of principles for teaching not a set of rules).

From this perspective, based on our discussion throughout this chapter; the framework of pedagogical principles we propose below is meant to offer language teachers a table of principles (see table 3.1) which point to the different aspects/components of teaching language and culture we suggest

need to be explored. The exploration of the issues involved in teaching/learning about the links between spoken language and culture can be approached as on-going professional and personal development. In this sense what we propose is a dynamic approach to developing pedagogical knowledge which aims to support teachers to construct *their own personal teaching/learning theories*. Personal theories of language teaching are ultimately the only pedagogical theories which can genuinely support the practice of language teaching as Edge (1996:9) has noted. This also tends to the same suggestion made by Richards (1987)-whereby experienced teachers follow principles where unexperienced teachers follow rules.

“Theory-in-use” or “usable theory” is what our following outline of pedagogical principles aims to be. We will test the validity of this usable theory in our next chapter on methodology.

In the following table we outline the main pedagogical issues we suggest language teachers need to consider for the teaching of verbal interaction and culture. We have listed the principles in the table by order of importance. We later comment on each of these issues.

**Nineteen pedagogical principles for the teaching of  
verbal interaction and culture:**

- 1- Refer to research in applied linguistics in particular research in cross-cultural pragmatics and conversation analysis, SLA, second culture acquisition and language instruction,.
- 2- Teach seven components of verbal interaction (chapter one) as well as metaknowledge and metalanguage on human verbal interaction.
- 3- Integrate the teaching of socio-cultural content into language teaching from day one.
  - 4- Use and allow the use of learners' first language for reflective learning.
  - 5- Use the bilingual speaker as a norm of reference not the native-speaker.
- 6- Acknowledge and act on the role of both cognition and feelings in learning foreign verbal interaction.
  - 7- Integrate non-verbal modes of behaviour as part of the expression of meaning.
  - 8- Foster both conceptual as well as experiential learning .
- 9- Help learners reframe beliefs and thoughts which inhibit language/culture learning.
  - 10- Be aware of stages of acculturation.
  - 11- Differentiate between academic and conversational listening
  - 12- Strike a balance between language input and output.
- 13- Teach new content using a variety of "passive", active and interactive learning approaches.
- 14- Use a non-interfering but systematic teaching of grammar/vocabulary/pronunciation using corrective feedback
  - 15- Teach,as much as possible, grammar as a feature of interactional dynamics
  - 16- Integrate the use of all language skills to support the learning of one.
- 17- Assess teaching environment in terms of learners'access to target culture and motivation.
  - 18- Take into account institutional/course and classroom constraints.
- 19 - Foster different qualities in learners which will assist the learning of foreign verbal interaction.

**Table 3.1 ; Nineteen pedagogical principles for the teaching of verbal  
interaction and culture**

**Principle no.1:** *Refer to research in applied linguistics in particular research in cross-cultural pragmatics and conversation analysis, SLA , second culture acquisition and language instruction.*

We suggest that new approaches to teaching spoken language as an expression of culture call for more cooperation between applied linguists and language teachers. As we have argued in this thesis, culture as reflected in language use is not immediately visible. Language teachers need to rely on detailed research in discourse analysis (especially research in cross cultural pragmatics and conversation analysis) to ensure that their teaching of the cultural components of verbal interaction becomes more than the approximate intuitive anecdotal comments it has tended to be so far in the best instances.

As language teachers are also primarily concerned about *learners' abilities to use the language they teach*, they can enlighten their practice by taking into account the outcomes of research into second language and culture acquisition as well as research into language instruction.

We are aware, as Kramsch (1995) recently pointed out, that the dialogue between applied linguists and language teachers is not always successful since each party has a different interest in language related issues and hence a different professional discourse. Nevertheless, we maintain that exchange of expertise between the two sides is essential for the enrichment of both fields.

We further propose that the relationship between applied linguists and language teachers does not have to be one-sided as our comments above might unintentionally have led one to believe. Applied linguists, especially SLA researchers and researchers in second culture acquisition could also gain from the expertise of language teachers in teaching and learning language.

**Principle no.2:** *Teach seven components of verbal interaction as well as metaknowledge and metalanguage on human verbal interaction.*

This principle is to make the point that language and culture cannot be taught in a vacuum. Learners need a starting point, this is what we mean by “new content” or “body of knowledge”, and what applied linguists call “input”. With reference to the teaching of verbal interaction we define in chapter two the type of new input learners require. This new input includes both the linguistic and socio-cultural features of language. It also includes the metaknowledge learners need to depict the invisible nature of culture in language use.

**Principle no.3:** *Integrate the teaching of socio-cultural content to language teaching from day one.*

There is often the belief among language teachers that “culture” can only be taught when learners have acquired enough “language skills”. Therefore “culture” is seldom seen as accessible to beginners in a language course. We have demonstrated in chapter two that verbal interaction contains both language and culture and that the two cannot be taught separately. From this perspective, as “language” has always been taught from day one, “culture” has to be taught from day one as well. It is only an erroneous understanding of the nature of language which has laid to the unfortunate split between language and culture.

**Principle no.4:** *Use and allow the use of first language as a tool for reflective learning.*

Allowing learners to use their first language during classroom activities is often presented in the literature as a novelty in language pedagogy which focuses on integrating the teaching of language and culture. We have argued earlier that learners have always used their first language to assist the process of language learning. Hence the real issue here is not the introduction of the use of learners’ first language as a novelty in teaching practice, it is rather the recognition by language teachers that the use of first

language can be a useful tool especially with the reflective aspect to learning a foreign culture. What teachers need to bear in mind however is that learners' natural tendency is to go for the easiest option, that is to use excessively their first language for which they need no effort. In allowing learners to use their first language language teachers need to make sure they monitor this use very carefully so that a language class on verbal interaction and culture does not become a class where the target language is almost never spoken by learners.

**Principle n.5: Use the bilingual speaker as the norm of reference not the native-speaker.**

Native-like competency is no longer regarded as the norm against which learners' successful achievement in learning a language is measured. The norm is now "the bilingual speaker's" language performance.

The aim of teaching verbal interaction and culture is therefore not to turn learners into parrots of the target culture. It is to support learners in finding a place between their own and target culture, a place in which they feel comfortable to be.

**Principle no.6: Acknowledge and act on the role of both cognition and feelings in learning foreign verbal interaction.**

Cognition is often referred to as "brain activity" alone to the exclusion of the role of feelings in thinking. We challenge this conception and suggest that feelings are an integral part of human cognition. The relevance of this to a course on verbal interaction is that language teachers need to acknowledge learners' feelings in the process of learning a language as feelings can affect cognitive performance. For example, a learner who experiences strong feelings of frustration, when exposed to cultural norms or grammatical features of the target language which do not exist in his/her native language, might not be able to cognise those new norms or features of language use until his/her feeling of frustration are dissolved. In this case, it

would be the language teacher's role not only to recognise the learner's frustration but also to help him/her act on it.

**Principle no.7: *Integrate non-verbal modes of behaviour as part of the expression of meaning.***

The role of body language is seldom recognised by language teaching practice. In chapter two we saw how much cultural component enters into the expression of gestures during human verbal interaction. For this reason alone non-verbal modes of behaviour as expressions of cultural behaviour need to be included in a course on verbal interaction and culture. Moreover teaching learners to engage their bodies in culturally appropriate ways when interacting verbally in the target language is actually giving learners complete, as opposed to partial support. Teaching language learners the cultural features of non-verbal behaviour is giving them the tools to express themselves fully in the target culture using all the human resources they have at their disposal.

**Principle no.8: *Foster both conceptual as well as experiential learning.***

Conceptual and experiential learning are intimately related. One feeds on the other. The introduction of a new concept can be the trigger for allowing a new experience to happen, but without the regulating learning effect of experiential learning the new concept is not fully acquired. In a course on verbal interaction, a lot of new concepts (metaknowledge) on the mechanics of human communication are introduced to learners. To be effectively acquired by learners those new concepts must also be experienced by learners (Di Pietro 1987).

**Principle no.9: *Help learners reframe beliefs and thoughts which inhibit language/culture learning.***

Language teachers interested in introducing the teaching of foreign verbal interaction as core content in language courses need to be fully aware of the challenge they introduce to traditional or maybe "not- so -traditional" but at



least “established” language pedagogy.

Learners themselves can resist new approaches to teaching and new language content. During class activities, there is hence often a mismatch between a teacher’s intention and learners expectations. For instance, a language teacher might take for granted that all learners are interested in learning verbal interaction in a way which can potentially transform their very sense of self. Not all students, however, are naturally inclined to engage in self transformative processes through language learning. Language teaching goals, no matter what they are, have to be exposed at the onset of a course and then negotiated with students. This negotiation can take place in overt and more silent ways. Teaching language as culture as we have pointed out several times in this chapter is about a human relationship between a teacher and learners. The quality of this relationship depends largely on the language teachers’ capacity to integrate academic knowledge of second language acquisition and a thorough understanding of the various links between language and culture to the practical and the human dimension of classroom language teaching practice.

**Principle no.10: *Be aware of the stages of acculturation.***

Knowing about the different stages of acculturation students may go through while learning a second or foreign language can greatly assist language teachers. It can assist them to recognize the potential sources of learners’ experiences of difficulty in learning how to be in another culture. The stages of acculturation we are referring to are: *period of excitement*, followed by *culture shock*, *period of stress* and *assimilation* or *adaptation* . The degree of acculturation varies according to the amount of exposure to the target culture learners are having to cope with. Second language learners are obviously more prone to intense experiences of acculturation than foreign language learners.

**Principle no.11: *Differentiate between conversational and academic***

## *listening.*

In a course on verbal interaction learners are exposed, often for the first time, to listening to authentic conversations or to “listening” as part of the practice of verbal interaction. In traditional language courses, the type of language listening learners are usually exposed to is what we have defined earlier as “academic” listening. We advise language teachers to point out to learners the main differences between conversational and academic listening, as the very act of listening to authentic conversation might challenge learners’ perceptions of what language learning ought to be. This knowledge will enable learners to recognise that the act of “listening” in a conversation is different from “academic listening”.

Passive listening to authentic conversations can be equated to academic listening in that they both share a passivity component. We suggest however that the type of support learners need in listening to an authentic conversation is different from the type of support they require when listening to an authentic piece of discourse which involve only one speaker, hence discourse which is not conversation.

To support learners in listening to authentic conversations, language teachers can point out to them the particular features inherent to dialogic oral texts as opposed to those inherent to monologic oral texts. In authentic dialogues, language is not “neat”, it is full of false starts, repetitions, spoken grammar etc... To understand the meaning of conversations, attention needs to be paid to body language, intonation contours and gaze. We argue that if students are made aware of the nature of language in use they will be better prepared to listen appropriately (ie. with the right expectations) to authentic conversations. The problem here is in part changing learners’ expectations of what are valuable listening tasks in a classroom context. In traditional educational settings, learners in their first language as well as in a second language learning context have not been used to listening to everyday language as valuable study content. It requires some shift in their

consciousness to accept that listening to “real” authentic conversations has value. Teaching overtly to learners the functions of the specific features of speech in use is a way to give value to these features which in turn can help learners make a positive shift towards listening to authentic spoken language.

**Principle no.12: *Strike a balance between language input and output.***

In language teaching practice, the teaching of verbal interaction normally happens during what is often called “the oral class” which is a class during which learners are supposed to practice only the target language without any input of any kind on the content or structure of verbal interaction. In a course on verbal interaction and culture such as we have described it so far, that is where both new knowledge is imparted to students as well as practice of this new knowledge, the danger for language teachers is to put too much emphasis on input. It is almost a natural instinct for teachers to want to teach, especially when they have a clear definition of the type of content they need to impart to learners. The challenge hence, in a course on verbal interaction, where practice of the target language and culture is essential, is for language teachers to ensure that in their planning and running of each individual language class enough time is allocated to actual practice of the target language.

**Principle no.13: *Teach new content using a variety of “passive”, active and interactive learning approaches.***

A “passive” approach to learning refers to the “traditional lecture” where learners receive by listening to the teacher’s presentation of a new item. Passivity in learning is often regarded as something negative which is not conducive to learning. We argue that in a course on foreign verbal interaction “listening” to the presentation of new knowledge is not as passive as it seems, especially if the presentation is done in the target language. It requires active participation in the process of listening in that

trying to grasp new content in a new language requires learners to actively make use of all the linguistic resources they possess to make sense of what they hear. The issue is more the amount of exposure to “passive” learning learners should have. For the teaching of verbal interaction and culture we advocate the use of mini-lectures over a short period of time followed by more interactive activities.

Mini-lectures can be introduced by a period of more “active” learning. For example learners can be invited “to notice” some specific features of language use before the teacher gives more substantial explanation about these features.

With reference to verbal interaction instruction, an interactive learning approach refers to classroom activities where learners engage in group work with a lesser degree of teacher intervention in the learning process than in other types of activities.

Passive, active and interactive class activities do not need to be conceived as a strict continuum where one type of activity should always come before the other to produce effective learning outcomes. For example one class might start with an interactive activity (scenarios) followed by a feedback session in which the teacher introduces new knowledge by effectively giving a mini-lecture during which learners are involved in a more passive learning experience.

***Principle no.14: Use a non-interfering but systematic teaching of grammar/vocabulary/pronunciation using corrective feedback.***

This principle points to two aspects of teaching practice related to the particular teaching of verbal interaction and culture. One is that focus on teaching verbal interaction and culture should not, cannot, exclude the teaching of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. The issue is more how the teaching of those integral components of language use need to be approached. We advocate a non-interfering but systematic approach to

teaching all features of language use which are not the primary focus of a course on verbal interaction and culture. For example, during class activities where learners practice “norms of interaction” through the acting out scenarios, in the feedback session that follows, the teacher can give feedback on the appropriate use of norms of interaction in the target language, *as well as* feedback on grammatical mistakes or pronunciation.

**Principle no.15:** *Teach , as far as possible, grammar as a feature of interactional dynamics.*

This principle is linked to principle no.10 in that it refers to the teaching of grammar. In a course on verbal interaction particular focus can be given to teaching grammar as part of the socio-cultural structure of language use.

**Principle no.16:** *Integrate the use of all language skills to support the learning of one.*

During class activities, focus on the learning of spoken language need not exclude the practice of other language skills such as reading / listening / writing in the target language. We have seen that learning verbal interaction and culture expands well beyond the exclusive “practice of spoken language”. It involves learning substantial new knowledge about the mechanics of human interaction. It also involves reflecting on one’s own culture and the target culture. The reflective component in learning foreign verbal interaction and learners’ need for a new type of input call for a flexible use of all language skills.

**Principle no17:** *Assess the teaching environment in terms of learners’ access to target culture as well as institutional, course and classroom constraints.*

Language teachers need to make a distinction between the environmental features of second language versus foreign language teaching. The choice and type of classroom activities and outside language activities depends largely on the particular teaching context. For example second language

learners in a class on verbal interaction can be given assignments where they have to go out and observe certain norms of interaction or pragmatic norms in the real world where the target language is spoken by everybody. Foreign language learners would not be in a position to do the same assignment as they do not live in the country where the target language is spoken.

Learners' motivation for learning the target language also needs to be taken into account. Second language learners have a more immediate and substantial need to communicate in culturally appropriate ways in the target language than foreign language learners, who might be more interested in a more general understanding of the cultural features of the target language. A course on verbal interaction and culture must respond to learners' specific needs of knowledge and practice.

**Principle no.18: *Take into account institutional/course and classroom constraints.***

With regard to the teaching of spoken language, the number of students per class and classroom space arrangement are critical issues no language teacher can ignore. Language teachers who want to give the teaching of spoken language the place it deserves in language teaching must be willing to engage in political battles with institutional authorities to ascertain the particular needs of teaching language as a form of spoken expression, as generally speaking, educational settings are not designed to promote learning through close verbal interaction between students.

Limited and scattered time periods throughout the year for language learning are another issue which can hinder well intentioned teaching innovations. All aspects of language learning benefit from steady regular practice. It is even more important in the case of the practice of spoken language.

A more fundamental problem which needs to be addressed and redressed is the fact that spoken language, as language in everyday conversation, is often

equated to knowledge which could as well be acquired on the street. It tends to be perceived as inferior to academic literacy because it is harder to evaluate, assess and control (Kramsch 1995:12). Spoken language is mistakenly viewed only as an impoverished version of written language and hence not so worthy of teaching. Traditionally in academic settings, for example, practice of the spoken language has been undervalued and hence it is allocated a minimum rather than maximum time slot. Consequently in order to run a course on foreign verbal interaction successfully, a language teacher is likely to have to renegotiate the balance between class activities spent on spoken language and those which focus on written language. This involves more than practical issues such as time and student numbers. It touches on the very goal of language teaching which colleagues involved in teaching the same course might not share. Although an initial intention might be to bring "light" as in bringing innovation in language teaching, the outcome might result in the increase of "heat" between language teachers who hold different views on the importance, content and approach to teaching foreign verbal interaction. Classroom and institutional constraints can be framed therefore not only in terms of practical issues but also in terms of on-going political and professional debates.

***Principle no.19: Foster different qualities in learners which will assist the learning of foreign verbal interaction .***

This principle is to suggest that language teachers take time during class activities to talk -when the need arises- about personal qualities which are particularly relevant to the learning of foreign verbal interaction. The qualities we are referring to in particular are: tolerance of ambiguity and empathy.

### ***Summary***

Many language teachers already practice a range of the principles we have described above. We therefore did not intend to provide an entirely new

recipe for the perfect delivery of a course on foreign verbal interaction. Our aim was rather to give an overview of all the issues at stake in the teaching of spoken language as a basis for reflection on the best potential teaching practice.

### **Conclusion:**

In this chapter we sought to demonstrate that teaching spoken language as culture requires some rethinking of the traditional ways in which language has been taught so far. We suggested that the aims of language teaching, which are still commonly thought of in terms of “communicative competence”, need to shift to “intercultural competence”. New aims to be achieved require “new ways of doing things”. We reviewed research in second language and culture acquisition as well as research in second language instruction to harness knowledge which could assist the teaching of foreign verbal interaction. Our reflection led us to the articulation of some nineteen pedagogical principles for an approach to teaching spoken language and culture.

As a more hidden agenda, we also attempted to show how language teachers, aided by their professional experience, can reflect creatively on academic knowledge related to language issues. In doing so they can create their own professional discourse to support innovation in their teaching (Freeman 1996).

Pedagogical principles can guide language practice but to be fully trusted as workable theory-in-use, they need to be put to the test of classroom practice. This is what we propose to do in our next chapter by presenting and discussing a teaching module on verbal interaction and culture which claims to follow the pedagogical approach we have described in this chapter.



## Chapter 4

### *A methodology for the teaching of verbal interaction and culture.*

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Teaching verbal interaction as a manifestation of culture has three main implications for language teaching practice. So far we have discussed two. Firstly, language teachers need to develop new content for their language classes which reflects a new understanding of the nature of language in use (chapter 2). Secondly they need to follow new pedagogical principles which take into account the processes involved in learning language as an expression of culture (chapter 3). The third implication derives from the first two. Teaching language use as culture requires language teachers to develop new methodologies which will enable new content and new pedagogical principles to be translated into actual classroom practice.

Nunan (1995) has underlined the necessity of developing new methodologies using an empirical approach. In this chapter, following Nunan's advice, we will propose the results of an empirically-based approach to developing a new methodology for the teaching of spoken language and culture. That is we will present a methodology which stems from reflection on experimentation, on practice in the classroom, rather than making general statements of intent which would describe what could be done as opposed to what has been done. We believe along with other practitioners that ultimately - but not exclusively- advances in language teaching stem from the independent efforts of teachers in their own classrooms (Malamah-Thomas, 1987).

Bearing the above perspective on methodology development in mind, the following presentation and discussion need to be understood as the personal

exploration of a language teacher into new teaching content and pedagogy. We aim to provide empirical evidence on the nature of teaching and learning verbal interaction and culture.

The emphasis on personal practice we wish to give in this chapter does not deny the importance of large scale theory and research as driving forces in language teaching innovation. It simply positions personal development in methodology as the vehicle language teaching theory needs in order to become successful practice. The suggestion that language teachers need *to rely primarily on practice to improve practice* is reflected in Nunan's research findings (Nunan 1987) which have shown that language teachers are generally more inclined to adopt innovations which are the result of successful practice rather than innovations which stem from untested ideas.

In this chapter we will therefore present a case study of the design and implementation of a module for teaching verbal interaction and culture. In part one, we will describe the structure of the language course in which the module was implemented. In part two, we will present and discuss the rationale for the module's *macro-methodological steps*. In part three we will describe *the micro -methodological components* of the module, that is the actual teaching content learners worked on, including classroom and outside classroom activities.

## **4.2 Structure of the language course into which the module was integrated.**

The module on verbal interaction and culture was designed for a class of learners of French as a foreign language at a post beginner level in a tertiary environment. That is for learners who had previously done the equivalent of 130 hours of French language tuition. The module was taught as a one hour class over twenty six weeks as part of a post-beginner (intermediate)

French course which involved five hours of language tuition a week. The introduction of a module on verbal interaction and culture was part of the restructuring of the whole intermediate French course in the language programme in which it was taught. The general aim of the new course was two fold: one aim was to increase the learning of culture as part of language learning at a post-beginner level and the second was to implement a new approach to teaching spoken language (the module on verbal interaction and culture). Prior to the restructuring exercise, the intermediate course used a textbook which adopted an anecdotal-rather than systematic and in-depth approach to teaching culture. At an intermediate level of language learning, doing away with reliance on a textbook as a provider of content and structure to a language course, constituted in itself a breakthrough and the beginning of an adventure into new territories.

Three teachers were assigned to teach the new course. All agreed that a textbook approach to a language course at tertiary level was inadequate in preparing learners for more advanced studies in French. Each teacher however had a different perspective and degree of interest in what ought to constitute appropriate teaching content and pedagogy for the new course. To accommodate the different teaching approaches of each individual teacher, a modular structure was adopted for the course. Five modules were created each aiming to provide focus on different aspects of language learning. The five modules were: Grammar and Writing, Culture and Society, Introduction to French Literature, Spoken language and Culture, Oral and Written Extended Practice (see Table 1). One teacher, the course coordinator, took on the teaching of module one, two and three. Classes for module four were prepared by the course coordinator but taught by another teacher. Module five was taught by a different teacher. As four modules out of five were taught or prepared by the same teacher, a high level of integration and coherence could be achieved between modules in terms of course content

and pedagogical approach. We will demonstrate what we mean by integration and coherence within a modular course structure throughout this chapter. The aim of the new course, namely to increase the teaching of French culture through the teaching of both written and spoken language, was particularly achieved through the implementation of modules two, three and four.

<b><u>Module 1:</u></b> <b>Grammar and and Writing</b>	<b><u>Module 2:</u></b> <b>Culture and Society</b>	<b><u>Module 3:</u></b> <b>Spoken lang. and Culture</b>	<b><u>Module 4:</u></b> <b>Literature</b>	<b><u>Module 5:</u></b> <b>Oral/Written Practice</b>
Grammar is taught formally and in context. Learners are introduced to writing skills in different genres and registers.	Learners are introduced to different themes on French society and culture through an interactive and cross-cultural approach to teaching cultural knowledge.	Teaching and practice of seven components of verbal interaction and culture.	Reading of two short 20th century French novels.	Extended practice of oral/aural and writing skills.

**Table 1: Structure of post-beginner course**

### Module 1: Grammar and Writing

In module one *Grammar and Writing*, several types of teaching and learning activities took place. For example, in the form of mini-lectures, specific grammatical items or writing genres were introduced to learners. In a class focusing on grammar for instance the following items would be taught: tense formation and use from the French verb system, identification and usage of relative pronouns, place of adjectives, formation and place of adverbs, etc.... In classes focusing on writing skills, the following examples of

writing genres were introduced to learners ie: writing letters in different registers for different socio-cultural contexts, writing a summary or “compte-rendu” of a newspaper article or of a chapter from the novel studied in the literature class, writing a short essay in French, etc.... Whenever relevant, learners’ attention was drawn to cultural knowledge as expressed in grammar or writing styles.

Classes were taught in French with occasional use of the learners’ first language, especially with reference to the teaching of new grammatical or other metaknowledge. Mini-lectures were always followed (within the one hour class) by mainly written activities in which learners practice and/or reflected on the new input. Exercises (computer programmes) were available to learners outside class times.

### Module 2: Culture and society

The aim of this module was two-fold. One aim was to introduce learners to a cross-cultural perspective on the understanding of aspects of French culture and the learners’ first cultures, from an anthropological point of view (ie: the study of historical context and significance of national public holidays, attitudes to food and eating, to environmental issues, to sport, to politics etc... in both the target culture and the learners’ first cultures). The second aim was to introduce learners to some understanding of French institutions (ie: educational and judicial systems etc...) and aspects of French past and current “history” (ie: history of the French language and regional languages, the five republics, history of the French national anthem “La Marseillaise”, history and current issues regarding immigration in France, etc...).

This module was important in providing learners with “world knowledge” about French culture and society. “Cultural world knowledge” is an integral part of both written and oral forms of communication (Schiffrin 1994). To understand and/or participate with confidence in written or verbal interactions with native speakers, learners need contextual cultural

knowledge about the target culture. Contextual cultural knowledge is different from cultural knowledge as expressed through, for example, pragmatic norms or norms of interaction in language use. It is more removed from language as such but is nevertheless crucial for the successful interpretation of information in communication. Let us illustrate this point with the following hypothetical example in which learners of French are watching a French film on the events of May 1968 in France. At one point in the film, one scene shows a conversation between two French people (Jeanne et Pierre), it is the first of May. When the two people first meet they have the following exchange:

1 (*Jeanne*: and *Pierre* kiss each other four times on the cheeks as they meet)

2 *Pierre*: **Ça va ?** (How are you?)

3 *Jeanne*: **Ouais et toi ?, t'as acheté ton brin de muguet c'matin.** (Fine and you? Did you buy your lily of the valley this morning?)

4 *Pierre*: **Y'a intérêt, j'ai besoin de chance en c'moment!** (I'd better, I need luck right now!)

5 *Jeanne*: **Et tu vas à la manif cet après-midi ?** (And are you going to the demonstration this afternoon?)

etc...

In line one Jeanne and Pierre (both Parisians) kiss each other four times on the cheeks. This is an example of *culture expressed as pragmatic norms*. That is in performing the speech act of greeting, Jeanne and Pierre did what French people do in casual interactions, they kissed each other. The fact they kissed each other four times rather than three or two is closer to contextual cultural knowledge rather than pragmatic norms per se. Lines two, three and four would be *linguistically* comprehensible to an intermediate learner of French, but without *adequate contextual cultural knowledge* about what French people do on the first of May, the decoding of the information exchanged in the conversation between Jeanne and Pierre would be impossible for this learner. In France the first of May is the celebration of

Labour Day. Small bunches of “muguet” (lily of the valley) are sold in the streets all around France. It is supposed to bring luck to those who buy it. On the first of May demonstrations organised by the leading trade-unions also take place all over France.

It is in module two on Culture and Society that learners build up the kind of contextual cultural knowledge illustrated in the above example. In this case, it is during several classes on the study of the French calendar that learners would have learnt about the significance and rituals of the first of May in France. We can also see here how the teaching content of module two can potentially directly assist learners in the understanding of casual conversations, which they study with more focus in module three on verbal interaction and culture.

### Module 3: Verbal interaction and culture

This module, the object of this chapter, is discussed at length below. Its main aim was to introduce learners to an understanding of the nature of spoken language and cultural codes through the study and practice of the seven components of spoken language identified in chapter two. In the intermediate French course, before the introduction of a new module on verbal interaction and culture, the teaching of spoken language took place in the commonly labelled “oral class”.

“Oral class” simply meant practice of a language skill with no content attached to it. The perceived lack of content in the oral class had led to the undervaluing of learners’ work in this class. The undervaluing of oral work in turn was reflected by the low percentage of marks given to oral assignments in the overall assessment scheme of the course. The introduction of a new approach to teaching spoken language therefore meant more than developing new content and applying a new pedagogical approach to teaching. It also meant reassessing the intellectual value of learning and practising spoken language. In practical terms, this

reassessment led to a significant increase in the marks attributed to spoken language assignments, as well as an increase in the amount and variety of oral work.

The inclusion of substantial and relevant cultural content in oral classes also had the impact of bringing under scrutiny (at least for some of us !) the until then unquestioned- approach language teachers followed in our department to teaching written language. It became clear to us that the review of the teaching of one language skill based on a new understanding of the links between language and culture needed to be expanded to the teaching of all language skills. Written language, like spoken language is inherently culturally patterned (Kaplan 1966) and this cultural component needs to be taught explicitly to language learners (Kirpratick 1997). In the language course we are describing the need to review the teaching of writing skills based on research on contrastive rhetoric was felt very acutely, but such a revision was not made at this time because it required substantial and specialized research in applied linguistics which could not be undertaken at the time by any of the teachers teaching in the course.

#### Module 4: Introduction to French literature

In this module learners read two French novels from 20th century writers. They were taught new skills on how to start reading in a second language. They also received insight into the structure of French literary texts and learnt how to comment on and discuss the content of a French novel. Noticing new grammatical items and new syntactic structures in context was highly encouraged in this class, and the Grammar taught more formally in the grammar module was often illustrated in context while reading and studying the two novels throughout the year. For example, the formation and use of the simple past tense in French was explained in the grammar class and throughout the study of the first French novel, learners could see in context many illustrations of what was a new tense for them. Learners



also gained substantial knowledge of French culture through discussions on the historical and socio-political context of the novels. Through extensive reading learners were also given the opportunity to increase and enrich substantially their French vocabulary.

#### Module 5: Extended oral and written practice

This module was designed with a purely practical aim in mind. In this class learners could finish or extend activities started in the other modules. Preparation and feedback on home assignments including field work of the kind we describe later in this chapter also took place during this class.

#### Assesement scheme

The assesement scheme for the course was an innovation in that it gave equal weight to the practice of oral/aural skills and writing/reading skills through different tasks linked to the type of work accomplished in each module. Spoken skills and listening skills are not as easily assessable as writing skills because spoken language is less tangible than words on a piece of paper. In traditional language courses, the testing of spoken language skills is usually treated as a "problem area" (Brown & Yule 1983:102) and is often disposed of at the end of a course during a short examination. Oral and more formal presentations on a given topic are usually not part of assessable work at beginners and intermediate levels.

In the assessment scheme described below in table 2, a strong emphasis is given to listening skills and oral production. An integration of the practice of different language skills and cultural content was purposefully sought and was accomplished whenever possible. For example, when learners were required to listen and transcribe an authentic conversation, they practiced both listening skills and writing skills, in particular grammar and spelling. As they were primarily listening for meaning, that is to actually understand the conversation, their practice of the target language was in this sense integrative by nature. The value of the transcription was to incite learners to

move from “meaning focused practice” to the linguistic representation of meaning through appropriate use of grammar, syntax and spelling.

***Semester one:***

6 assignments:

Listening and transcribing of an acted (ie. not authentic) conversation on tape.

Grammar exercises and a small composition (200 words).

Reading of a text and oral commentary on content (to be recorded on tape).

Listening of a short authentic conversation - written summary of content and a transcription.

Listening to the reading of a newspaper article and an oral summary.

Short composition on a literary text studied.

One oral presentation/conversation with a lecturer on a topic studied in the Culture and Society class (towards the end of the semester).

One role play delivered and videotaped in class (on work done in the Spoken language and Culture class).

Two written tests: listening comprehension and writing task, reading and writing task.

***Semester 2:***

5 assignments:

Listening to and transcribing of an authentic conversation.

Reading of and commentary on a newspaper article chosen by each student. (to be recorded on tape).

Short essay on a topic studied in the Culture and Society class.

Listening to an authentic conversation with a summary of the content and a transcription.

Grammar/writing exercises.

One role play delivered and videotaped in class as in semester one.

One project - two parts: a/recorded interview with a native French person.

b/Written compte-rendu of the interview.

One essay and oral presentation on a topic studied in the Culture and Society class.

One test - listening comprehension and writing task.

**Table 2: Assessment scheme**

***Concluding remarks***

Before we present in detail how a new approach to teaching spoken language was implemented in the classroom, we felt it necessary to show the

structure and content of the whole language course in which it was integrated.

Language learning is integrative by nature. No one aspect of language learning (ie. learning spoken skills) happens in isolation from other aspects of language learning (ie. learning grammatical knowledge, new vocabulary etc...). The exact nature of the impact of one medium of language learning on another is difficult to determine, but we can assume that, for example new vocabulary learnt while *reading* a novel can be re-used by a learner in oral production.

The specific content and kinds of practice learners engaged in in the module on verbal interaction and culture must therefore be understood as *one medium for language learning* which was greatly supported by other forms of input and practice which occurred in the other modules we presented.

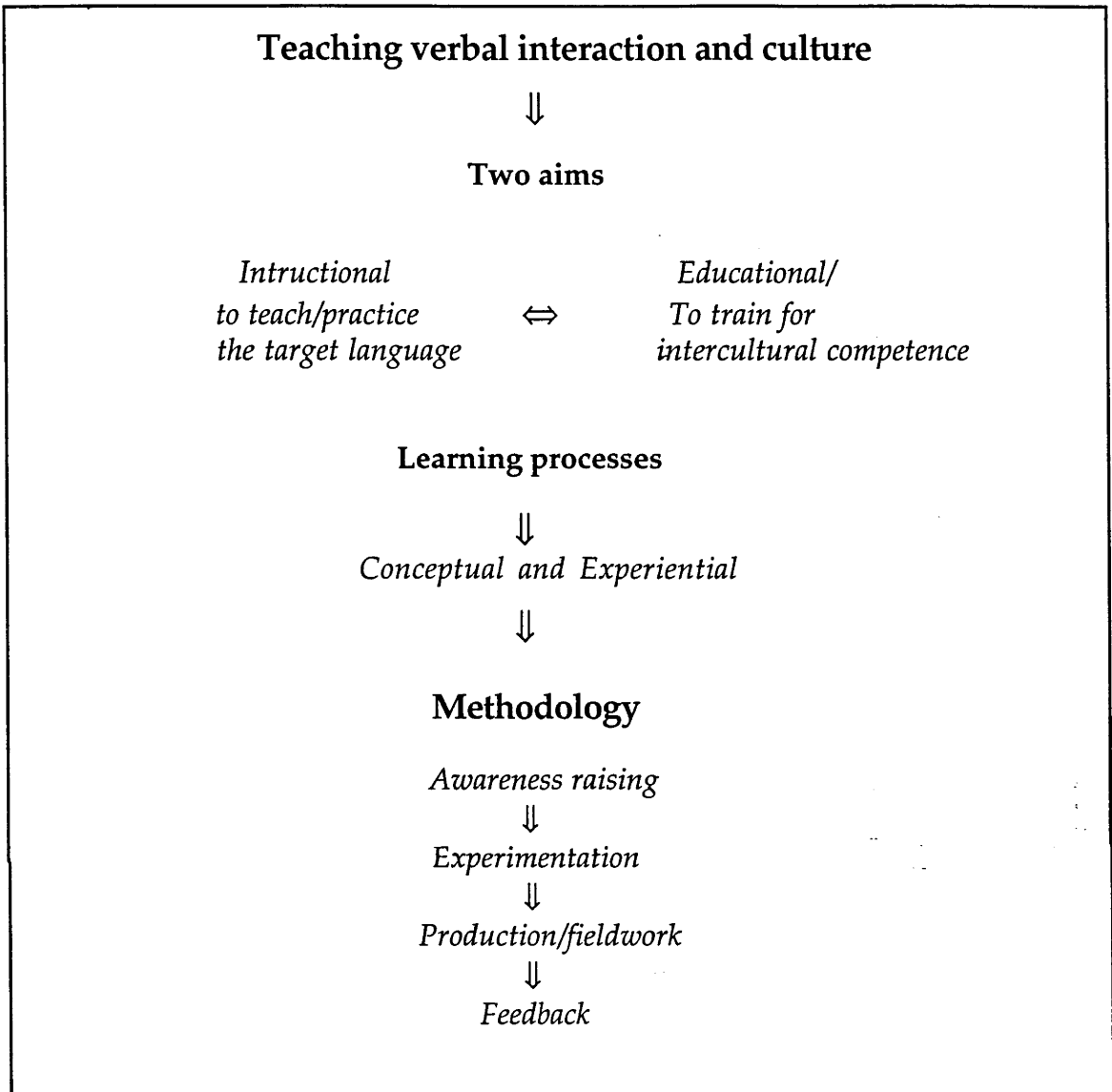
#### **4.3 Macro-methodological steps for the teaching of verbal interaction and culture.**

One might argue that there is no validity in identifying a specific methodology for the teaching of verbal interaction and culture since it is well known in the language teaching profession that there is no such thing as *one and only one* satisfying methodology guaranteed to work in all classrooms for any aspect of language learning and for all types of students' population (Tarone 1991). We endorse this argument in that, as we have acknowledged it earlier, we believe that success in language teaching practice is ultimately *the personal success of teachers* in promoting approaches to learning which are best suited to the individual teacher's abilities and the local needs of students (Prabhu 1990). Nevertheless there is value in sharing innovation in teaching pedagogy as a way to participate in a collective ongoing reflection on language teaching, not so much in search of the *best* methodology but as a way to alert each other of new ways of doing and seeing which can lead to more successful practice (Kramsch 1995).

The teaching of verbal interaction and culture as we implemented it in the classroom has both an instructional and educational aim. Firstly the more instructional aim was to teach learners the seven components of spoken language outlined in chapter two. Secondly, the more educative aim was to raise learners' awareness of the importance of language in shaping cultural reality (Kramsch 1993). This awareness raising exercise is an educational process whereby learners learn to deconstruct their monolingual and monocultural worldview through the comparative study of their own culture and the target culture (Byram 1990). This process is important in enabling learners to move from "communicative competence" to "intercultural competence". To achieve these two aims a pedagogical approach was adopted to foster both conceptual and experiential learning, using a four stage teaching/learning interactive methodology: Awareness raising- Experimentation- Production/Fieldwork and Feedback (see table 2).

To show the applicability of the suggested methodology to teaching practice, the following is a bottom-up commentary of Table 2, starting with the four methodological stages. The methodology aims to promote a highly interactive learning process throughout the four stages of teaching and learning activities. The apparent division between the four stages is made here only to allow for a systematic introduction of new content followed by relevant practice. From the learners' point of view there is no sharp division between stages. For example, new input is introduced during awareness-raising activities but it is constantly recycled through the subsequent stages of the module so that learners are able to refine the different aspects to learning language and culture through an interactive process between reflecting and experiencing. By the same token "feedback" of a specific kind is provided to learners during the feedback phase of the module but this does not preclude feedback in different forms from occurring during any other phases of the module. The interactive nature of the module's

methodology becomes more apparent in part three of this chapter when we present classroom activities.



**Table 2: Aims and methodology for the teaching of spoken language and culture**

### *The awareness-raising stage*

During the awareness-raising phase of the teaching module, learners receive new input (instructional aim) which includes a selection of items from the different components of verbal interaction outlined in chapter 2. New input is introduced as far as possible through participative tasks which encourage the comparison between learners' first and target culture. According to the level of learners' competence in the target language, the course can vary in

content and density and be graded. For example, the course content selected for the module we are discussing included: features of pronunciation, colloquial lexical items, grammatical variations in oral language, discourse markers, emblematic gestures, intonation as a discourse-sensitive item in oral interaction, rules of politeness, terms of address, telephone conversations, requests and some norms of interaction through the study of a French response to the question "Did you have a good weekend".

Whenever possible, authentic audio-visual documents was used to illustrate new input. Currently available language teaching materials (ie. text-books, audio-cassettes, viedeos) which intend to illustrate language in use usually fails to do so accurately because the dialogues which are presented to students are polished versions of real interactions based on the written forms of language. They leave students with a distorted picture of the forces at work in conversation ( see Liddicoat 1995c for an illustration of the difference between authentic conversation and conversation abiding by the canon of rules for speaking derived from a prescriptive analysis of spoken language). In a course on verbal interaction, to illustrate grammatical variations, colloquial lexical items and emblematic gestures, recordings (cassettes and films) of short real conversations between native-speakers can be used together with transcriptions of the interactions. For norms of interaction and pragmatic norms, extracts from research in discourse analysis of the language taught which illustrate the targeted items can also be used for adult learners.

The aim of the awareness-raising phase is for learners to *notice and receive explanations* about the new imput as it appears in authentic conversations. It is a type of consciousness-raising exercise where the teacher assists learners to notice new knowledge (Nunan 1995). The awareness-raising phase is also the time to give learners new metaknowledge and metalanguage to describe features of spoken language which will support their conceptual understanding of the links between language and culture. The form of

delivery chosen for imparting this metaknowledge need to be adjusted to the level of learners' cognitive processing skills. This would vary according to learners's age. For instance, adult learners can be introduced to the concept of "registers", "norms of interaction", "emblematic gestures" etc... where younger learners can access the same knowledge in a less abstract form through examples alone. The language used during the awareness-raising phase can alternate between the learners' first language or the target language. Whenever appropriate, however, using the target language for an immediate real purpose (ie. learning about language) should be encouraged as it is an effective way to reinforce the idea that language learning is about *using* the language not just *learning* about it.

The awareness-raising phase would normally happen at the beginning of the class for a short period of time. A crucial point for the success of the module is that learners get enough practice at using the target language. Awareness-raising activities therefore should quickly be followed by more communicative activities in which learners actually use the target language rather than merely observe it. As a more reflective and analytical form of language instruction, awareness-raising activities are particularly suited to the learning of cultural codes which are not acquired through osmosis, that is it is not enough to practice a foreign language to acquire its invisible cultural codes. Some analytical enquiry is required from the part of the learner to access the cultural features embedded in language use. In this sense the awareness-raising phase of the module is as much instructional as it is educative since it is during this stage of learning that learners are first educated into the skills of depicting culture which does not so visibly manifests in language use. It is also during this stage that learners first initiate comparisons between their first and target language and enrich their knowledge of both.

## *The experimentation phase*

Stern (1992) has mentioned that the move from more formal instruction to actual language use needs to happen repeatedly during the learning process for effective learning to occur. The experimentation phase of the module allows for this move to happen systematically in each class after awareness-raising activities have taken place.

After having received new input during the awareness-raising stage, learners need to experiment with the new knowledge and produce some output for language acquisition to happen (Swain 1985). During communicative tasks, learners can start manipulating new knowledge with support from the teacher. For example once learners have been introduced to new colloquial lexical items in the target language, they can start using new colloquial vocabulary in short communicative tasks where they create their own oral text. For instance learners can be required to tell a partner (in pair groups) about a recent event in their lives. The task would be first to tell the story in a formal register and then to retell it in a familiar register allowing for the use of colloquial lexical items. This can be an empowering exercise for learners which starts demonstrating to them how the linguistic choices they make when they speak shape the meaning of what they say.

The experimental phase, to be most productive, should happen straight after new input has been introduced and should be in the form of short tasks to quickly set new knowledge. This learning phase belongs to the realm of experiential learning, when understanding of new concepts or items comes from "doing" in the language rather than thinking about it. Just as learners learn about syntactic structures by using them to communicate (Hatch, Flashner and Hunt 1986), they can also learn about any other aspects of language through practice.

Communicative tasks performed during the experimentation phase are



integrative in nature. Although learners might focus more consciously on one aspect of spoken expression during a particular task (ie: emblematic gestures, pragmatic norms, norms of interaction etc...), as soon as they have to communicate in the target language they have to engage in the use of all aspects of language production and this involves appropriate use of grammar, pronunciation etc...

It is in this sense that the experimentation phase is highly beneficial for learners provided it happens repeatedly. Communicative tasks counteract what Stern (1992) has called "the Humpty Dumpty effect" of formal instruction. One of the shortcomings of formal instruction Stern refers to using this metaphor is that it is easier to break a language apart than it is to put it together again. During the awareness-raising phase learners do tear verbal interaction apart and they do so specifically in this case to make invisible cultural codes visible. However, during communicative tasks learners literally put spoken language together again. Both learning exercises are necessary to support successful language acquisition. Communicative tasks of the type we implemented in the experimentation phase of the module are in fact an integral part of instruction since they happen during the same class in conjunction with or straight after awareness-raising exercises.

A new approach to communicative tasks was explored during the implementation of the module, in particular to attempt to satisfy better learners' needs during the experimentation/explorative phase. In the tertiary institution where the module was implemented and at the time it was developed, high financial and technical support was given to language teachers who wished to develop multi-media material. This institutional support led to the production of a CD-ROM on teaching and learning verbal interaction and it became part of the module's communicative activities.

Several of the tasks on the CD-ROM were used mainly during the experimental phase of the module and will be illustrated later on in this

chapter, showing how multi-media technology can greatly facilitate the teaching of conversational skills.

### *The Production/Field work phase*

This phase in the module corresponds to two different types of learning activities which happen in and outside the classroom. We will refer to in-class activities as *production work* and outside classroom activities as *fieldwork*.

#### Production work

Production work refers to work in the target language where learners are required to create more substantial oral texts than during the experimentation phase. They have to integrate various components of verbal interaction using role-plays which allow them *to act out* the socio-cultural codes and other features of spoken language they have learnt in the target language. This approach to “culture” learning might at first surprise some since, as mentioned earlier, the aim of teaching verbal interaction and culture is not to have students parroting socio-cultural rules in the target language. However, asking students to act temporarily foreign cultural codes is part of a *teaching process* which acknowledges that understanding a foreign culture and language is not just an intellectual exercise (Maley and Duff 1984) done through comparative analysis between one’s own culture and the target culture. It includes *experiencing* the impact of foreign cultural norms on one’s sense of identity. That is, as Byram (1990) noted, learners *must live the target culture from within* and this can only be achieved through direct experience. Casse (1979:95) also noted that the best way to help people understand themselves and others from a cross-cultural perspective was not to talk about culture but to provide opportunities for them to experience this understanding through case studies, simulations, or

controlled real-life situations.

Drama activities such as role-plays which amount to acting “controlled real-life situations” can give learners the opportunity to experience culture from within. Role-plays, provided they are willingly performed, can encourage learners to shift their attitudes by having to take into account new knowledge to understand a socio-cultural phenomenon (Janis and King, 1954). In drama, language is viewed as a means of communication which includes both verbal and non-verbal expression rather than as a linguistic system that can be dissected. It focuses on the experiential and interactional aspects of language learning. During role plays, the intake of new knowledge filters through the whole person. It happens at cognitive, affective, physical and non-physical levels of a learner’s “being”. Drama in this sense is a wholistic pedagogical approach during which learners focus on meaning and paralinguistic expression rather than form. This in turn reduces the pressure for learners to be linguistically accurate and hence encourages experimentation.

During role-plays, learners work in pairs. They are given a fictitious plot, a situation in a particular socio-cultural context, for example:

“Two colleagues (French people) are arriving at work on Monday morning, they greet each other and talk about their week-ends. They know each other well but are not intimate friends. One is twenty years old, the other is nearly sixty. Act out their conversation as they greet each other upon arriving at work.”

First the pair of learners discusses the socio-cultural codes (pragmatic norms and norms of interaction) they will have to include in their role-play to produce a conversation which could socio-culturally match the “plot” they have been given. In the example given above, learners would have to decide

on the appropriate terms of address they have to use to speak to each other. That is learners would have to ask and answer the following questions: "Does the socio-cultural context given require the use of "tu" ou "vous", the use of first names or family names, titles or not etc...? What sort of non-verbal language would be appropriate, ie. in this case would the interactants kiss each other upon meeting. Learners would also have to think about the appropriate norms of interactions French speakers use to talk about their week-ends (see further illustration of this example under section three of this chapter).

After a short preparative reflective phase, learners can improvise conversations. Through the improvisation of role-plays in which learners attempt to reproduce the cultural codes of the target language, learners can experience how the use of those cultural codes *feels to them*. This is what Courtney (1995:17) called "the experience, (through improvised drama exercises), of the practical possibilities of *felt-meaning* in fictional contexts". Getting learners to experience the felt-meaning of cultural codes through role plays is the primary aim of the production phase in our module on verbal interaction and culture. This is when learners are given the chance to experience the target culture from within.

It is very much within oneself, that is at the level of *feeling* rather than *thinking* that one experiences a sense of cultural identity, hence one might say; "I feel very French or I feel very German". In the same way, for second language learners to fully appreciate how cultural codes construct social reality in the target language they literally have to "live" those codes from within at the level of feeling.

Courtney (1995) also argues that dramatic actions such as in role plays can potentially lead to the construction of a new reality in that they create *root metaphors* in the actor's (in our case language learner's) mind, or *signs of*

*world-views*. Those root-metaphors/signs of world-views (ie. experienced cultural codes) can later be re-used by actors/language learners as templates to create further new realities. From a pedagogical point of view, role-plays can potentially transform students by giving them support in experiencing and creating new realities. In our module on verbal interaction, during the awareness-raising phase learners are *informed* about cultural codes in the target language. Through role-playing, the experience of different cultural codes in verbal expression can potentially *transform* the learners into more multi-cultural communicators.

Drama activities in the language classroom also have the advantage of giving learners support *to experiment safely* with a foreign set of cultural codes as they watch how the use of those codes affects the way they perceive themselves and others. For example, for native Australian-English speakers learning verbal interaction in French, it is a challenge during role plays to have to act out French gestures and to interrupt during conversations to show involvement. The challenge can be perceived by learners as positive or negative according to their level of comfort with the foreign socio-cultural codes and degree of natural physical expressiveness in their own culture. From a teaching point of view what is important is to give learners the experience of being “destabilised” by another culture and learn from it. In a sense learners can use the language classroom as a laboratory, a protected environment in which they can experiment safely with *being* in another culture. Practising foreign cultural verbal codes in a classroom is safe because there are no serious negative consequences (ie; breakdown in communication) to endure from failing to act in culturally appropriate ways during a role-play. On the contrary, in real-life situations where learners would have to interact with native-speakers, the social consequences or failing to interact in culturally appropriate ways can be serious as it can lead to a breakdown of communication.

Role-playing cultural codes in the language classroom has the advantage of facilitating the creation of “cultural root-metaphors” in a learner’s mind which they can later use to create what is to them a new reality when they interact in a foreign language. The “safe” but also reflective practice of the target culture in the language classroom is giving learners “a nurturing space” where they can gently start transforming their monocultural perspective on the dynamics of human verbal interaction. Cultural codes because they are not readily accessible to the conscious mind are not learnt by osmosis, by simply being exposed to the target language and culture. Learners need to learn about and practice cultural norms in a classroom environment before they can successfully participate in verbal interaction with native-speakers.

### Field work

During the last few weeks of the module, that learners prepared and carried out a particular fieldwork exercise: an interview with a native-speaker followed by a written account of their experience.

#### *The interview*

During the interview learners had the opportunity to interact in an authentic and unpredictable manner with a native speaker who had been living in the country for a while and had the reverse perspective on the same communicative situation. This task gives the learner the possibility of observing and attempting to use some cultural norms and other features of spoken language they have learnt and practice in class. The aim of the interview was also to give learners the opportunity to discuss the personal experiences of cultural differences the native-speaker had been confronting with in the learners’ own country.

Before conducting the interview, learners did some preparative work. They learnt to prepare questions which would elicit the type of information they wanted to gain from the interviewee and also the type of language they wanted to be exposed to. In our case the elicitation of spontaneous, uncorrected, natural speech is one important aim of the interview. In order to achieve this aim, learners prepared in class a few questions designed to elicit general information (ie: personal details of interviewee). Responses to these questions would tend to produce a more formal register of but were necessary at the onset of the interview. Learners then prepared questions would will elicit more natural informal speech. Questions which encouraged the retelling of personal stories and the reliving of past experiences, for example, are likely to generate more spontaneous utterances (Blanche, 1988). They direct the speaker's attention away from the interviewer and involve him/her in the communication of personal feelings. This personal involvement helps to take the focus away from the natural tendency of native speakers to speak "correctly" when they know their language is being watched and perhaps judged by an outsider.

During class time, before launching into the real world, learners also practiced on each other the interview techniques they had studied. The preparatory work before the interview was very important for intermediate learners who were not always very confident about their spoken skills and feeling well prepared helped them to counteract the effect of lack of confidence.

#### *Written account of learners' experience of the interview*

In this task, learners summarized the information their questions elicited on the general cultural context of the target language (ie: information on French attitudes to food, politics, religion, money, rituals, local traditions etc...). Learners also commented on the verbal interaction itself with the interviewee included what they had noticed in terms of cultural norms and

other features of spoken language or what the interviewee had told them about cultural norms in verbal expression. They also expressed the difficulties they encountered generally in communicating. The following are a few excerpts of learners' written accounts of the interview which show learners' comments on cultural norms and language.

#### Excerpt one

"I learnt a lot about what Madeleine (the interviewee) said but also about the way she said it. In Australia it is normal to answer to a question on one's personal life briefly because we don't think people are very interested. But Madeleine answered my questions at length and with a lot of details".

#### Excerpt two:

"Another difference she (the interviewee) mentioned was that she finds people in Australia quite distant. This is a cultural difference we had talked about in our class on spoken language and culture. She thought Australian people could be very distant and also they can hide their emotions too much. In France, she said, if one asks the question "how are you" one answers more than "fine" or "yes I had a good week-end". They (the French) explain at length why they had a good-week-end or why they had a good day".

#### Excerpt three:

"So I asked her to explain to me the differences between "tu" and "vous", the different registers of the French language and perhaps their effect on culture. Because I find it surprising that a country like France which values equality so highly can have a language which creates so much distance between people with all the different registers and "tu" and "vous". She said it was a bit difficult to explain because she was not a linguist but that the use of "vous" was to show more respect".



#### Excerpt four

“She (the interviewee) said there were cultural differences between the way French people and the Australians talk but that they were small differences which are important because she said if we don’t understand them it is very difficult to communicate”.

#### Excerpt five

“Catherine (the interviewee) said that one cultural difference is between the way people think. In Australia, there is an attitude of “no worries” which she said is different in France. I asked her if this difference was reflected in the language, in the way French people speak. She said yes but that it was hard to know how.”

In those excerpts, it is interesting to note that the interviewees (the native-speakers) knew of cultural differences in language use, in the sense that they have “lived and felt” them, but they were not always capable of explaining how cultural differences were manifested through language (excerpt three and four). This point, however reflects what learners have been taught in the module on verbal interaction and culture. That is cultural codes in spoken language are omnipresent but not easily depictable for precise analysis. This point is embedded in the comment, in excerpt three, from an interviewee: “It’s difficult to explain, I am not a linguist”.

#### *Summary*

The production/field work phase of the module on verbal interaction and culture is the most challenging one for learners in that in both types of activities they are exposing themselves either to their classmates or native-speakers. Classroom and outside classroom activities offer different approaches to learning about spoken language and culture. In the protected

environment of the classroom, learners can experience foreign cultural codes safely. This experience is necessary to prepare them for the fieldwork task. Many other types of fieldwork tasks could follow on from what we have presented so far. At a more advanced stage of language learning, learners could, for example, do more extensive field work and be sent out into the community to collect samples of spoken interaction which they would later have to analyse.

### *The Feedback phase*

In the module on verbal interaction and culture, learners receive feedback from the teacher in many forms and during each phase of the module. Corrective feedback on grammatical mistakes, syntax, pronunciation and vocabulary for example is given to learners whenever appropriate during all types of classroom activities. It is part of the on-going interaction between teacher and learners.

In the feedback phase of the module, the type of feedback we are referring to is of a specific kind. It is linked specifically to the learning of cultural codes during the production phase of the module after learners have performed role-plays.

This phase is a very important one, especially to bring to fore the educational value of teaching verbal interaction and culture. During *feedback* sessions learners discuss with the teacher their performance during the role-playing of cultural codes. If the role plays have been filmed, learners can watch the class' performances and then comment on it as a group. If no filming has taken place feedback sessions can happen straight after performances. The feedback session has two objectives: 1) to comment on the learners's appropriate use of all components of verbal interaction during performance (ie: norms of interaction, grammatical variations, body language etc..) and 2) to allow students to express how they feel when they

perform foreign socio-cultural codes and to review (in the light of what their have learnt) stereotypes they might have had about the target culture. Both types of feedback should lead to discussions on what it means to be culturally competent in a foreign language. A common issue which needs to be addressed is the conflict many learners experience between some of their native socio-cultural norms and the foreign norms. Discussion on the topic can help learners negotiate a place for themselves between the two cultures. Learning to be comfortable in this "in between two cultures" space has often been acquainted to a third stage of socialisation (Byram 1990) where learners learn to compromise between their native culture and the foreign culture (Kramsch 1992). The primary goal of the feedback session is educational. For this reason, if learners need to resort to their native tongue for fruitful discussions to take place they should be allowed to do so.

Social cultural competence in a second language can be initiated through instruction and practice within the constraints of a classroom environment. Language teachers can help learners learn a foreign set of cultural rules by making them notice the cultural patterns of language in use through consciousness raising exercises and exposure to authentic interaction. This needs to be followed by practice of the new patterns, and reflexion on the meaning of cultural competency in a second language and direct interaction with native speakers.

#### **4.4 The micro teaching components: the programme for the teaching content and samples of classroom activities.**

The module corresponds to twenty-six hours of classroom teaching, one hour a week over one year in the university calendar. Approximately two hours of class time are spent on each theme. The first hour focuses more on awareness-raising activities and experimentation and the second hour

focuses on production and feedback work. Learners progressively build up knowledge of the different features of spoken language. Integration of the different themes studied occurs during the experimentation and production phases of the module. New knowledge noticed (learnt) during the awareness-raising phase is constantly recycled, re-used through a variety of tasks which follow this phase where learners engage in using the target language in various ways.

At a post beginner level of language learning a module on verbal interaction is meant to raise learners' *awareness* of the links between spoken language and culture. More extensive analysis of verbal interaction need to follow this module at more advanced stages of language learning.

The teaching content of the module is solely based on current (although limited) research in discourse analysis in French, in particular research in pragmatics and conversation analysis.

The programme of the module is divided into two parts and covers the following content:

Part one: (semester one)

Introduction to French conversation  
Pronunciation  
Spoken grammar  
Colloquial lexicon  
Prosody  
Proxemics and French gestures

Part two: (semester two)

General cultural traits of French conversation  
Terms of address and greetings  
Did you have a good week-end  
Requests  
Telephone conversations

Following is a description of the teaching aim and content of each theme followed in most cases by an illustration of a classroom task.

In this unit learners were introduced to the main differences between familiar spoken language and written language. They gained some general conceptual understanding of why the learning of grammar and the written form of a foreign language do not automatically lead to the ability to understand and speak the target language. Through different short tasks, learners were exposed for the first time to the features of spoken language they would be learning and practising during the course. They were also introduced, through the target language, to new metalanguage which would be used during the module to describe spoken language (ie: notion of register, pragmatic norms, norms of interaction prosody, proxemics, emblematic gestures etc...)

*Illustration of classroom activity*

During the awareness-raising phase for this activity, the teacher gave a mini-lecture in the target language on the main differences between spoken and written language and introduced briefly the seven components of verbal interaction described in chapter two.

During the experimentation phase of the activity, the whole class watched a short conversation several times on a video. The conversation portrays two native speakers acting in a very short verbal interaction in an informal, quite familiar register. In groups of two, learners then tried to transcribe the conversation. Each learner this time listened to the conversation from a tape-recorder to allow for an individualised monitoring of the listening task. The teacher then showed the correct transcription of the conversation (with annotated non-verbal language) to the whole class together with a version of the same conversation in a more formal register of the target language. Both

the transcription of the familiar conversation and the comparison with a formal version (closer to the written form of the target language) helped make different features of spoken language more visible to learners. Learners were then asked to identify in pairs what in terms of language features made the familiar conversation they listened to sound "familiar". This was done to encourage learners to notice how a familiar register of verbal expression (ie. a particular social-cultural context) is created through the use of colloquial lexicon, gestures, contractions and simplified grammar expression.

During the production phase of the activity, learners were asked to either write and act, or just act - according to their level of confidence in oral expression - one short fictitious conversation in a familiar register of their own creation in a familiar register. They then performed the same conversation again but this time in a formal register which approximated written language expression.

### *Pronunciation*

At an intermediate level of language learning, many learners still have difficulties at pronouncing the target language. The Communicative Approach - as the latest commonly favoured language pedagogy - does not offer a systematic approach to teaching pronunciation and hence as with the teaching of formal grammar in this approach, the teaching of pronunciation is an area which has often been neglected, although highly needed especially by beginning and post-beginning learners.

In our module on verbal interaction and culture, a particular approach to teaching pronunciation was favoured. Learners were taught the most important articulatory differences between phonetically close consonants in the target language system and the learners' first language phonetic system. They were also taught the differences in pronunciation between French and

Australian-English vowels. This is a particularly important teaching point, as research in phonetics shows that the transition from the pronunciation of English to French presupposes the elimination of certain vowels and the acquisition of new ones (Tranel, 1987).

Learners are also taught differences concerning stress and rhythm in the target language and their first language.

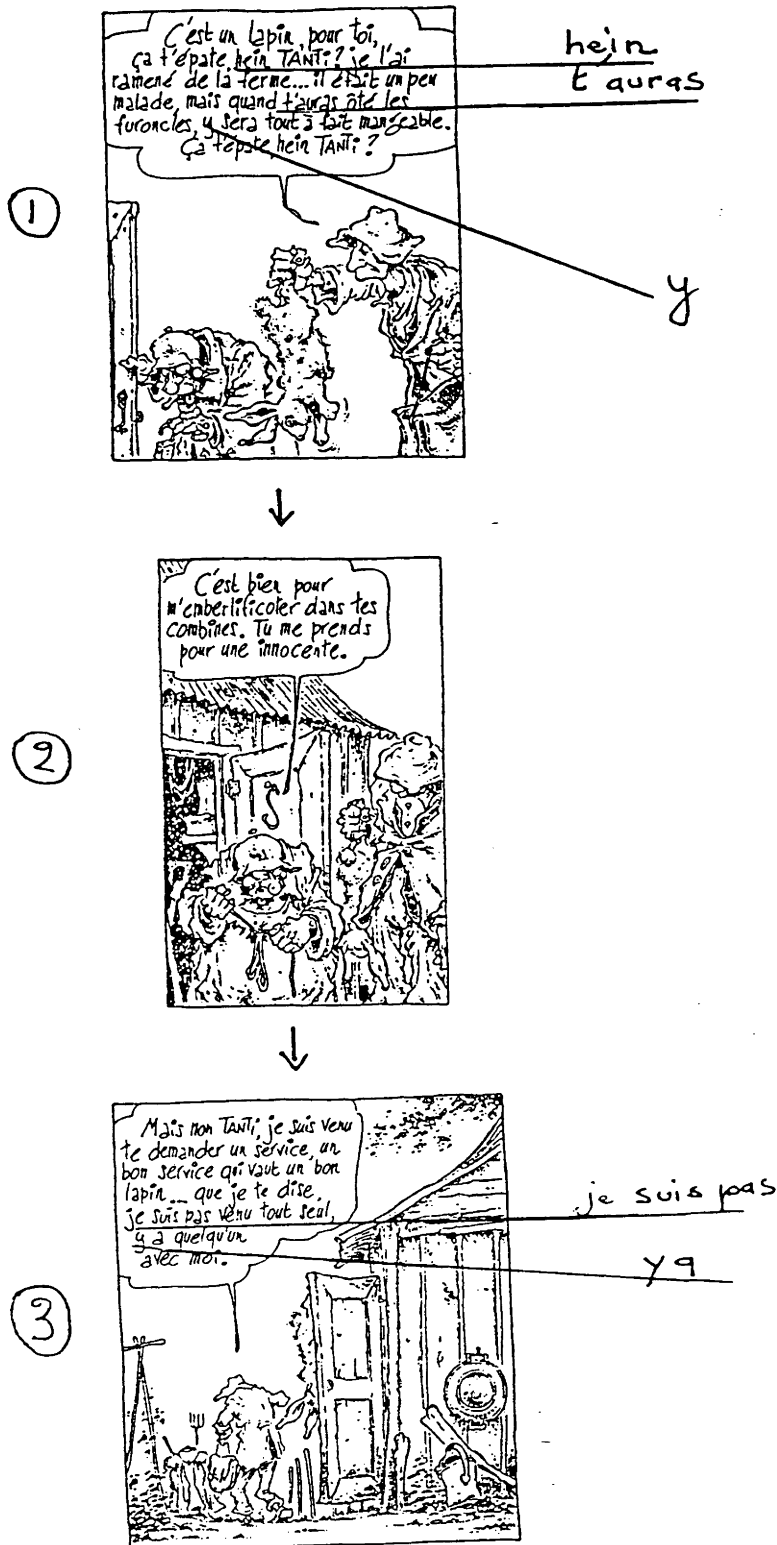
The teaching of basic phonetic knowledge in the target language gives learners a reference point on which they can always fall back for further study after they receive corrective feedback on their pronunciation errors during the many oral production activities of the module.

As part of the teaching of pronunciation, learners are also exposed briefly to some French regional accents as a purely awareness-raising exercise on the existence of non-uniformity of French pronunciation. It is also pointed out to them that regional accents are carriers of "cultural information" since they indicate, to native-speakers of French at least, the geographical origin of a person.

The aim of the teaching of pronunciation in the target language is to give learners the support they need to achieve a level of pronunciation which makes their oral performance easily comprehensible to others. Native-like pronunciation is not however regarded as the only acceptable norm all learners should achieve.

### *Spoken grammar*

In the classes on spoken grammar, learners were taught the common variations from written to spoken language at the level of morphology and syntax. They are also taught discourse markers in oral French and common contractions. To illustrate features of spoken grammar, cartoons can be used, (see table 3) as well as extracts of authentic conversation accompanied by transcription.



**Table 3: Example of a cartoon in which the language used portrays examples of features of spoken grammar<sup>5</sup>**

<sup>5</sup> Extract from "La Grenouille" by Carmen Cru in "Fluide Glacial, Umour et Bandessinées" no.122. Aout 1986, France, p47-51.



The advantage of using cartoons to illustrate linguistic features is that as a printed medium of communication they can portray para-linguistic information on verbal interaction. This has the advantage of showing verbal interaction in at least a minimum of socio-cultural context. In the example above, learners can notice features of spoken grammar in the verbal expression of the interactants. Table three is an extract of a five page cartoon learners were given to read and comment in groups of two. Firstly, learners were asked to define the social context/environment in which the interaction occurred. They were told to identify any aspect of the socio-cultural background they might not understand (for example: the suitability of a rabbit as a gift). Secondly learners were instructed to underline any features of spoken grammar they could recognize in the verbal interaction. In table 3 we have extracted the features learners were expected to identify. For example, in drawing no.1, learners would be expected to identify *hein* ("um") and its possible meaning and use in the interaction. "Hein" is used here instead of *n'est-ce pas* ("doesn't it"). It is a very "familiar" discourse marker in French often used by an interactant to seek acknowledgement and/or assessment of what has just been said. *T'auras* is a contracted form of *tu auras* (you will have). *Y* is used as a contracted form of the personal pronoun *il* ("it"). In drawing no.2 there are no features of spoken grammar as such but the use of very colloquial vocabulary - ie: *m'emberlificoter dans tes combines* ("to trick me with your scheming") - contributes to the expression of familiarity in the interaction. In drawing no.3, learners would have to notice the omission of the particle *ne* in *je suis pas*, used instead of *je ne suis pas*. The omission of the negative particle *ne* (in negative sentences) is a marker of spoken French grammar. The omission of *il* in *y a* instead of *il y a* ("there is") is also a feature of spoken French.

Task one

In this task, learners listen to an authentic extract from a filmed conversation several times. They are then shown a transcript of the conversation and asked to circle all the features of spoken grammar they can notice. They are also asked to read aloud the transcription in groups of two trying to reproduce all the contractions such as "chuis pas, "chais pas" which have been transcribed textually.

Task two

After having been introduced to some very commonly used oral contractions in French, learners are given five sentences written phonetically (see table 4 for illustration). They are asked to read the sentences aloud in groups of two and to then to write what would be a full "correct" version of each sentence .

Kesta ? Sita mal à la tête taqua prendre dldlaspirine .....
--

**Table 4: Example of a sentence showing oral contractions**

In table four the full version of the sentence transcribed to show oral contractions would be : "Qu'est-ce que tu as ? Si tu as mal à la tête tu n'as qu'à prendre de l'aspirine" ("What is wrong with you? If you have a headache, you need only take aspirin").

Tasks on spoken grammar were followed by role-plays in which learners attempted to use the different features of spoken language they had been taught.

## *Colloquial lexicon*

The classes on colloquial lexicon were meant to be an awareness-raising exercise on the extensive use of colloquial lexicon to mark familiarity in everyday conversations. Learners were given a list of commonly used colloquial vocabulary in French as well as explanation as to when and in which socio-cultural contexts, this vocabulary is used. A minimum of commonly used “swearing” or “rude” words were also taught to learners as these words are an integral part of verbal interaction. An over-prudish attitude to what constitutes acceptable teaching content in a class on verbal interaction could deprive learners of essential information they require to understand the authentic uncensored speech of native speakers. Short extract of films or cartoons can again be used here to illustrate the use of colloquialisms in context (as shown in table 3).

In the introductory classes on colloquial vocabulary, learners were also given a list of commonly used French onomatopoeia and interjections (see table 6). Through the use of onomatopoeia and interjections, speakers express a lot of feelings. Teaching them in the target language enriches learners capacity to fully express themselves in oral production.

Bof! - Plouf! - Toc toc! - Chut! - Pif paf! - Pst! - Hep! - Mince! - Zut! - Flûte! - Chic! - Chouette! - Hélas! - Ouais! - Vlan! - La vache - Hourra! - Pan! - Coucou! - Ouf!
--

**Table 5: List of French onomatopoeia and interjections given to learners**

After receiving the list of French onomatopoeia, learners are then asked to try to identify in which context each of the onomatopoeia and interjections could be used.

After this task learners in pairs create a short story that they will tell to the class later on. In the story learners attempt to use colloquial vocabulary, onomatopoeia and interjections.

## *Prosody*

In the two classes on the introduction to prosody learners were mainly taught the importance of intonation contours in the shaping of meaning in verbal interaction.

### *Illustration of a learning task on intonation contours*

Learners were shown a series of short inauthentic scripted filmed conversations between two native speakers. In the conversations, one interactant asks different questions to the other interlocutor who answers using *oui* "yes" or *ouais* "yeah" or *non* "no". Through the use of different intonation contours accompanied sometimes by some specific facial expression, the interlocutor who answers the questions gives "yes" or "no" different meaning.

Learners watched the filmed conversations once. They were then given the transcript of each interaction. Each filmed conversation was watched again by the whole class and learners had to identify the meaning of each "yes", "yeah" or "no". That is they had to for example identify whether a "yes" meant simply that the recipient in the interaction was acknowledging what had been said or was it indicating agreement with what had been said. They also had to identify some striking features of body language and facial expression which had some relevance in shaping the meaning of what was said.

After this first task learners were asked in pairs to create one short dialogue, which they then performed in front of the class twice. In the second performance, learners changed the intonation contours of some of the responses they gave each other. The change in intonation contours had to show a significant change in the meaning of the response given.

## *Proxemics and French gestures*

In the form of a mini lecture (awareness-raising activity) learners were informed of the meaning of proxemics and emblematic gestures and how both vary from culture to culture. Specific examples of differences between French and Australian proxemics were given to the learners. After this introduction, learners were given a graphic representation of twenty commonly used French emblematic gestures with their colloquial affiliates. The teacher acted and commented on the gestures and invited learners to imitate the illustration. Some extracts from French films which portray some emblematic gestures were also shown to learners.

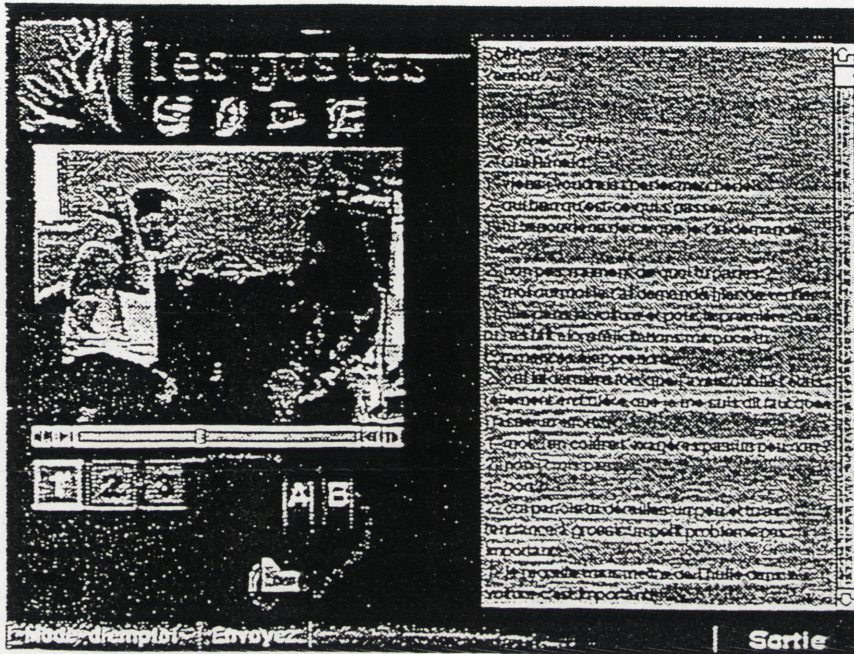
Learners then worked on a multi-media task (experimentation phase) which had been developed specifically for the module on verbal interaction and culture. This task called "les Gestes" (see table 6) demonstrates in nine small video sequences the use of the twenty emblematic gestures learners had previously been taught. The user of the task watched the selected video without sound (three times) to identify the gestures and had to select one of two possible transcriptions. The next step was to identify in the transcription the phrases which corresponded to the gestures used in the video. The user could choose to verify their selection and then watch the exact use of the gesture in context.

Assessment of the task required the user to modify the chosen transcription by inserting a brief text identifying the gesture used, its textual meaning and the context in which it had been used. The entire script was then submitted across the internet for assessment by the teacher.

After the multi-media task, learners were required to role-play a conversation in which they had to use not only French emblematic gestures but also colloquial vocabulary and features of spoken grammar.

The role-plays were filmed and during the feedback session the whole class watched and commented on the performance of the role-plays, including

discussion about how learners felt when using the different features of spoken language they illustrated in role-playing.



**Table 7: Illustration of the multi-media task on the teaching of French emblematic gestures**

*Terms of address and greetings*

In the first part of the teaching of terms of address and greetings, learners worked in pairs. They were given a cartoon which portrayed two French native-speakers at one point in a greeting (see table 7). Learners had to identify the type of relationship the two interactants had in terms of social distance and how the viewer of the cartoon received this information. That is through which linguistic and pragmatic devices including specific body language did the interactants in the cartoon created a particular social context between themselves.



**Table 8: An example of a cartoon which illustrates some pragmatic norms used by French native-speakers in greetings.<sup>6</sup>**

After this first exercise, learners were given a list of questions in which they were asked to identify what would be the appropriate terms of address and greetings in different contexts (ie: between grand-parents and grand-children, university students and teachers etc...

After the two activities mentioned above (the awareness-raising phase), more extensive the teacher provided more information on terms of address and greetings in France. An explanation was given about the use of the

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<sup>6</sup> Cartoon from Plantin in "Plus ça change...". Hatier international, p69.

personal pronouns ‘tu’ and ‘vous’ as well as the importance of the use of titles in French greetings (ie. Monsieur, Madame and name or profession as in; ‘Bonjour Madame la Directrice’). Learners were also given a list of some of the common affectionate terms used to address intimates (ie: ‘ma puce’ (my flea), ‘mon chou’ (my cabbage), ‘ma crotte’ (literally meaning ‘my little pooh’) etc...

The importance of non-verbal language in French greeting sequences was explained and illustrated using short film clips (ie. ‘kissing’ routines).

Learners then worked in groups of two on a multi-media task (exploration phase, see table 9). In this task learners were given five scenes which suggested different socio-cultural contexts in which the speech act of greeting was performed. Learners selected a given scenario and recorded their conversation. They could listen to their oral production as well as a model conversation once they had finished their task. The audio files generated during this activity were then able to be submitted for assessment by sending them across the internet.



*Students select a scenario (1-5) and record their conversation by clicking on ‘enregistrez’. They can listen to their oral production by clicking on ‘écoutez’. Under ‘correction’ they can listen to a model conversation. (see CD-ROM)*

**Table 8: Illustration of multi-media task on terms of address and greetings in French**



After the multi-media tasks, learners had to perform role-plays (production phase) which were filmed and then shown in class during the feed-back sessions.

Since the development of the module on verbal interaction, new research of norms of interaction in French greetings is now available (Traverso, 1997). Using the same format, this new knowledge could be incorporated in this section of the module. So for example learners would be able to learn not only pragmatic norms in greeting (ie: use of "tu" and "vous", names and titles and kissing routines) but also what sorts of things are typically said in French greetings and in what order.

*Did you have a good week-end (or linking stereotyping with misunderstandings of cultural norms of interaction).*

The following class activities describe the format which was used to teach the tasks we have titled "Did you have a good week-end?", "Requests" and "Telephone conversations". These three tasks were based directly on cross-cultural research available on those topics. We are presenting in detail only the activities regarding the teaching of the "Did you have a good week-end?" task. The presentation below is meant to represent one possible template for teaching cultural norms in a foreign language.

Béal's (1992b) research was used for the "Did you have a good week-end task" task. Béal has studied cross-cultural misunderstandings between French and Australian employees in a French firm located in Sydney, Australia. Her research was particularly suited for the sort of information we wished to present to Australian learners in a module on spoken French language and culture. The following presentation is hence an example of how research in cross-cultural communication can be directly used in the language classroom.

The activity described below aimed at getting learners to understand and practise the different cultural norms French and Australian people use to answer the question “Did you have a good week-end?”. This activity was also used to show how negative stereotyping often stems from misunderstanding cross-cultural differences in human communication.

### Awareness-raising phase

#### *Step one*

Learners worked in pairs using the target language. They were asked to identify a short list of stereotypes they held, or noticed other holding, about French and/or Australian people. The teacher provided the new vocabulary. After this activity learners reported back to the class. Learners typically identified negative stereotypes about the two cultures such as “French people speak too much, they are too personal, Australians are laid-back, too indirect etc...).

After this brain-storming activity, the teacher suggested that stereotyping often stems from misunderstanding the different cultural norms speakers use in different countries to communicate with each other. As an illustration of this suggestion, the teacher proposed the study of the answer to the simple question “Did you have a good week-end?” in French and Anglo-Australian cultures.

#### *Step two*

The teacher asked the whole class examples of typical answers to the question “Did you have a good week-end” in an Australian context. The teacher and students worked out what the equivalent answers could be in French.

The aim of this activity was to show learners that the answer to the question “Did you have a good week-end?” could not be so easily translated from one language to another without knowing the appropriate cultural norms

speakers in the two cultures used in providing answers.

Next the teacher read out to the class extracts from Béal's (1992b) research in which both French people and Australians explain their frustrations with the different ways both cultures use to answer the question "Did you have a good week-end?". Following are the two extracts read to the class:

*Example one (an Australian comments on the French). The extract was read in English, the learners' first language.*

"... and they start giving other people's names, and I mean, we don't particularly want to know all these things and yes... they tend to do that. Yeah... they do that in... what could you say..." "How was your week-end?" you know normally you say, "Oh good..." ,... wouldn't know who they're talking about, you know, they tend to do that sometimes, but, that's all right, I mean, you know, that's fine... They they'll probably go into a lot more detail and, you know, like tell you where they went, and how their kids liked it, what their wife thought about it, whereas... whereas you'll find with an Australian, even though they have got time... they still won't... you...they still won't come out with it all, you know, they'll just say "Oh yes. We had a good time..." and perhaps they'll tell you where they went and that's it. Whereas the French, they'll tend to tell you what...er...what they had to eat, and it it was nice and, you know... (Béal 1992b:206).

*Example two.: This is an extract of what one French person said about Australians. The extract was read in French to learners.*

"Oui, ben oui, je me suis rendu compte que c'est vraiment des formules de politesse! (petit rire de dérision). A la limite si on vous pose la question, c'est qu'on veut vous dire "Bonjour. Comment ça va?", en fait ils attendent pas la réponse. Si on pose cette question en français, c'est qu'on s'y intéresse, parce qu'autrement on dirait, "Bonjour, comment ça va?" c'est tout. Bon, mais si effectivement on demande, "Alors, vous avez passé un bon week-

end?" Ça va...bon, ça encourage à dire: "Qu'est-ce que tu as fait?"... alors que ici (en Australie), à la limite, non c'est bon, "How was your week-end?" mais c'est bon, "Bonjour, comment ça va?" et puis on écoute pas. Ou si, effectivement, si on développe, bon à la limite, ils en attendaient pas autant! (petit rire)... moi je suis resté toujours avec mon réflexe français, j'ai pas changé, si on me demande comment...comment était le week-end, je vais dire ce que j'ai fait pendant mon week-end..." (Béal 1992b:206-207).

*(Well, yeah, I realize that it's only about being polite (derisive laughter). To an extent if someone asks you the question, it's because they want to say to you "Hi. How are you?", in fact they are not waiting for an answer. If you ask this question in French, it's because you are interested, because otherwise you would say, "Hi, how are you?" that's all. Yeah, but if effectively you ask, "So, did you have a good week-end?". It's going...well, it encourages one to say: "What did you do?"... where here (in Australia), to an extent, no well it's, "How was your week-end?" but well it's, "Hi, how are you?" and then they don't listen. Or else if effectively, if you go on, well to an extent, they were not expecting that much! (short laughter)... I, I 've kept my French habit, I have not changed, if someone asks me how... how was the week-end, I am going to say what I did on the week-end..."*

The aim of step two was to make the problem of cross-cultural communication a concrete issue. It brought real life dilemma into the classroom for discussion and analysis. After the reading of the extracts, learners were asked to comment on their responses to them, thoughts and feelings.

### *Step three*

The teacher explained that for Australian people the answer to the question "Did you have a good week-end" is used mostly as a conversational routine on Monday mornings often as a way to make contact. The expected answer is

short, friendly and reciprocal. For French people the answer to the same question is not part of the Monday morning first contact strategy. It is a genuine question which requires a detailed answer. In an Australian context, the answer to the question can of course move beyond the ritualised short answer. If it does so specific rules still apply in the ways a more detailed answer is given.

Béal (1992a and 1992b) identified six differing rules between French and Australian to answer this simple question in ways that are culturally and separately acceptable to both communities.

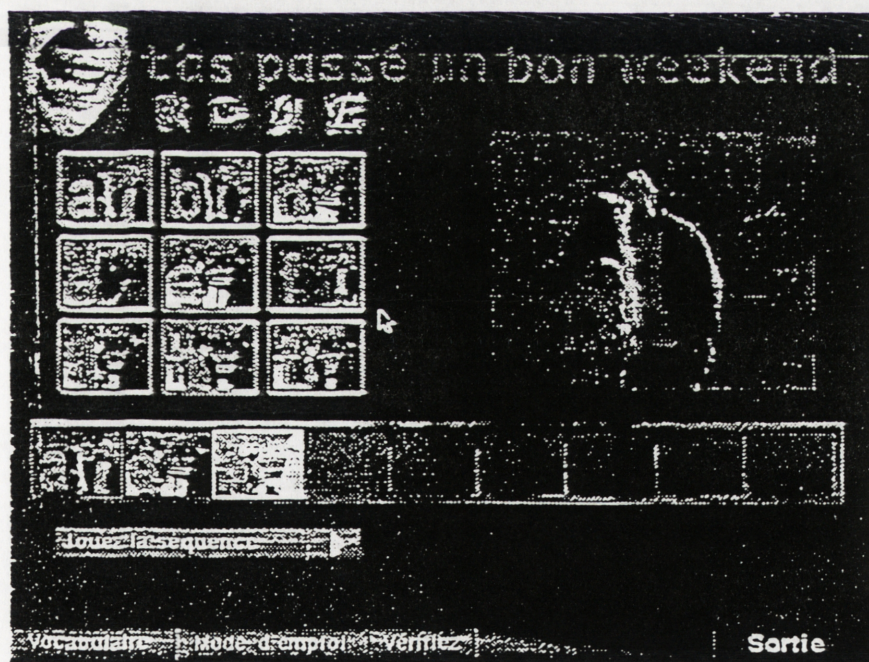
Learners were given the list of the six differing rules, (see table 9 below). They read it in pairs and discussed it. The teacher also showed on an overhead a transcription of a typical French answer to the question "Did you have a good week-end" as well as a transcription of a typical Australian answer, both transcriptions were authentic data taken from Béal's (1992:212) research.

Australiens	Français
<p>1/Posez la question à tout le monde. C'est une routine de conversation pour les Australiens (le lundi matin !). La réponse est en général courte, amicale, réciproque. <i>Ask the question to every body. It is a conversational routine for Australians (on Monday mornings). The answer is generally short, friendly and reciprocal.</i></p>	<p>1/Vous n'êtes pas "obligé" de poser la question à tout le monde. Elle ne fait pas vraiment partie de la routine française de conversation du lundi matin. <i>You don't have to ask the question to every one. It is not part of French conversational routine on Monday mornings.</i></p>
<p>2/ Soyez positif sans être trop enthousiaste. <i>Be positive without being enthusiastic.</i></p>	<p>2/ Si la question est posée: donnez ou attendez-vous à recevoir une réponse détaillée. <i>If the question is asked: expect to receive a detailed answer.</i></p>
<p>3/ Mentionnez les activités typiques d'un week-end. <i>Mention typical week-end activities.</i></p>	<p>3/Soyez sincère, donnez votre opinion sur ce que vous avez fait le week-end. Décrivez vos sentiments, même ceux qui sont négatifs. <i>Be sincere, give your opinion on what you did on the week-end. Describe your feelings, including negative feelings.</i></p>
<p>4/ Donnez des faits plutôt que des opinions. <i>Give facts rather than opinions</i></p>	<p>4/Soyez amusant ou "vivant" dans votre description. Dramatisez ce que vous avez fait. <i>Be entertaining or lively in your descriptions. Dramatise what you have done.</i></p>
<p>5/Dites seulement ce qui est utile et intéressant pour celui qui écoute. <i>Say only what is useful and interesting for the hearer,</i></p>	<p>5/Montrez que vous connaissez les gens et les endroits dont parle l'autre. Parlez de votre famille et amis. <i>Show you know the people and places the other mentions. Talk about your family and friends</i></p>
<p>6/Employez un style de conversation qui montre que vous êtes attentionné envers l'autre: <i>Use a conversational style which shows care for the other:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- N'interrompez pas la personne qui parle. <i>Don't interrupt the person who is talking</i></li> <li>- Ecoutez avec attention. Attendez que la personne qui parle ait complètement fini de parler pour dire ce que vous voulez dire. <i>Listen attentively. Wait until the person who is talking stops speaking completely to say what you want to say.</i></li> </ul>	<p>6/Employez un style de conversation qui montre que vous êtes intéressé par ce que dit l'autre: <i>Use a conversational style which shows you are interested in what the other is saying:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Répétez et ajoutez à ce que dit la personne. <i>Repeat and add to what the person is saying.</i></li> <li>- Interrompez la personne qui parle. <i>Interrupt the person who is talking.</i></li> <li>- Parlez en même temps. <i>Overlap each other when talking</i></li> </ul>

**Table 9: Cross-cultural differences between French and Anglo-australian speakers in the answer to the question: "Did you have a good week-end?"**

## Experimentation phase

After having been presented with the different cultural norms used by French and Australians speakers to answer the question "Did you have a good week-end", learners worked on a multi-media task (see table 10). In this task learners had to reconstruct the correct sequence of a conversation in which native speakers displayed norms of interaction appropriate to the context. They were also invited to recognise the norms of interaction which had been brought to their attention during the awareness-raising phase. The conversation had been cut in nine segments which were placed in a random order. The user of the task had to listen to each piece, understand the segment narrative and then try to reconstruct the original conversation. The student submitted a short string of characters representing the order of the video segments for assesement. These were communicated to the teacher for assesement using the internet.



*In this task, students have to reconstruct the correct sequence of a conversation in which native French speakers display norms of interaction appropriate to the context. (see CD-ROM)*

Table 10: Illustration of the multi-media task on "Did you have a good week-end ?"

### Production phase

After the multi-media task, learners engaged in role-plays in which they acted out a conversation in which they talked about a fictitious week-end using the appropriate French norms of interaction to do so. Learners were given a second option to perform a conversation in which an Australian and a French person were talking about their week-end in French each side using their respective cultural norms and hence clashing. Learners were reminded to integrate in their role-plays, features of spoken grammar, familiar vocabulary and French gestures where appropriate. The role-plays were performed in front of the whole class and filmed by either the teacher or some of the learners.

### Feedback phase

During the production phase the whole class watched the role plays performed by the learners. A group discussion followed after watching each role play where the class commented on the appropriateness of the performance in terms of use of cultural norms, body language and other features of spoken language taught during the module. The performers of each role play were also invited to comment on how they felt about "acting French". The discussion brought up questions such as: "should we be speaking like the French if we went to France?" or "What if we don't like the way the French talk about themselves and all their gestures?". The teacher at this point suggested that learners needed to distinguish between what they had to know to culturally understand French people and the behaviour that could be expected of them in a foreign culture. The discussion led to the understanding that learning to speak in a foreign language was not about becoming parrots of a foreign code of behaviour but about finding a comfortable place for oneself in between one's first culture and target culture.



## *4.5 Evaluation of the module and concluding remarks*

In this chapter we have presented a methodology for the teaching of verbal interaction and culture which describes an explorative step into the “practicabilities” of teaching the intangible cultural features of spoken language. Part of the challenge was to see how the links between spoken language and culture could be made available to *intermediate* learners of the target language. The best way to judge if we have met this challenge is to hear what learners have to say about it. Hence, before discussing our own evaluation we will present evaluative comments from the learners because they speak for themselves of both the success of the module as well as the areas which need to be improved.

### *Learners' evaluative comments*

At the end of the module, learners were asked to answer in writing the following question: “Did you enjoy the module on Spoken language and culture ? Give reasons for your answer”. With this open question we obtained a range of responses which covered most aspects of the course.

We have selected at random fifteen evaluative forms which represent a sample of what a class of thirty five learners thought of the module. To facilitate the analysis of the comments we have classified them into four categories as shown below.

- Category one: answers which point to the learning of French cultural norms in general terms.
- Category two: answers which refer to the learning of French gestures.
- Category three: answers which refer to the production phase of the module (ie. role-playing).
- Category four: answers which refer to the use of multi-media tasks.

*Category one: answers which point to the learning of French cultural norms in general terms:*

1/ "We learnt practical aspects of the French language and culture which weren't looked at in the standard classes. It was interesting because it's French that you actually need and will use when/if you go to France".

2/"The module was entertaining but mostly because I saw it as very relevant and useful. It gave me an understanding of how French people communicate and interact, which is very important to French culture.

3/"This module was fantastic, the best I have done in French so far! We learnt a lot about colloquial language, French gestures and we got to practice all this doing sketches. It was fun, useful and very relevant".

4/ "The module was interesting, informative and entertaining".

5/ "As well as being interesting and well taught, the module was really quite fun. It is pretty rare to find a course that is actually fun!"

6/ "What we have learnt is so important because it is the way people really express themselves. It is French culture impersonated.

7/"The module was topical and relevant, extremely interesting and challenging without being too difficult".

8/"The module gave me an insight into a form of the French language I had not seen before".

9/"I thought it was pretty good, especially when I remembered seeing what we'd done actually happening".

10/"It was quite heavy but I don't think there is anything wrong with that. It gave a great insight into spoken language".

11/ "It was fine because it gave a good idea of the less formal (but very rich!) side of the French culture. It helped me understand ways of communication which I think is the point of studying a language".

12/" Yes anything like this module is welcome. I'd like to do more. It made me realize how formal and staid the French I knew is - see the fun and witty side to the language - now if only I can use it without looking like an idiot!".

13/"It made me realize why my French sounds different to that of native speakers and perhaps helped me to change".

14/" Yes it was interesting learning about everyday French and French people and the different ways they communicate because that was why I chose to study French at uni".

15/"The cultural content was very good. It showed me what actually living in France would be like. I enjoyed the cultural perspective of it".

*Category two: answers which refer to the learning and practising of French gestures:*

1/"I realized the extent of non-verbal communication, the history behind many insults etc..."

2/"Interesting at times. French gestures don't come naturally".

3/"The module increased my knowledge of body language and symbolic gestures and taught me different levels of language".

4/"The style of conversation and use of gestures differs widely from that of English so my understanding of French culture improved in this way".

5/"Gestures were interesting but a challenge to incorporate into our anglophone speech patterns".

6/"I found the practice of French gestures a bit difficult as it felt unnatural".

7/"Gestures were a bit difficult because I needed to think about them. They didn't come naturally".

8/"The module helped me understand the unspoken part of the culture, eg. the importance of touching, intonation, expressions, gestures".

9/"I became aware of the amount of language which is not verbal but it is often difficult to make our sketches natural because the gestures do not come naturally to an Australian".

10/"It was fun to put some of the gestures to use as opposed to just memorising them".

11/ "I understand now that communicating with people at other levels of

communication (non-verbal) is very important to bridging a cultural gap but I found it hard to practice the gestures”.

12/“I think it’s useful to know gestures, bad language and when, where to use it”.

13/“Everyday talk, slang, gestures all very useful to viewing the French culture, very cleverly taught”.

14/“The reasons for gestures and the use of certain language gave an understanding of the French psychology”.

*Category three: answers which refer to the production phase of the module (ie.role-playing):*

1/“Getting use to more physical interaction in conversation was difficult”.

2/“Difficult to produce authenticity. I think it is a cultural trait, that you can probably only pick up if you live in France for a long period”.

3/“ I found it a bit difficult to act French. It felt very unnatural”.

4/“I like the fact we all had a chance to talk”.

5/“I found the “acting” element a bit difficult”.

6/“A bit concerned about emphasis on acting ability, would rather just learn about the cultural bits in spoken language and gestures rather than having to act, it is so alien to our culture”.

*Category four: answers which refer to the use of multi-media tasks.*

1/ “Work in the computer-lab was fantastic. It was great to see the dialogues and have the transcriptions. I learnt heaps”.

2/“I really liked the dialogues with all the gestures in the computer-lab. We could see for real what we had talked about in class”.

4/“I much preferred doing role-plays using the computer in the lab than doing it in front of the classroom”.

5/“I guess what was great in the lab is that we could work at our own pace and actually seeing the dialogues at the same time as hearing them and then

looking at the transcriptions was great. It really helped my comprehension of French”.

6/“In the lab, I loved the conversations with the gestures. They were fun and real. Much better than just seeing French gestures on a piece of paper”.

7/“I liked the fact we could actually see the conversations with all the gestures for real and I found the transcriptions very useful. It helped me actually work out the bits I didn’t understand straight off”.

8/“I would have liked more work in the computer-lab because we really saw all the stuff we’d learnt in class sort of put together in real conversations”.

9/“To be able to watch the French actually using all their gestures in conversations was great. Having the transcriptions also really helped”.

10/“Doing the role-plays in the lab was less threatening than having to do it in class. We could listen to what we’d say too and redo the dialogue”.

#### *Comments on learners’ evaluation and concluding remarks*

Comments under category one overwhelmingly indicated that the module filled a gap in learners’ knowledge of French culture as testified by words such as: “Interesting”, “very relevant”, “useful”, “informative”, “what you actually need and will use” etc... or in comment 13: “It made me realize why my French sounds different to that of native speakers...” and comment 15: “It showed me what actually living in France would be like”.

The words “entertaining” and “fun” also came up a lot which is not surprising since learning foreign verbal action is akin to learning “drama in real life”, in this case specifically it is about learning the cultural construct of everyday life “dramas” as expressed through language use. Learning foreign verbal interaction is in this sense unlike other “standard” language classes (see comment 1).

In comments under category two learners acknowledged the importance of

knowing about French non-verbal language as it contains a lot of culture. However they clearly pointed to their uneasiness about having to practice them. Comments under category three also showed that learners found “acting French” difficult.

Comments in both categories two and three clearly indicated that learners experienced discomfort in acting/being French. We suggest that this seemingly negative experience is in fact a positive outcome. Learners can learn from it that the acting of foreign cultural codes in the language classroom is only a learning device to experience the other culture and hence try to understand it better. This does not imply that one has “to become the other” to understand “the other” in real life.

Under category three learners clearly indicated that foreign cultural behaviour is not readily acquired, as in “taken on board by one’s being” through sheer will. Negotiating a comfortable place for oneself between two different cultures is a long-term process which could not possibly be achieved through the very short period of time learners had in the module. We can also reasonably assume that the discomfort learners have experienced in “having to act French” was not solely because they experienced uneasiness with foreign cultural behaviour but also because they felt a certain degree of vulnerability in having to expose themselves in role-playing in front of a whole class.

“Acting”, whether in one native’s tongue or in a foreign language, represents a challenge in itself. In analysing learners’ responses to role-playing foreign verbal interaction, language teachers need therefore to make a distinction between learners’ responses “to experiencing foreignness” and “the challenge of acting in front of an audience”. Both aspects of experiential learning contained in “the genre” of role-playing (ie: acting foreign norms) we have used in the module are likely to be destabilising for learners. This is, however, one aim we had hoped to achieve: destabilising

the learners' intimate sense of self through the temporary experience of having "to live foreignness" within the safe environment of the language classroom. How much learners enjoy and more importantly are willing to learn from "being culturally destabilized through foreign language learning" is a matter of individual response.

In category four it is obvious that learners appreciated the use of multi-media tasks for the exposure to real conversations they provided to them, including in particular, the illustration of French gestures.

We can assume that the fact no learners mentioned difficulty in performing the tasks shows that instructions given in the target language were sufficiently clear.

Transcriptions of the conversations gave learners the opportunity to fill in the gaps in their comprehension of the oral text. At an intermediate level, language learners need support in comprehension tasks.

Finally the advantage of role-playing in front of a computer clearly removed the anxiety of having to perform in front of other students.

## **Conclusion**

It is important to remember that the purpose of the module we have presented in this chapter aimed at exploring a new approach to teaching spoken language and culture at an *intermediate* level of language learning. It was, in this sense, a very first step in a new direction purposely limited in its endeavour. Our aim did not include the assessment of the module in terms of the impact it had on learners' acquisition of spoken language and cultural norms. This would constitute another research project in itself which we could not include in the scope of this thesis. Moreover we suggest that research on the *acquisition* of foreign verbal interaction through institutional language learning, to achieve valuable results, would have to

assess learners who attended a much longer course of study than the module we have presented aimed at offering.

Teaching culture in language use ought to start from day one as Kramsch suggested (1993) and needs to continue being taught at all stages of language learning if it is to achieve the ultimate goal of intercultural competency as discussed in chapter two.

From the learners' evaluation of the module, we can assume that our approach to teaching foreign verbal interaction has significantly improved learners' awareness of the nature of spoken language and especially its cultural components. At more advanced levels of language learning, more cultural norms could be introduced to learners through tasks such as the one we have described in the "Did you have a good week-end" activity. This would lead to more substantial learning of what it means to be an intercultural speaker.

One of the challenges in teaching intermediate learners foreign verbal interaction was to ensure that the course allowed for enough actual practice of the target language, which had to be balanced with the need to introduce a lot a new content (ie. seven components" as described in chapter two).

From a teaching point of view we have found the multimedia tasks the most integrative in nature as they allowed learners to access features of spoken language through visual, audio and written mediums. They also allowed learners *to notice* conversations in real context as they practiced their own comprehension or conversational skills.

We suggest that the use of multimedia is particularly adapted to the teaching of verbal interaction and culture as it offers the potential to integrate the use of all mediums of communication (ie. visual, audio, oral and written meduims) to present and practice new knowledge.

Multimedia however cannot fulfil all learners' needs. In the methodology



we have presented earlier it can be used effectively (but not exclusively) for the first three phases of the module, awareness-raising, exploration and production phases. It can not be used for the last but equally important feedback phase.

## *Conclusion*

Our research on the teaching of verbal interaction and culture, as presented in this thesis, has led us to reconsider the ontological parameters which we believe ought to be put under scrutiny in any inquiry into the teaching of spoken language. By ontological parameters we refer to the following labelling of entities:

- The nature of spoken language and its links to culture,
- Second language pedagogy and practice,
- Core concepts in second language and culture acquisition,
- The politics of teaching everyday talk.

In our conclusion, we will highlight the salient points of the outcomes of our research for each of the ontological parameters mentioned above.

### *The nature of spoken language and its links to culture,*

When Hymes (1972) proposed that to understand language in context one should start looking at context first, he had positioned language as being primarily a social and cultural phenomenon. His views were in sharp contrast to Chomsky's dominant theory at the time in which grammatical knowledge was seen as the key factor in language performance.

In fact Hymes (1972) had redefined language performance as encompassing both communicative as well as grammatical skills. A few decades later, Ochs, Schegoff and Thompson (1996) fully supported Hymes' views by asserting that the traditional distinction between grammar and context needed to be blurred since grammars were "deeply socio-cultural" in nature.

The recognition of the links between language and culture had a huge impact on language teaching. Viewing language and socio-cultural context



the expression, through language, of the different values a given society attach to the concepts of "self" and "other". It reflects both the ethos and worldview of a people. "World knowledge" is in fact culture specific and refers to what is generally conceived as more "contextual cultural knowledge" that is history, institutions, literature, arts etc... in the target language as well as knowledge of the cultural elements in the way a people lives everyday life events. This 'cultural' world knowledge is what has been commonly thought until now as being the boundaries of "culture teaching".

By spoken and written genres we mean culture as embedded in the general structure of text. For example culture as it is found in the way official or intimate letters are written in different countries, the type of information which ought to come first and last etc... An official speech, as a genre of oral text would also have culture in the way it has been structured.

In chapter two we have given a detailed description of what pragmatic norms and norms of interaction were as they tend to refer more to culture as it manifests in spoken language our main focus of interest in this thesis. In pragmatic norms, culture is visible in shorter units of texts such as speech acts (for example performance of greetings) where through norms of interaction culture is expressed more in the way units of speech such as openings and closings are organised within a conversation.

In grammar, lexicon, kinesics, prosody and pronunciation culture is also present interwoven into linguistic structures, words, syntax and non-verbal language.

By making visible the intangible cultural features of language, it becomes clear that language far from being separate from culture is in fact *the most important* part of culture. Language is used in all areas of life, it has an essential instrumental role in creating reality. Because culture is in language, when language creates reality, it creates with it a culture-specific reality. Teaching culture in language is in this sense about teaching a

different worldview.

One important aspect of culture in different language uses, of immediate relevance to language teachers, is that culture is not directly “visible” and “graspable” to be converted into tangible teaching content. It requires some work, some analysis to extract culture from language. We have suggested throughout this thesis that although some of this analytical work can be done by teachers and language learners during classroom activities or through fieldwork, it is advisable for language teachers to use as much as possible and where available research in discourse analysis, in particular cross-cultural research between the learners’ first and target languages. This will ensure that the teaching of culture in language does not run the risk of being purely anecdotal and sometimes simply mistaken. The notion of basing the teaching of culture in language different uses on research in discourse analysis acts as an equalizer between language teachers who are native-speakers of the language they teach and other teachers who are not natives of the target language. We have shown, (see chapter four) that native-speakers might be aware of cross-cultural differences between their first language and another language which they also practice but this does not mean that they are able to articulate those differences. To teach the cultural components of language use as described in chapter two, language teachers have to be able to articulate those differences, feeling the presence of culture “intuitively” in the way one speaks is not enough.

### *Second language pedagogy and practice*

The acknowledgment of culture as an integral part of all aspects of language use not only calls for a review of what ought to be the content of language classes, it also forces the review of the goals of language learning and implies the use of new language pedagogy, methodologies and teaching material

(Liddicoat & al 1997:18). We have explored those issues in depth in chapter three and four. Our main points are the following:

Teaching foreign verbal interaction as an expression of culture expands the commonly accepted boundaries of language teaching. "Communicative competence" becomes best understood as "Intercultural competence". The key implication teaching language as culture has for language pedagogy and actual practice is that culture in spoken language (and other forms of language expression) cannot solely be taught as new content which learners can automatically take in and reproduce faithfully. Firstly the aim of teaching foreign verbal interaction is not to make learners into parrots in the target culture. Secondly, even if attempted it could not give the desired results since learning foreign cultural modes of verbal and non-verbal communication implies assessing the foreign cultural norms and codes against ones' own cultural norms and codes. This comparative assessment between one's first language/culture and target language/culture is not an additive process but a dialectic one (Sankey & al 1997:117). In other words it is not enough to learn the different norms in the relevant languages, although this is a necessary starting point which language teachers ought not to neglect. The ultimate goal for language learners is to be able in time to create "a third place" for themselves between the two cultures (Kramsch 1993:236). This is what is meant by intercultural competence, the ability to become a happy mediator between two cultures.

Teaching verbal interaction as culture therefore has both instructional and educational aims. One aim cannot be overlooked in favor of the other for positive learning outcomes. This is an important point which requires language teachers to be vigilant in the way they conduct their classes on spoken language. The primary aim of language teaching must necessarily remain that of actually teaching *the target language*, this implies that learners be given the opportunity to practice and be sufficiently exposed to the language they are learning if they are to achieve a satisfactory level of

performance. When language teaching starts to include overt educational goals of the kind implied in the development of intercultural competence, the danger can be to overemphasise the analytical aspect of learning language as culture without enough emphasis on learning through practice. Language teachers must always bear in mind, as a guiding principle that it is through speaking a foreign language that one learns to speak it. This is why in our pedagogical approach (chapter 3) we have underlined the necessity to foster both conceptual *and* experiential tasks during class activities. In the same line of thoughts, although we have recognised the inevitable need of learners to use their first language especially with regard to more conceptual type of learning, it is essential that language teachers use and let/make learners use the target language during class times.

### *Core concepts in Second Language Acquisition*

In chapter three we have included an assessment of how SLA research can inform the teaching of verbal interaction and culture. We expanded the notion of SLA research to include research in second culture acquisition. This in itself was a statement that the acquisition of language must be understood as the acquisition of both language and culture as the two are in fact one.

Our key points regarding SLA research is that the majority of studies have centred so far around the acquisition of morphosyntax due to the strong influence in the field of the traditional Chomskyan's view that grammar is the driving force of language production. However, recent questionings of the validity of the traditional paradigm of SLA research have concluded that a purely cognitive view of second language acquisition is doomed to be limiting and that what is needed instead is "a holistic, bio-social form of SLA" which recognises language learners as being primarily active interactants in language production not to be equated to cognitive robots.

This view strongly endorses that language acquisition like language itself is highly variable and context dependent.

We have concluded, however, that despite its shortfalls, SLA research, as it stands now, still has something to offer language teachers, especially the notion that language learners produce an interlanguage as a language processing device and that this interlanguage in turn follows natural stages of acquisition. Those stages of acquisition impose some restrictions on language teaching. We have endorsed the view that language teaching which follows the natural "cognitive" stages of second language acquisition has a better chance of producing positive outcomes than a teaching approach which does not do so. The problem however is that SLA research which looks into stages of acquisition in specific languages is scarce hence for most language teachers, *general principles* only of SLA core theories can *inform* language teachers rather than be directly applicable in language courses.

When we turned to assessing research in the acquisition of culture we have found the following summarized information highly relevant to teaching verbal interaction and culture.

Brown's (1980:132:133) identification of four phases in the acquisition of culture - which he calls "acculturation" - represents the prototype of the most commonly acknowledged phases of culture acquisition. There are firstly *a period of excitement and euphoria*, followed by *culture shock* then *culture stress* and finally *assimilation or adaptation*. We have qualified the last phase as being more accurately referred to as "finding one's own voice in a foreign language (Kramsch 1993:12).

Other more recent inquiries into the acquisition of culture in a second language have looked into what constitutes "pragmatic competence" (for example: Kasper & Schmidt 1996, Schmidt 1983, Ellis 1992 and Sawyer 1992). The conclusions are that there is no order of acquisition for what has been coined Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP). Another relevant piece of



information for language teachers is that learners need to both develop a repertoire of pre-patterned routines for specific functions in the target language and they also need to understand and create new utterances to be able to both decode and express meaning outside the conventional norms. This implies that language teachers can help learners acquire culture through the teaching of pre-patterned routines (ie. formulaic speech) which carry a high cultural content.

Kramsch (1996) added to the understanding of culture acquisition with her notion of "metaphorization". Language learners, when exposed to a cultural difference between L1 and L2 would produce "metaphors" of the target culture in order to understand the message. This "metaphorization" concept can be interpreted as being "an inter/cross-cultural processing device".

Knowing how the cultural elements of language are acquired is important for language teachers. It can help them recognise what learners do in their efforts to learn and acquire culture as expressed in language.

Although research on the acquisition of a second culture is so far promising, more needs to be done to gain a better understanding of how language teachers can best help learners achieve the ultimate goal of learning verbal interaction as the expression of culture. For this we need to know more about how an intercultural space is created by learners (Liddicoat & al 1997:19)

### *The politics of teaching everyday talk*

In chapter one, our inquiry into the treatment of spoken skills throughout the history of language teaching from 5000 years ago clearly showed that the teaching of spoken language as *the language a people speaks in every day life* has always tended to be undervalued. We have suggested that this has been (and still is so) because everyday speech was and is perceived as a deprived version of written language. Moreover, the highly valuable

cultural content embedded in verbal interaction as we have described it in chapter two was never “seen” or looked for, therefore it could not be acknowledged or valued.

Historically the purpose of teaching foreign languages has been to give language learners access to the high realms of culture (mainly literary works) in the target language. High (as in valuable) cultural content and written language were in this sense closely related. Later the notion of valuable cultural content as part of (but not integrated in) language courses was extended to what we have defined earlier as “cultural world knowledge” often taught in the all encompassing “cultural studies” courses (ie. history, institutions etc...).

Spoken language was not seen until recently as a carrier of valuable cultural content. Both the perception of spoken language as a deprived form of language and as “cultureless” explains why it has never received in the past or today the attention it deserves in instructional settings. In the current political environment of language teaching where the dominant claim is that foreign language learning should produce *fluent speakers* in the target language who can serve as *mediators of cultures* at the service of international trade, the undervaluing of the teaching of spoken language is in a way like “cutting our own throats”. Lo Bianco (1987) made a similar point when he quoted from a survey that:

*University language departments generally emphasise reading and written skills and the study of literature, rather than extensive development of oral fluency or the development of registers relevant for bussiness or international relations (Lo Bianco 1987: 30 ).*

The call for the recognition of the value of expanding the teaching of spoken language does not have to be exclusively construed in terms of utilitarian,

vocational gains. Liddicoat & al (1997:25) have argued that language programs which use a communicative methodology where language and socio-cultural context are integrated produce various learning outcomes, both vocational and *personal* in nature. One of the most obvious and more personal outcomes of learning foreign verbal interaction as presented in this thesis is that it gives learners the skills of being able to interpret and adapt to cultural differences, or, as Jurasek (1995) noted, it teaches learners how to reconstruct faithfully other people's world views. Moreover these "skills in managing interculturality" are transferrable to other situations in which cultural relativity is a key factor (Coste 1995).

The academic legitimacy of teaching spoken language as valuable cultural and educational content will take time to become fully recognized. When Kramsch (1995:12) in an analysis of the academic discourse of the language teaching community, asked "What kind of input is academically legitimate?", she suggested that spoken language was still given low status because it was much less controllable than academic literacy. We have argued that the intangible and variables features of spoken language are what makes spoken language not so controllable.

If we start *seeing* spoken language for what it is, variable complex and deeply embedded in rich socio-cultural context, this shift in perception automatically calls for radical changes in the way we teach language. We have endorsed Kramsch 's view (1995:ix) that it is when we start "seeing things differently" that we find "increased opportunities for personal and professional growth".

Once language teachers have taken on board, on a conceptual level at least, the benefits of teaching foreign verbal interaction and culture and become willing to change their practice to lead learners towards intercultural competence, they run the risk of being overwhelmed by the "ampleur" of

the task.

We have strongly stated that language teachers should not be held solely responsible for the production of future generations of intercultural speakers. Intercultural competence is a far-ranging concept which needs to be realized through a cross-cultural approach to studying many other subjects than strictly “foreign language study”. For example cross-cultural approaches to the study of history, philosophy or art can support a learner’s deconstruction of a monocultural worldview, the key factor in achieving intercultural competence.

The role of language teachers in promoting intercultural competence is undoubtedly crucial, as it is through studying a foreign language that learners are given the chance to work actively and with support on deconstructing the monocultural worldview they might have. Language teachers *can start* the long term goal of creating intercultural competence by raising-awareness of the socio- cultural embedment of language use. The most comforting thought is that teachers do not have to wait until language learners have reached a high of language performance to promote intercultural communicative skills in the language classroom. They can start from day one as it is as soon as learners utter their first words in the target language that they are also engaging into the “other” culture.

### *Final remarks*

To teach foreign verbal interaction and culture language teachers need to review their concept of the nature of spoken language and learn in what ways everyday speech is imbued with culture. They also have to adopt a new pedagogical approach which promotes the development of intercultural competence. They will have to develop new teaching material which is suited for the new content they have to introduce in spoken language

classes. Finally as the teaching of everyday speech might not be readily perceived as legitimate academic content in the language teaching community, they might also take on, as part of their endeavour the work of helping others shift their views of what teaching spoken language really means and how much it has to offer. The effort is worthwhile as, Liddicoat & al (1997:19) have audaciously stated "the paradigm shift which language teaching currently faces promises to be as wide ranging as was the shift to communicative language teaching".

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