

Exploring the creation of a digital resource to support the learning of undergraduate students of L2 French and L3 Spanish

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of Nottingham Trent University for the
Professional Doctorate in Education

Ronan Fitzsimons

April 2022

Copyright Statement

This work is the intellectual property of the author, Ronan Fitzsimons. You may copy up to 5% of this work for private study, or personal, non-commercial research. Any re-use of the information contained within this document should be fully referenced, quoting the author, title, university, degree level and pagination. Queries or requests for any other use, or for information if a more substantial copy is required, should be directed to the owner of the intellectual property rights.

Abstract

The research presented in this thesis focuses on the development of a bespoke online resource to support the learning of undergraduate students with English as their native language (L1), studying French as their first foreign language (L2) and Spanish as their second (L3). It explores the experiences of both staff and student members of a university department of Modern Languages, and contextualises the data by drawing upon theories of cross-linguistic influence (CLI) and metalinguistic awareness (MA). Simultaneously, this collaboration is analysed in the context of the development of a language-learning community, to determine whether it can be deemed the endeavour of a Community of Practice (Wenger, 1998).

The research uses an Action Research approach, employing a sequence of interviews and focus groups to generate data relating to linguistic aspects of L2 French and L3 Spanish language-learning, as well as pedagogical and practical considerations in the design of the resource. The emerging data are scrutinised through thematic analysis. The prototype e-learning resource is piloted by student participants, who subsequently engage in a debriefing process to evaluate its effectiveness.

The evidence confirms that students of L2 French and L3 Spanish felt the benefit of working with a bespoke resource addressing their specific learning experiences and needs. They demonstrated MA in their engagement with materials focusing on areas identified as potential sources of CLI. There was also evidence of a heightened sense of community identity in this enterprise, which the study concludes as being an example of a collectivity of practice (Lindkvist, 2005).

The project proposes a living educational theory, which is articulated before and after the study and evolves as a result of the research conducted. The theory stresses the appropriateness of collaborative endeavour in the context of the study, and contends in the conclusion that through collective activity in a language-learning domain, a sharing of ideas and understanding can exist and be developed.

In its focus on developing an online learning resource to support the specific audience of English L1 students learning L2 French and L3 Spanish, and achieving this by harnessing a language-learning community to pinpoint lived and living experiences of CLI and MA, this study addresses a gap in professional practice. Its findings are presented both as a contribution to the teaching and learning of Modern Languages, and as a stimulus for further research and development in the field of bespoke resource design for students simultaneously engaging with L2 and L3 studies. The innovative approach, embracing sequenced input from staff and students and drawing on both learning experiences and relevant theories, offers transferability to different language combinations, and to other language-learning settings across the HE sector.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, thank you to my supervisors, Dr Anne O’Grady and Dr Luran Doak, for their expertise, support, encouragement and patience. I am grateful also to Dr Helen Boulton, for her supervisory input at the start of the course.

I acknowledge, with gratitude, the support provided by the SAAH.

I would like to record my thanks to the following people, who answered my questions or provided assistance, encouragement or support in a variety of ways at different points in the project: Verity Aiken, Ben Argyle-Ross, Hannah Baker, Angela Brown, Donna Chambers, Jimmy Connington, Clara del Río, Sue Dymoke, James Ferry, Liz Hodson, Neil Hughes, David Jeckells, Lizz Jones, Maria Maranci, Kieran McLeish, Freddie Peppiatt, Karen Randell, Chris Rolph, Lucy Savell-Congreve, Agathe Zobenbuller.

Above all, my thanks to Shell for her love, support and belief in me.

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my Mam and Dad, who were passionate about the importance of education – *Siobhán agus Anraí, go raibh maith agaibh.*

Contents

	Page
Copyright Statement	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Glossary of Language-learning Terms Used in This Thesis	viii
List of Figures	ix
Chapter 1: Introduction	
1.1 Overview of the Research Project	1
1.2 Professional Context: The Personal and Institutional Dimension	2
1.3 Professional Context: The National Language-Learning Landscape	4
1.4 Living Educational Theory	5
1.5 Summary and Road Map	7
Chapter 2: Literature Review	
2.1 Introduction	8
2.2 The Role of Student Motivation in Developing an E-learning Resource ...	9
2.3 The Importance of Personalisation in the Design of an E-learning Resource	12
2.4 Pedagogy and E-learning	14
2.5 Identifying a Platform to Pilot and Host the E-learning Resource	15
2.6 Design Features for the E-learning Resource	17
2.6.1 Repeatability of Tasks	17
2.6.2 Should Activities be Timed?	19
2.6.3 Evaluation and Feedback	20
2.7 Cross-linguistic Influence (CLI)	22
2.8 Metalinguistic Awareness (MA)	25
2.9 The Development of a Learning Community: a Community of Practice? .	28
2.10 Research Questions	34
Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework	
3.1 Introduction	36
3.2 The Research Problem	36
3.3 Philosophical Stance	37
3.4 The Development of a Learning Community	40
3.4.1 The Language-learning Community within an HE Institution	40
3.4.2 The Community of Practice (CoP)	41
3.5 Research Approach: Action Research	43
3.6 Conclusion	45
Chapter 4: Research Methodology	
4.1 Introduction	46
4.2 Positionality: The Insider-Researcher	46

4.3	Access, Sampling and Ethics	48
4.3.1	Access	49
4.3.2	Sampling	49
4.3.3	Ethics, Power and Bias	52
4.4	Piloting a Focus Group	54
4.5	Research Methods	56
4.5.1	Focus Groups	56
4.5.2	Interviews	61
4.5.3	Analysis of Data (Thematic Analysis)	62
4.5.3.1	Tagging and Coding to Establish Themes	64
4.6	The Implementation of an Action Research Project	67
4.7	Summary	69
Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion		
5.1	Introduction	71
5.2	Pedagogical Aspects Relating to the Development of a Bespoke E-learning Resource	72
5.2.1	The Identification of Grammatical Aspects Requiring Pedagogical Consideration	72
5.2.2	Pedagogical Aspects in the Design of a Bespoke E-learning Resource	74
5.3	Metalinguistic Awareness	82
5.4	The Development of a Learning Community	93
5.5	Summary	95
Chapter 6: Conclusions		
6.1	Introduction	97
6.2	Research Questions	98
6.3	Student Motivation	104
6.4	Living Educational Theory (LET)	107
6.5	Contribution to Professional Practice	109
6.6	Limitations of This Research	110
6.7	Conclusions and Recommendations	113
References		116
Appendices		129

Glossary of Language-learning Terms Used in This Thesis

Modern Languages (ML): In an educational context in Anglophone countries, this term refers to languages in contemporary use that are commonly studied at primary, secondary and tertiary level, excluding English. At undergraduate level in the United Kingdom (UK), the most commonly studied ML, in descending order of popularity, are French, Spanish and German (Bowler, 2020).

Romance Languages (RL): ‘The Romance languages [...] share a common source: their development in each case may be traced back to Latin’ (Harris and Vincent, 1988: 1). At undergraduate level in the UK, the most commonly studied RL, in descending order of popularity, are French, Spanish and Italian (Bowler, 2020).

Ab initio: In the context of ML at undergraduate level in the UK, ‘ab initio’ (Latin: ‘from the beginning’) relates to a language taken by a student with no prior knowledge of it.

Language-learning Community: The term is used in this thesis to refer to the context in which research involving both staff and students was conducted, within a UK HEI’s department of Modern Languages. It is further contextualised in a discussion of Wenger’s (1998) work on the development of communities within an organisation.

Cross-linguistic Influence (CLI): ‘An important phenomenon in second language acquisition studies having to do with the way language systems interact in the learner’s mind’ (Sharwood Smith, 1996: 71).

Metalinguistic (or Metalingual) Awareness (MA): ‘the ability to distance oneself from the content of speech in order to reflect upon and manipulate the structure of language’ (Altman et al., 2018: 43).

Embeddedness: I use this noun to refer to the extent to which the characteristics of one foreign language are embedded deeply in the brain of a student, causing potential difficulties or confusions in the learning of a further language.

List of Figures

Figure	Details	Page
1	Group types within an organisation (adapted from Wenger and Snyder, 2000: 142).	32
2	Situation of the French L2 / Spanish L3 student group within their ML cohort	33
3	Numerical detail of sampling in the recruitment of student participants	50
4	Example of a primary field note from FG1, with post-event comments added	83

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Overview of the Research Project

Studying two Modern Languages (ML) at undergraduate level can be a challenging endeavour, not only in terms of mastering the idiosyncrasies of the languages themselves, but also given the precarious predicament of ML in UK Higher Education Institutions (HEI), with declining numbers of ML departments in existence and offering degree-level study (Polisca et al., 2019).

Recent research on the experience of learning ML has ranged from an examination of the discipline-specific difficulties prevalent in the Brexit era in the UK (Broady, 2020; Copland and McPake, 2021) through studies of student motivation for studying ML (Bower, 2019) to work on the effectiveness of blended learning (BL) models (McCarthy, 2016; Hughes, Lo and Xu, 2017) and the importance of the provision of flexible online learning, as highlighted by the Covid-19 pandemic (Coman et al., 2020).

It is clear from research in the field of ML that there are many challenges to studying languages at university level in the UK, and with the shrinking of ML provision, it is important to ensure that the undergraduate learning experience is engaging and innovative.

In this context, and having an academic interest in the reality of learning two ML simultaneously at undergraduate level, I sought to conduct an action research (AR) project to explore whether the development of a bespoke digital resource to support students studying a specific ML combination could enhance their language-learning experience. My selection of an AR approach is discussed in Chapter 3.

The central problem identified and addressed in the thesis relates to the learning experience of UK undergraduates with English as their first language (L1) studying post-A Level French as their first foreign language (L2) alongside ab initio Spanish as their second (L3). I explored theories of cross-linguistic influence (CLI) and metalinguistic awareness (MA) to investigate

the effects of these concepts on students' learning. My approach to addressing the research problem harnessed the language-learning community at a UK HEI – both students and lecturers – in a dialogic, participatory enterprise. Data were collected via focus groups and interviews and scrutinised through thematic analysis.

The findings from this research provide evidence of how this collective venture has contributed to the piloting, evaluation and refinement of a tangible outcome: a prototype digital resource to enhance the language production of students of L2 French and L3 Spanish. I also demonstrate the extent to which this collaboration may be described as constituting the endeavour of a Community of Practice (CoP) (Wenger, 1998).

My research, with the involvement of staff and students in the development of the resource, is synthesised in a living educational theory (LET), described in section 1.4 and discussed further in section 6.4.

1.2 Professional Context: The Personal and Institutional Dimension

Throughout my career as a university lecturer in ML, I have worked exclusively in the Romance Languages (RL) family, which 'share a common source: their development in each case may be traced back to Latin' (Harris and Vincent, 1988: 1). My main languages are Spanish (which I teach) and Catalan, but my earlier learning of French, Portuguese and Italian gave me an awareness of the difficulty of identifying and processing both the similarities and the differences between pairs of RL. This interest in the challenges of multilingualism has provided a focus for my research activity.

The roots of my Professional Doctorate in Education, of which this thesis constitutes the culmination, lie in a combination of my linguistic inquisitiveness, my passion for language-related problem-solving and my vocation to offer effective academic support to students.

My university teaching has focused on students' *written* language, via the development of their Spanish grammar, vocabulary and expression. This has always been logical, as in each of

my roles, I have ‘team-taught’ language modules with a Spanish native speaker, whose priority was to work more closely on students’ oral and aural skills. In my first full-time post, I began to notice quirks in the written Spanish production of some students, and pondered whether another foreign language they had learned might be responsible for certain errors. At that stage, the matter was simply a hunch, but I became intrigued by the possible unconscious interaction between two foreign languages in a learner’s mind, and wondered whether any research had been undertaken into this aspect of language-learning.

I discussed the concept with colleagues teaching French and Italian. These discussions sought to identify examples of good and poor practice in students’ foreign-language written production, and to suggest possible influences from elsewhere in the RL family. It appeared that there were examples, in students’ writing, of successful transfer from language A to language B, but also incidences of language B seeming to be hampered by an over-reliance on language A. This dichotomy between the positive and the negative led me to explore what I came to know as cross-linguistic influence (CLI) and metalinguistic awareness (MA).

Reviewing the available literature, it became apparent to me that there was a gap in professional practice: in the literature I scrutinised, I could find no focus on the specific issue of how CLI and MA can affect the learning experience of students of L2 French and L3 Spanish and how any problems may be tackled. To address this, I decided to undertake a systematic study of some of the structural and lexical differences and similarities between French and Spanish, and to identify a means of involving both colleagues and students in the development of a prototype learning resource to support L2/L3 undergraduate learners.

The principal objective was to provide a helpful service to my students, allowing them to be more confident in identifying areas in which two languages work similarly or identically, and other aspects in which there are considerable differences in structure between the two. The research would also serve to enhance my institutional profile and professional standing. At the same time, it was clear in my mind that such a resource would potentially be useful in the language-learning community beyond the HEI where I developed it, and that the collaborative approach I proposed would constitute an example of innovative professional practice.

1.3 Professional Context: The National Language-Learning Landscape

Recent research suggests that the learning of ML in the United Kingdom is in a perilous state. In broad societal terms, Bowler (2020) notes that only 32% of British people aged 16-30 express confidence in reading and writing in a foreign language, compared to an average of 89% across EU countries.

Whilst the long-term effects on the UK of the country's departure from the European Union cannot yet be measured, the evidence from recent surveys on language-learning under the shadow of Brexit is far from encouraging. Although there are grounds for cautious optimism for younger children in the ML context (e.g. the Scottish 1+2 Languages initiative, implemented in 2021), nation-specific reports relating to ML study in England (Collen, 2021a), Northern Ireland (Collen, 2021b), Scotland (Doughty, 2019) and Wales (Collen et al., 2021) all confirm decreases in numbers of pupils studying a modern language beyond the age of 14.

A feature common to the secondary curricula of the four UK nations is that children over 14 are not *required* to learn any ML, but may *opt* to do so. This non-statutory status mainly affects the furthering of ML traditionally studied in UK schools such as French, German or Spanish, but also hinders the development potential for languages deemed desirable for applicability to global business, such as Arabic or Mandarin (CBI/Pearson, 2018). Indeed, Collen (2021a) reports concern at a dramatic drop in language study at Key Stage 4 (age 15-16) and post-16 level in the category of Other Foreign Languages (i.e. other than French, German, Irish, Spanish and Welsh). Such data clearly augur badly for subsequent progression to ML programmes at HE level.

In this challenging context, ML departments in British universities are faced with a smaller pool of prospective students, and many such departments have closed in recent years. Polisca et al. (2019) highlight the continuing fall in the number of UK universities offering languages as degree subjects: from 69 in 2018 to 62 in 2019. This compares with the figure of 93 universities in 1998, reported by Bawden (2013).

Universities are therefore under pressure not only to recruit students to language degrees, but to find attractive ways of enhancing their students' learning experience. Lecturers in ML are no longer simply creators and deliverers of language-learning materials, but are now 'designers of learning experiences for their students, which they might do independently or in collaboration with colleagues [...] and even students themselves' (Pegrum, 2019: 45).

One of the features of the ML department in which this study was conducted is the ability for a student beginning a Joint Honours undergraduate degree to study a language of which they have no prior knowledge. This feature, most commonly taken in a combination of post-A-Level-entry French and ab initio Spanish, has proved to be a popular and appealing choice, and has provided the starting point for this project.

It would be an overstatement to assert that the language-learning panorama described above can be significantly alleviated by the outcomes of a small-scale project such as this, but I view it as key to my professional activity to seek to enhance the learning experience of the HEI's students of L2 French and L3 Spanish, and at the same time to make a valuable contribution to sector-wide professional practice, knowledge and understanding.

1.4 Living Educational Theory

In addition to creating a resource to aid students' language-learning, this project simultaneously aimed to develop a living educational theory (LET). A LET is defined by Ghaye (2011: 107) as an 'educational theory based on educational practice as lived and experienced by teachers themselves'. In this definition, I recognise clearly my professional practice as that of a 'hands-on', resourceful educator for whom the sharing of knowledge and experience is key. McNiff (2007: 308) discusses further the presentation of LETs, noting that 'by offering these theories of practice, [action researchers] are able to show how they hold themselves accountable for what they are doing and why they are doing it'.

Whitehead (1989: 47) notes that a LET is 'a dynamic and living form whose content changes with the developing public conversations of those involved in its creation'. The emphasis on

collaborative effort and communication is central to my approach, which follows an AR cycle of planning, action, evaluation and reflection. It is evident that my LET will necessarily change over time in the light of this shared reflection and continued application and evaluation (Elliott, 2009).

At the start of this study, my LET was couched in general terms, based around three core beliefs:

- (a) that it is useful, and good practice, to develop online resources to support the learning of L1 English speakers who have learned L2 French followed by L3 Spanish, taking account of issues of CLI and MA;
- (b) that members of a language-learning community can potentially work together in the development of a digital tool for the students described above;
- (c) that through collaborative activity in a language-learning domain, a sharing of ideas and understanding can take place.

My LET is built on the cultivation of a sense of community among learners of RL, whereby members contribute language-learning experiences to inform and shape new meaning. However, in addition to these participants having *lived* these experiences, more importantly they are also *living* a current language-learning process, and it is this *living* aspect of the framework that gives vibrancy and flexibility to the theory.

I do not think of the theory as necessarily granting the ability to *overcome* linguistic problems, but rather as a means of shedding light on a series of learning situations, triggering discussion among participants and the provision of a platform to *understand* and *manage* the issues in question. This understanding and management has the potential to be disseminated and embraced across the ML-learning community.

1.5 Summary and Road Map

In this opening chapter I have outlined my rationale for this project and discussed my professional background and motivations.

In Chapter 2, I provide a discussion of the literature I reviewed in a number of areas relevant to the development of this thesis. Chapter 3 describes the conceptual framework around which the project has been based, detailing my philosophical stance, the development of a learning community and my choice of AR as a research approach. This leads on to Chapter 4, where I discuss my positionality, choice of methodology and the methods I selected to implement the research. In Chapter 5 I discuss the findings of the project, before providing conclusions in Chapter 6.

In detailing the planning, implementation and findings of the research, this thesis also discusses the developmental impact the project has had on me and the benefit it has delivered to undergraduate participants. More broadly, the project also examines the potential value of my research to the wider language-learning community, as an example of innovative professional practice.

The professional focus of this project has provided an opportunity for me to look closely at myself and my professional activity as a linguist and an educator. In particular, it has allowed me to identify and explore problems existing in my academic environment, and to address them through an AR approach.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1, I stated that the central outcome of this project was a prototype e-learning resource, developed specifically to support the language-learning experience of undergraduate students of L2 French and L3 Spanish.

In this chapter I discuss a number of concepts pertinent to the development of this resource, through a review of relevant available literature. In approaching this review, I considered a series of key areas I had drawn up when starting to plan the project, each of which is discussed in the literature review:

1. The role of student **motivation** – I wanted to examine discussions of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in engaging with e-learning resources, and how motivation works on both individual and collective levels.
2. The importance of **personalising** a digital resource, seeking to ensure that tasks and activities are tailored to users' learning preferences.
3. What **pedagogical** factors would need to be considered in developing a digital resource?
4. The selection of a **platform** to host the resource, that offers user-friendly functionality.
5. Specific **design features** of the resource, principally issues potentially affecting a user's engagement and experience, such as the repeatability, timing and evaluation of tasks, and the importance and nature of feedback.
6. Ensuring that the linguistic material featuring in the resource is appropriate in highlighting **cross-linguistic influence** (CLI).
7. Exploring how the research community has examined **metalinguistic awareness** (MA), to determine whether my research could contribute to the existing knowledge base.

8. Given my interest in working collaboratively with a language-learning **community**, is there evidence of any previous projects with similar characteristics? What constitutes a Community of Practice (CoP) and could this be applicable here?

After a review of the available literature in each of these areas, the chapter concludes with a set of emerging research questions.

2.2 The Role of Student Motivation in Developing an E-learning Resource

Before discussing motivation specifically in the context of developing a digital resource, it is worth looking briefly at what motivates a student to learn a foreign language. Gardner (1985: 10) refers to L2 motivation as ‘the extent to which an individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity’. This is an interesting definition, in that it embraces both the aspiration felt at the start of the process and the sense of joy experienced subsequently. Dörnyei (1998: 117) discusses the protracted nature of motivation, noting that it ‘provides the primary impetus to initiate learning the L2 and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process’. This sense of a sustained process led me to consider motivation among my own students.

The groups of students identified to participate in this project (see section 4.3.2, Sampling) had, by definition, studied a foreign language at school and opted to continue the process as undergraduates. I wanted to discover more about what might motivate a learner to read ML at university: in other words, and pertinently to this project, what mindsets might the users of the planned resource have?

Lanvers (2017: 522) lists the most commonly identified reasons why a student with an ‘A’ Level or equivalent in a modern language might choose *not* to continue with this language at university:

a climate of negativity regarding students’ language skills, lack of interest in target language country and culture, lack of practice opportunities, negative

school experience, and uncertainty about career paths with a modern languages degree.

Contrary to this, Stolte (2015) discusses evidence of a sense of achievement felt by students who had mastered a foreign language, and cites the example of learners of German deriving strong motivation from studying something relatively uncommon and considered difficult. Oakes (2013) notes the sense among student participants that they were defying the widely held perception of the British as a monoglot society, and that they were deliberately adopting an international worldview. This tallies with views I had heard repeatedly in informal discussions with my students, so I was eager to learn the views of participants in the current project.

The student participants in this study were all in their early 20s and had appeared highly motivated in their degree studies thus far. As part of the project, I wanted to explore how their language-learning motivation might correlate to willingness to engage with a new form of tailored technology. We live in a technologically advanced age, in which young people are generally enthusiastic and motivated in their engagement with digital devices; they are competent and fluent in their digital literacy (Dudeney, Hockly and Pegrum, 2013). Beetham and Oliver (2010: 157) discuss the changing face of literacies and note that digital literacy is 'a complex but highly relevant term for exploring learners' experiences of learning, and the directions in which learning may evolve in the near future'. Gathering and discussing students' experiences of language-learning, including how they have done so using technology, plays an important part in this project, and I wished to learn more about the link between students' *motivation* for e-learning and their resultant *experience* of it.

Motivation within an individual or a group of students can be identified and illustrated in various ways. Norton (2013) highlights the appropriateness of a learner developing a strong emotional connection with new learning material, whereas Hockly and Dudeney (2014: 21) note that 'unless the [...] activity is bringing some clear benefit to the students, we are wasting our time.' In my HE teaching experience, I have found that one of the areas of language-learning that most motivates students is translation, where they can see immediate evidence of success in mediating between two languages. Huertas Barros (2011) discusses heightened

motivation among students working in a collaborative online environment in a translation group setting, as well as additional benefits such as increased productivity and satisfaction derived from teamwork and socialisation.

For students to experience this type of success and satisfaction, it is vital that their tutor has understood their motivation and language-learning preferences and been instrumental in developing appropriate resources. In an analysis of the motivation of online language learners, Ushida (2005) concludes that a tutor's involvement is central to the success of an e-learning experience. I noted this, but would introduce the caveat that motivation is primarily an individual concept, and it is doubtful that identical feelings and levels of motivation would be experienced across my group of students. However, I did extract from Ushida's findings the importance of my reassuring presence in working alongside the students in developing a resource and closely monitoring its effectiveness and user-friendliness.

The distinction between intrinsic motivation (the impetus within an individual to succeed in a task, rooted in the perceived personal benefits of doing so) and extrinsic motivation (driven by an externally imposed reward or another stimulus) is discussed by Tranquillo and Stecker (2016). Busse and Williams (2010) conclude that the strongest motivational factor in language-learning is the achievement of proficiency in that language, regardless of any influence exerted by impending qualifications. Coleman and Furnborough (2010) report evidence of intrinsic motivation in a distance Spanish course, with participants enjoying the language-learning experience for its own sake. However, the possible presence of extrinsic motivation cannot be discounted in the current project. Like other HEIs, the university within which this study is located measures and publishes outputs via a range of metrics in a culture of performativity (Thiel, 2019). Current and prospective students can therefore harbour a nervousness of being deemed to have performed poorly, and a fear of not gaining the necessary grades to progress to the next stage of their career. This was something I deemed worthy of focus in my discussions with participants.

I considered it highly relevant to look closely at the levels of motivation of the student participants in this project – both individually and collectively – to be part of a process of developing a digital resource. The project was predicated on the objective of a peer

community of learners working in a spirit of collective endeavour and intrinsic motivation, but it is important to acknowledge that the extrinsic pressures within a university setting, as exemplified above, are inevitable.

The motivation of participants was therefore a factor for me to contemplate in planning this project, particularly as there was such heavy reliance on participant engagement in a context of collaborative learning.

2.3 The Importance of Personalisation in the Design of an E-learning Resource

Certain characteristics are deemed important when planning the design of a digital learning resource. Such a resource must be both instructive and user-friendly, but also aligned closely to both the language-learning experiences and the pedagogical needs of the users (Rovai, 2004).

Cakula and Sedleniece (2013: 114) identify a theoretical framework comprising four blocks in the design of a personalised e-learning system: 'student personality, knowledge level, course content and technologies'. This approach was of use to me in thinking about how the individuality of a learner and their language-learning experiences could influence the resource I was designing and what technology I could use to implement it.

Littlejohn and Pegler (2007) favour the provision of e-learning materials in the form of tasks, each of which can form part of an overarching package but, importantly, can also work as a standalone unit into which users can dip according to their preferences. Their view is that the separation of materials into small, manageable chunks works efficiently in making the learning experience more personal. The ability for users to scroll through a menu of e-learning tasks, depending on their specific needs or the precise area of language they wish to consolidate, is considered by Littlejohn and Pegler to be vital. Discussing digital literacy and learners' expectations, Mishan (2010) also champions the provision of standalone tasks, as well as supporting the use of these activities to pursue individual goals or satisfy the desire to steer learning in a specific direction or to follow a particular sequence. I found this approach

persuasive for adoption in my own resource, in that it provides the flexibility for students to focus on whichever aspect of their language-learning requires attention at a particular time.

Such personalised provision in e-learning can also be taken further. The increased prominence of formative analytics in e-learning (Sharples et al., 2016) has made it commonplace for learners' performance and preferences to be recorded by the platform they are using, and for targeted support, suggestions and recommendations to be made automatically. In other words, it is possible to use technology to recognise, store and weave into subsequent interactions the learning experiences, prior performance and updated needs of users, offering tailored tasks and support (Kukulska-Hulme and Traxler, 2007). My feeling is that this is something to be borne in mind for subsequent, more refined iterations of my resource, beyond the prototype version developed in the current project.

Summarising the relevance and appropriateness of task-based e-learning provision, McCarten and Sandford (2016: 205) note that tasks should be 'engaging, varied, clear, reliable and accurate in content, well-paced and pitched at the right level'. This is consistent with my own philosophy in my professional practice: I aim to provide targeted, well supported solutions to specific groups of learners, and to do so in a way that maximises the personalisation of their learning experience. In this project, the additional dimension is the collaborative approach I have taken to develop the resource, whereby the design, piloting and finessing of its tasks are undertaken with the active involvement of the eventual users.

My review of the literature on personalisation was helpful in focusing my mind on the characteristics of the group of students at the centre of this project. Whilst, for practical reasons, it would be unfeasible to develop a system in this context that catered fully to the demands of each individual student, I was persuaded of the importance of accommodating the learning experiences and preferences of the target group. These factors would be determined and addressed through the collaborative approach discussed above.

2.4 Pedagogy and E-learning

Blake (2008) notes that pedagogical planning and technology choices must align with users' beliefs and understanding of how a foreign language is learned. This is echoed in McCarthy's (2016: 3) assertion that 'we need to understand, insofar as we can, the complexities of how people acquire second and foreign languages.' This interplay between the human language-learning experience and the technological choices to be made in planning a resource led me to look closely at the pedagogical aspects of e-learning.

The term 'e-learning' is defined by Sangrà et al. (2012: 152) as an approach to learning and teaching:

based on the use of electronic media and devices as tools for improving access to training, communication and interaction and [to facilitate] the adoption of new ways of understanding and developing learning.

E-learning is proven to be highly appropriate in learning ML, with applications ranging from blended learning pedagogies (McCarthy, 2016; Hughes, Lo and Xu, 2017) to intuitive tutor-regulated or student-regulated mobile learning uses (Pegrum, 2014; Hockly and Dudeney, 2014). Identifying a suitable, user-friendly style of technology is vital in e-learning design.

The first learning style I explored as a possible means of accommodating my resource was blended learning (BL), defined by Graham et al. (2012: 4) as 'the combination of traditional face-to-face and technology-mediated instruction.' The pedagogical arguments in support of BL in language-learning contexts are persuasive, both for the flexibility this approach can bring to encouraging consolidatory learning away from the classroom (Johnson and Marsh, 2014), and in terms of student motivation (Leakey and Ranchoux, 2006). Courses using BL as a mode of delivery, such as that described by Hughes, Lo and Xu (2017), have yielded high levels of satisfaction among participants. By definition, however, BL must associate a programme of in-class study with a bespoke set of technology-based activities that will reinforce and enhance it. The HEI in which this project is located did not, before and during the scheduled fieldwork period, offer formal provision in its ML syllabus for a BL approach (although some

ad hoc arrangements were made in 2020 to amend teaching styles during the lockdowns occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic). I therefore had to reject BL as a learning style for the implementation of my resource. Nevertheless, the BL literature I reviewed provided evidence of pedagogical good practice to inform the development of a digital resource for my specific group of learners. In particular, I took careful note of Allum's (2013) focus on the link in BL design between foreign-language acquisition and the nature of the interaction between human and computer.

Paramount in planning a digital resource in this project was for the experience provided to be flexible. The versatility of mobile learning (m-learning), and in particular mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), whereby students can choose when and where they engage with digital language-learning materials (Dudeney and Hockly, 2016), is persuasive as a format for the development of any such resource. I wanted to use a pedagogical approach that would offer the resource's users complete flexibility as to the location and the timing of their interaction, as well as control over the time spent engaging with the tasks. Such flexibility is advocated by Sönmez et al. (2018) and by Johnson and Marsh (2014), who support allowing learners to engage with resources in a temporal and spatial environment that best fits their individual needs.

The appropriateness to my resource design of m-learning led me to think carefully about how the prototype resource might be piloted and implemented. Students' access to the resource would need to be flexible: as well as being available via computers located on campus, the materials would have to be accessible remotely on students' own devices, to maximise the learning experience. In the next section, I present the literature I reviewed regarding the selection of a suitable platform to host the e-learning resource.

2.5 Identifying a Platform to Pilot and Host the E-learning Resource

A Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is the standard platform provided by universities for their students to engage with e-learning, and to access a range of other aspects of the learning experience. A VLE is defined by Laurillard (2002: 209) as 'a web-based environment that

provides [...] all the support facilities that a good campus would provide'. Students are automatically linked to a VLE at the start of their course, and become part of a learning community, with the potential to enjoy the advantages of collaborative learning and peer support (Littlejohn and Pegler, 2007). For their part, academic staff can also benefit from a VLE, as it has the potential to enable them to 'develop new ideas about teaching and learning' (McQuiggan, 2012: 28).

The multifunctionality of a university-level VLE is discussed by Davies et al. (2013), who note the usefulness of this type of platform in allowing lecturers to create online materials, as well as providing a means of communication, both lecturer-to-student and student-to-student. Salmon (2014: 22) also notes the range of communicative features an institutional VLE can provide, but introduces a note of caution, claiming that 'almost all VLEs are underused, especially from the perspective of interaction between staff and students'. I found this noteworthy, as it tallied very much with experiences discussed informally among colleagues, and I resolved to explore the full range of affordances of an institutional VLE, to find a feasible means of embedding the planned resource.

Given the approach I proposed for planning and piloting the resource, with the involvement of a language-learning community, I considered it crucial that there be effective communication among the participating learners within the learning environment, to foster both tutor assistance and peer support (Simpson and Obdalova, 2014; Gregory and Salmon, 2013). A VLE's potential for communication and collaboration aligns well with the philosophy behind the development of my resource, as well as its implementation. All the users at whom the resource is aimed are automatically connected to their institutional VLE, thus benefiting from its infrastructure and ease of navigation and, in the age of fluent digital literacy (Dudeney, Hockly and Pegrum, 2013), are easily able to access the materials and derive the optimum learning value from them. This would be important in the development of my resource, as the students are both familiar with the navigation and functionality of their institutional VLE, and accustomed to communicating with each other via the platform, both synchronously and asynchronously. Furthermore, I considered that engaging with a carefully constructed set of online activities on a VLE to aid language-learning in the L2/L3 context would be within the capabilities of digitally competent users, for whom participative online

activities, or 'e-tivities' (Salmon, 2013) are a commonplace means of learning. Effective VLE embedding and successful engagement on the part of the users would, I reasoned, allow me to consider, in discussion with the users, whether in a subsequent iteration the resource could perhaps be developed as a standalone learning tool or app.

There are, however, a number of shortcomings of institutional VLEs discussed in the literature. Godwin-Jones (2012) and Mishan (2016) both examine the limitations of online learning within the VLEs used most widely in the university sector. Mishan (2016) notes that such platforms may offer only a narrow range of tools, and that the types of interactive exercises they can support may also be limited. Mishan also warns that developers should not satisfy themselves with the convenience and limited features of institutional VLEs, but rather should research more widely to explore how technology can assist language-learning.

These were issues for me to ponder carefully in determining whether to use an institutional VLE or a commercial platform such as Edmodo or Moodle. Potentially negative factors such as a limited range of affordances and styles of exercise would need to be balanced against the familiarity and operability already experienced by students using their HEI's VLE.

2.6 Design Features for the E-learning Resource

In constructing a pedagogical approach for the design of a digital resource for students of L2 French and L3 Spanish, various features needed to be considered with the potential to affect the students' ability to engage effectively with the resource, and hence impact upon their language-learning experience.

2.6.1 Repeatability of Tasks

In the learning of a foreign language, repetition of tasks is widely accepted as being a key element, vital for consolidating new vocabulary and structures (Bygate, 2018). The term 'task' has been variously defined in a language-learning context. For Willis (1996: 53) a classroom

task is 'a goal-oriented activity in which learners use language to achieve a real outcome', whereas Ellis (2003: 16) refers to an activity that:

[...] requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed. To this end, it requires them to give primary attention to meaning and to make use of their own linguistic resources.

Ellis's reference to learners drawing on their linguistic resources when addressing a task resonates strongly with the significance of students' learning experiences and challenges in the current project, where the 'tasks' designed for the resource move away from the traditional classroom and are introduced as 'e-tivities' (Salmon, 2013) located in an online environment.

In this setting, learners are invited to respond to tasks designed to require them to engage with the characteristics of French, those of Spanish, and the similarities and differences between the two languages. I view this not as a spontaneous test requiring quick-fire responses, but as an activity that promotes depth of thought about cross-linguistic subtleties. I therefore consider it logical for tasks to offer high flexibility in terms of how they are addressed, including the ability for them to be performed repeatedly for consolidation.

Repeatability of tasks and exercises in an e-learning context is central to my belief in the importance of personalised learning, and is discussed by McCarten and Sandiford (2016), who note the readiness of students to engage with material within a private, self-study environment, where they can control their style of interaction. The allowance to make repeated attempts at an e-learning task in a relaxed atmosphere, according to McCarten and Sandiford (2016), reinforces users' sense of feeling supported. The authors also note the benefits of repeatability to learners with lower self-confidence, and the importance of this in creating an inclusive learning environment. Reviewing this area of the literature brought into focus the benefits of repeatability in two ways relevant to my resource design: (a) repeatability permits a user to have an immediate second attempt at a question they have answered incorrectly, and (b) even if an activity has been successfully completed, a user is allowed to re-do the exercise for consolidation after some time has elapsed.

2.6.2 Should Activities be Timed?

In the face-to-face teaching of ML, spontaneity has traditionally been encouraged in how students respond to tasks or challenges, as a representation of how communication works in real life (Brandl, 2021). This is particularly so in communicative language teaching (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). In the case of online variants of language-learning, however, I wanted to seek evidence in favour of, or against, the setting of time-limits in the design and provision of e-learning tasks. I wondered whether the evidence in the literature suggests that educators and learners encourage or oppose the imposition of time-constraints in such an environment.

In the era of the Covid-19 pandemic, universities across the world moved largely to an online model for teaching and assessing students. One of the salient characteristics of this phenomenon was the move towards greater flexibility in the time allowed for the completion of online learning tasks and assessments. Coman et al. (2020) note as a key finding the importance, in the minds of learners, that tasks should not be rushed, and that ample time be given for their completion.

As the rationale of my resource is that it should be suitable for learners to use in their own time and following their own learning preferences (including the element of repeatability, proposed in 2.6.1), I would be concerned about designing online exercises to be completed against the clock, fearing that this might induce undue anxiety in users. Discussing this issue, Mason and Rennie (2006) argue strongly for the removal of the pressure prompted by setting a time-limit for completing an online exercise, concluding that the imposition of such a limit could be demotivational to users and detrimental to their learning experience.

Other than the work referenced above, I could not identify relevant research regarding time restraints in online language-learning exercises of the type I was proposing. I ended my review of the literature by concluding that this would need to be a key item for discussion with student participants.

2.6.3 Evaluation and Feedback

Other important design features to contemplate were how to evaluate users' performance in the exercises within the resource, and how to issue feedback to commend users on correct input and provide constructively supportive feedback if a question is answered incorrectly.

Mason and Rennie (2006) refer to feedback being maximally effective if it not only informs the learner that a particular item is right or wrong, but also provides an explanation of *why* the answer is correct or incorrect and, where appropriate, some hints for subsequent rectification. This echoed with my belief in the appropriateness of feedback – in its usefulness in allowing a student to learn from a mistake and gauge their progress. Thinking ahead, I envisaged activities that would challenge participants to deal, for example, with a sentence that is grammatically constructed very differently in French and Spanish. My aim would be to use the affordances of the selected platform to programme the resource to offer instant, targeted feedback in the event of an incorrect answer being given.

Looking more closely at the features of the HEI's in-house VLE, I confirmed that there was a way of triggering feedback in the case of a correct or an incorrect answer being given to a question. I also discovered a range of styles of exercise which lecturers can harness to test or consolidate students' learning. Both tutor-regulated and self-regulated assessment styles were provided, via exercises such as matching, multiple-choice, gap-fills, and short and long narrative answers. I was heartened to note that all of these could be designed to generate immediate feedback to the user.

Central to the idea of students accessing and interacting with my e-learning resource in their own time and at their own pace, is the permissibility for them to self-regulate, attempting the exercises whenever they feel ready and reacting in their own way to the feedback given. Mason and Rennie (2006) note the popularity of self-assessment tasks that provide instant and targeted feedback, whereby students gauge how well they have absorbed and can accurately reproduce or apply what they have learned. Moloney and O'Keeffe (2016) refer to students' learning in such a context as developing an iterative pattern, with spontaneous weaving between tasks and assessments in a spirit of free self-regulation. The authors

conclude that such free movement promotes a high level of understanding and a deeper, more satisfactory learning experience.

Linked to this was the question of whether it is useful, or desirable, for a numerical score to be provided alongside the targeted feedback that is reported back to users. Butler and Nisan (1986) conducted a study looking at the effects on performance and motivation of feedback being offered solely in the form of a grade or numerical score; being issued in the form of task-related comments; and not being provided in any format. Their findings were that the students performing best, and whose motivation was highest, were those who had received targeted written feedback on a task. Black et al. (2004: 13) concur, adding that:

while student learning can be advanced by feedback through comments, the giving of numerical scores or grades has a negative effect, in that students ignore comments when marks are also given.

Considering this further, I resolved that the possible inclusion of a numerical value in the resource would be something to discuss with student participants, to determine whether they might feel encouraged or, conversely, unnerved on receiving a score to gauge their performance in a task. Equally, I reflected that it would be instructive to discuss with users their views on the possible inclusion, in a subsequent iteration, of a wider range of metrics, if they felt that this would add value.

Having reviewed the literature available on this aspect of resource design, I thought further about feedback. Throughout my career I have believed strongly in the provision of timely, detailed and relevant feedback. Inevitably, in the context of generating feedback for traditional essays and other, longer pieces of work, the process of returning scripts to students with meaningful feedback can be slow. In the development of an online resource for language-learning, however, I envisaged the potential for immediate, detailed feedback. Indeed, Gillespie et al. (2007) highlight feedback as being most impactful if it is instant, while the student's mind is still engaged with the answer given.

2.7 Cross-linguistic Influence (CLI)

Cross-linguistic influence (CLI) was first discussed by Sharwood Smith and Kellerman (1986), whose work analysed how a multilingual speaker might unintentionally ‘borrow’ or ‘transfer’ a word or structure belonging to one of their languages and employ it in another language. In the case of the two languages featuring in this project (French L2 and Spanish L3), a speaker might, for example, erroneously use a French preposition when speaking Spanish, or unthinkingly form a Spanish sentence using an equivalent French structure that is more deeply embedded in their brain, having been learned earlier than the Spanish one.

Much of the literature on CLI focuses on the psycholinguistic factors producing interference from a speaker’s mother tongue (L1) on their first foreign language (L2) (e.g. Singleton, 1987; Sharwood Smith, 1996). These studies provided a valuable insight into CLI theories and led me to review research into the interaction between L2 and L3, to see if there was evidence of L2 exerting influence on L3, either positively or negatively.

I identified some stimulating and pertinent research into the particular problems encountered by speakers moving between L2 and L3 in their communication. For example, Hufeisen and Jessner (2009: 116) observe that:

L3 learners and users do not simply fall back on their L1 in their L3 production and reception, but rather on their L2. The L2 seems to take over the role of a source, default and supplier language during the production of the L3.

I took careful note of this phenomenon, given its possible relevance to how my students might reflect, in discussions with me, on their own L2/L3 performance, and how this might be illustrated in this project.

Hufeisen and Jessner (2009: 116) also refer to CLI as potentially producing:

positive and negative transfer of linguistic units, transfer of L2 language learning strategies into L3 learning or language loss of the L2 due to the recent learning of the L3.

Hence there exists the potential for my students to see their L2 French influencing their L3 Spanish both positively and negatively; to use methods they used when learning French to create a short-cut to mastering new, less familiar Spanish structures; and for their Spanish L3, being more recently learned, to 'overtake' their mastery of French L2, to the detriment of the latter.

I wanted to discover whether, in the above contexts, the similarities or differences among the three languages spoken by an individual might be pertinent in how they (consciously or unconsciously) generate language production affected by CLI. This would have relevance to my study, as the students' L1 (English) is Germanic in origin whereas their L2 and L3 (French and Spanish, respectively) belong to the Romance Language (RL) family. Several authors (Bartelt, 1989; Hufeisen, 1991; Cenoz, 2001; Wei, 2003) conclude from their research that L3 learners whose L1 was typologically unrelated to their L2 and L3 (which is the case in my study) tend to transfer linguistic and language-learning knowledge from their L2, not from their L1. Hufeisen (1991) also examines what is known across the literature as the 'foreign language effect': the tendency among L3 learners to rely on the structures and vocabulary of their L2 when seeking an L3 solution. Hufeisen notes that, particularly in the early stages of learning their L3, students not only tend to activate their L2, rather than their L1-related knowledge, for production and reception tasks in their L3, but they also do so with heightened metalinguistic awareness (discussed in section 2.8). Murphy (2003) concurs, observing that this rejection of L1 when formulating output in L3 can be unconscious, and that the choice of L2 as the provider language for the transfer of structures and words for L3 is equally unconscious. I noted that it would be instructive to discuss this 'unconscious' factor with my students, in the context of their own language-learning experiences.

Additionally, I was interested by the work of Dewaele (1998), who observed that the order in which languages were learned appeared highly relevant in determining which language was the main source of influence. Dewaele noted that the strongest provider was whichever language was learned immediately prior to the target language. This, too, was something I considered worthy of discussion with the participants in my project, to explore whether they

felt their language-learning experience might have been different had they learned their L2 and L3 in a different order.

It was encouraging to see focus, within the literature I reviewed, on positive as well as negative manifestations of CLI. For instance, Jarvis (2015: 69) concludes that ‘the consequences are, on balance, mostly positive when the target language is closely related to a language the learner already knows.’ These findings are consistent with the conclusions of Hammarberg (2001): that a favourable influence can be exerted on L3 by L2, and that this is more likely to happen if the L1 is typologically distant; and with those of Clyne (1997: 103), who reported participants in his case study ‘using one language as a support to help them with another’.

Reviewing research within the RL family, I noted the research of Carvalho and Bacelar da Silva (2006), whose study focused on the addition of Portuguese (a Romance language) as L3 to students with L1 English (Germanic) and L2 Spanish (Romance). In this sense, the authors’ work bore a structural similarity to what I proposed, and I was drawn to their approach, using contrastive sample sentences to gauge and compare their students’ responses to linguistic challenges posed in Spanish and Portuguese. The findings of that study also included a recommendation that educators should place greater emphasis on developing students’ awareness of similarities and differences between L2 and L3 when these languages are from the same family. Salaberry (2005) provides similar advice, highlighting the benefits to be gained from a close comparison between L2 and L3 from the same language family, specifically in terms of mastering the past tenses of the verb system in L3. Indeed, it was noteworthy how many authors (see Price, 1990; Blyth, 2005; Ayoun and Salaberry, 2005) had chosen to focus in their research on areas relating to the verb systems across the RL family. This also led me, when designing the materials to be used in my e-learning resource, to think about the inclusion of tasks contrasting the French and Spanish verb systems.

The above studies provided valuable guidance in the design of my proposed resource. Their findings were in line with my long-standing interest in finding relevant, creative ways of supporting multilingual language-learners, in the absence of traditional, face-to-face teaching catering specifically for their L2/L3 needs.

As to ways of testing CLI in the language production of participants in research projects, I identified a variety of studies. Ayoun and Salaberry (2005), for example, discuss a range of techniques on which they drew in preparing their own experiments to gauge the effects of CLI on their groups of students. However, the technique with most relevance to the characteristics of my project and my student participants was that employed by Carvalho and Bacelar da Silva (2006). The authors issued two tasks which invited participants to react to prompts by writing sentences using specific grammatical structures that differ between Spanish and Portuguese; they were also required to explain their linguistic choices while composing the sentences, and to provide a reflection on their answers afterwards. In the discussion of their findings, the authors conclude that the participants displayed notable metalinguistic awareness (see section 2.8) in constructing and reviewing their L3 output. In the authors' view, this was due to 'the native English speakers' explicit attention to Spanish structure and their application of learning strategies used in their earlier acquisition of Spanish' (Carvalho and Bacelar da Silva, 2006: 197).

In summary, the absence of studies involving the L1/L2/L3 sequence of my project revealed a significant gap in the literature, which suggested that what I was proposing had the potential to make a fresh contribution both to the literature and to professional practice in my discipline.

2.8 Metalinguistic Awareness (MA)

Following on from my review of the literature on CLI, I wanted to explore the phenomenon of metalinguistic awareness (MA), defined by Altman et al. (2018: 43) as 'the ability to distance oneself from the content of speech in order to reflect upon and manipulate the structure of language'.

Jessner (1999) and Blake and Delforge (2004) place strong focus on the importance of MA in the learning and mastery of L3. In this context, I sought to view evidence of how language-

learners in my students' position might successfully draw upon their L2 (French) in formulating production in their L3 (Spanish).

Malakoff (1992: 518) asserts that MA allows an individual to 'step back from the comprehension or production of an utterance in order to consider [its] linguistic form and structure'. This suggests the reflective and comparative approach I have always striven to encourage in my students of two languages. Also in terms of comparison, Bono (2011: 31-2) observes that both differences and similarities can be identified and processed by language-learners with strong MA, who can 'analyse linguistic structures and selectively attend to those structures as a problem-solving strategy'. Linguistic problem-solving is, in turn, a key element of my teaching.

It was notable that there was widespread acknowledgement in the literature of the so-called 'L2 effect' or 'foreign language effect' first discussed by Meisel (1983), both in discussions of MA and in research into CLI (see section 2.7). Gajo (1996) extracts interesting conclusions in an experiment on students' reading ability in L3 Italian, noting that the participants deployed MA from prior knowledge of other Romance languages to score highly in the tests to which they were subjected. Llama et al. (2010) was the only research I could identify that focused on measuring the deployment of MA in the same language combination as that examined in this project: L2 French and L3 Spanish. Whilst it was limited to a purely phonological context, whereas my focus was on grammatical structures and vocabulary, it provided informative results regarding the effectiveness of participants' MA.

It was also instructive to gain deeper knowledge of how research has analysed learners' perceptions of language-learning and the role that MA might play in the process. Murphy (2003: 6) views the student of L3 as 'a learner with a unique and specific linguistic configuration', noting the strong likelihood that a multilingual learner beginning an additional language will approach, and reflect upon, the learning process in a different way from a monolingual learner. Equally, Murphy argues that CLI and MA will be more complex, the more languages are present in a learner's linguistic profile.

Also of relevance here is Grosjean's analysis of language mode, defined as 'the state of activation of the bilingual's languages and language-processing mechanisms at a given point in time' (Grosjean, 2001: 2). I felt that this could be pertinent in my work with my students, in discussing how 'active' they deemed each of their foreign languages to be, ahead of their engagement with the exercises in the prototype resource. In this context, Murphy (2003: 10) illustrates such activeness with a tendency in L3 production to invent words influenced by L2, and concludes that 'in terms of language mode, it appears that the L2 remains at a high level of activation' throughout the process of L3 learning. Later in the same discussion, Murphy (2003: 11) makes a further point of interest about how such linguistic infidelities might be perceived. This chimed with my experience of supporting students in one-to-one tutorial meetings to discuss their language work:

characteristics of L3 learners such as unintentional code-switching and lexical access errors should not be viewed as failures but rather as evidence of the multilingual's unique and flexible linguistic configuration.

I also reviewed studies focusing on learners' perceptions during the learning process of L3, including factors such as 'level of proficiency in the L2, recency of use, typology and perceived language distance (psychotypology)' (De la Fuente and Lacroix, 2015: 50). Bardel and Lindqvist (2006: 127) define psychotypology as 'the similarities and differences between languages, as perceived by the learner'. This phenomenon piqued my interest, and I sensed that it could provide an intriguing dimension to my approach to working with my students in planning the learning resource: it would, I felt, be informative to invite their *perceptions* of how French and Spanish differ.

Finally, I looked at a study that measured the effects of MA. Thomas (1988) quantified the advantages enjoyed by students already in possession of a L2, when learning L3, and noted that they performed better than their L1 > L2 peers in tests. The three-language students, according to the author, displayed a keen awareness of language as a system. In conclusion, Thomas speaks in favour of actively promoting the development of MA, a recommendation echoed by Gajo (2001), who views MA as providing a strategic advantage for subsequent language-learning. Bono (2011: 31) summarises the debate by referring to MA as 'a

sophisticated toolbox for problem-solving or, alternatively, the ability to anticipate problems and to overcome linguistic, discursive or pragmatic shortcomings.'

My review of the literature relating to MA was very informative, particularly in starting to scope the subsequent discussions I planned to undertake with my students, about their experiences of L2/L3 language-learning.

2.9 The Development of a Learning Community: a Community of Practice?

As noted in Chapter 1, at the heart of this project is the development of a bespoke e-learning resource, achieved with the involvement of both students and lecturers within the language-learning community in which the project is housed. Such collaboration resonates with my wider interest – in my teaching, research and professional practice – in learning more about the language-learning backgrounds, experiences, realities and perceptions of the other members of the community of which I am part (Oxford, 1997), and using this shared knowledge to inform academic activity.

It was important for me to be unambiguous at the outset, in planning the research activities involving other members of the language-learning community, as to what I understood by the term 'collaboration', and how it differs from germane concepts such as 'co-operation' or 'participation'. Whilst it was clear to me that I was seeking the active involvement of participants, this did not necessarily mean that their participation would carry the same weight as my own as the researcher; nor did it imply that they would be active at all times. Fully participatory research, in which participants are actively involved in shaping research questions, data generation, data analysis and the production of findings, can be powerful in some contexts but was inappropriate for the current project. Munford et al. (2003) discuss scenarios in which, even though contributors might be participating or collaborating in a project, they may be doing so to different extents. Linked to this, in my mind, was my duty of care to my participants. As Gaffney (2008: 10) points out:

One of the roles of a research facilitator or mentor is to understand the varying demands on team members so as to maximise the opportunities for contribution without overwhelming participants.

Having undertaken an exhaustive analysis of how 'collaboration' and its synonyms and near-synonyms have been used in research contexts, Castañer and Oliveira (2020: 994) conclude:

Drawing on the use of the term collaboration in prior research, we propose that collaboration refers to voluntarily helping others to attain a common [...] or a private goal.

This analysis and phrasing helped to shape the definition of the 'collaboration' taking place in the current project: participants are invited to offer their contributions to the research process, and do so voluntarily but not as equal partners in the development of the resource. They collaborate with me, assisting me by offering their time, experiences and other types of input, and their involvement and contributions are essential to the flow of the project, but the crafting of the resource is undertaken by me alone, not as a truly joint enterprise. The goal is mine, but its benefits can be enjoyed by the wider learning community.

In thinking about a 'learning community', I was interested to discover more about the theories and pedagogies associated with collaborative learning. I was drawn to the notion of 'active knowledge' (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 48), whereby students take ownership of their learning, as opposed to being solely taught via the traditional transmission model (Richardson, 2005). Wenger (1998: 279) discusses the suitability of constructivist approaches to pedagogical design, whereby learners interact with each other and with their learning environment in a task-oriented atmosphere, noting that they tend to favour 'hands-on, self-directed activities oriented towards [...] discovery'.

The Community of Practice (CoP) has been variously defined by researchers over the last thirty years. The concept was first formally defined by Lave and Wenger (1991: 98), for whom a CoP is 'a system of relationships between people, activities and the world; developing with time and in relation to other tangential and overlapping CoPs'. Wenger (1998) developed the phenomenon further, establishing three key dimensions to a CoP: that members interact in *mutual engagement*, bond together in a *joint enterprise*, and discuss their experiences in a

spirit of *shared repertoire*. I found these dimensions persuasive in depicting the environment in which I planned to work with other members of the language-learning community in a university setting. In scoping this further, I was also interested in Lave and Wenger's (1991: 98) notion, mentioned above, of CoPs being potentially 'tangential and overlapping'. In this context, Wenger (1998: 126) describes the existence of 'constellations of interconnected practices', whereby 'related enterprises' can be conducted and all members can experience a heightened sense of belonging to their organisation. My reflections at this stage were of a grouping, or a series of groupings, working collaboratively to create and share nuances of understanding. This view was consolidated by my reading of Roberts (2006: 623), who refers to the CoP as a crucible for learning, describing it as 'a mechanism through which knowledge is held, transferred and created'.

Though it is widely discussed and accepted as a useful mechanism for sharing expertise within organisations, the CoP has been criticised from a number of angles. Mutch (2003) discusses the seemingly unresolved issue of whether a CoP *conditions* practice or *emerges from* practice, while Fox (2002) notes that CoP theory does not specify or discuss in detail how members' practice may undergo tangible change. Both these critiques raised issues for me to contemplate in the context of the group of participants with whom I would be working in this project. I felt that it would be both important and of interest to ponder whether belonging to a language-learning community (regardless of whether I concluded by categorising the group as a CoP) exerted an influence on the members' learning experience, or whether it was their prior learning that brought them together as a group (thus conforming to the assertion by Mutch, (2003)). My initial reflection was that both elements could potentially be the case. With regard to the view expressed by Fox (2002), I noted the potential for difficulty, in the context of my research in this project, in quantifying any change experienced by the participants. This issue is discussed further in Chapter 6. In considering CoPs, Roberts (2006) advises of the need to categorise such communities in terms of their size and their spatial reach, arguing that large organisations differ greatly from small enterprises. Roberts also questions whether there can be full homogeneity and a natural 'community' in a group whose level of interest and predispositions may be extremely diverse. This has relevance to the individual and collective motivations within the group of participants with whom I would be

working on this project: I resolved to consider these motivations carefully, and to give further thought to issues of performativity.

Central to the debate around the role of a CoP is the fact that it cannot be created deliberately or in a forced way: rather, it must evolve naturally and be nurtured by its members (Wenger, 1998). I found this to be particularly important to my aim, within this project and in my broader professional practice, to craft self-sustaining learning practices via collective endeavour. I was therefore keen to learn more about the features of a CoP, and to get a sense of whether such a community could already exist among the members of the language-learning environment in the HEI in which this project is located. This, I felt, would lead me to reflect on whether the group of participants engaging with my project already had a form of organic identity, or whether the grouping was an ad hoc creation, and hence ineligible to be termed a CoP.

In his description of the required characteristics for a group to be properly termed a CoP, Wenger (1998: 125-6) provides a long list of features (reproduced in full in Appendix 15). Of these, the traits that struck me immediately as being worthy of further thought in relation to my project were:

...shared ways of engaging in doing things together [...] very quick setup of a problem to be discussed [...] knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to an enterprise [...] mutually defining identities [...] the ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products [...] a shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world.

I was curious to explore further the identities, abilities and potential for collaborative work inherent in a group exhibiting these characteristics, and to weigh up the extent to which these might apply in the context of my project.

In the same discussion, Wenger (1998) notes that a group may function over a period of time and display none, or only a few, of the features he quotes; in this case it is not a CoP, but that does not mean it will not achieve CoP status after further evolution. Lindkvist (2005) offers a different angle with the concept of the *collectivity* of practice, whereby a group may be

assembled, generally over a short timeframe, with a particular task, project or plan in mind. I highlighted this as being a plausible, alternative means of categorising the grouping I was intending to nurture within my academic department. Whilst lacking the longevity and evolution of the CoP, a collective such as that described by Lindkvist (2005) nevertheless possesses the groupness and goal-orientated interaction of a CoP, as well as drawing upon the experience and knowledge of the members.

In addition to Lindkvist’s (2005) perspective, I noted the subcategorisation offered by Wenger and Snyder (2000: 142), who provide a useful table, adapted in Figure 1, below, of four types of groups within an organisation: community of practice; formal work group; project team; informal network. Each of the four groupings identified has its own purpose, membership, binding factors and duration. This was helpful in planning the interactions within this project, and would be valuable to me in reflecting on the nature of the groups being assembled.

From the information contained in Figure 1, it would be difficult at the outset to justify describing the activity of the group of student participants I was planning to assemble as the endeavour of a CoP. Whilst they have self-selected in terms of joining the degree programme, and have interest in developing their capabilities, it is also true that their motivations, passion and sense of identity may differ significantly from one member to the next. Their involvement is also time-limited by the length of the degree, rather than constituting ‘interest remaining’.

GROUP TYPE	Purpose	Membership	Binding	Duration
Community of Practice	Build / exchange knowledge; develop members’ capabilities	Self-selecting	Passion, commitment, identification with group’s expertise	As long as interest remains
Formal Work Group	Deliver product or service	Everyone reporting to group’s manager	Job requirements / common goals	Until next reorganization
Project Team	Accomplish specified task	Employees assigned by senior management	Project’s milestones / goals	Until project complete
Informal Network	Collect /pass on business information	Friends / business acquaintances	Mutual needs	As long as members have reason to connect

FIGURE 1: Group types within an organisation (adapted from Wenger and Snyder, 2000: 142).

In addition to Lindkvist's (2005) collectivity of practice, the possibility emerged from my review of Wenger and Snyder (2000) that I might be working with a project team, as outlined in Figure 1. Although the aspect of assignment by senior management would be missing, the tasks, goals and duration appeared to be a good fit with the type of interaction I had in mind.

In reviewing the literature, I began to think of the relationship between the group of students with whom I hoped to work, and the wider year-group of which they were part. It is possible to view this in terms of the concentric circles depicted in Figure 2: the outer circle represents the entirety of the ML degree cohort, with their varying levels of commitment and motivation, and their disparate subject combinations; the inner circle portrays the group of French L2 / Spanish L3 students invited to participate in this project. At this stage, it was impossible to know what their sense of identity, commitment and motivation would be; nor would their individual and collective experiences have been shared and discussed. However, my hope was that their motivation would be sharpened by the relevance of my project to their own learning.

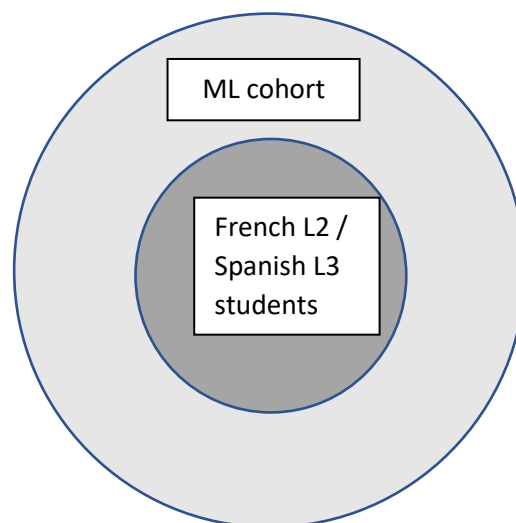


FIGURE 2: Situation of the French L2 / Spanish L3 student group within their ML cohort

I concluded from my review of the literature on the CoP that the precise identity and nomenclature of the group(s) of participants with whom I would be working required further thought. However, what was clear was my vision of a learning community in which knowledge

of ML is held, shared and generated by combinations of staff and students, and in which student participants have two specific factors in common: their knowledge of ML, and a mutual engagement in developing their academic knowledge of L2 and L3 in working towards achieving their degrees.

2.10 Research Questions

My review of the relevant literature evidenced how CLI and MA might affect the language-learning experience of my students, and provided an instructive insight into the key issues to be considered in the design of an e-learning resource to support their learning. The review was also crucial in allowing me to learn more about how to develop a culture of collective endeavour within an academic department, working towards the mutual benefit of all participating members.

My proposal is that, in the development of the e-learning resource for undergraduates studying L2 French and L3 Spanish, the most effective approach is to harness the expertise of lecturers and the experiences, views and needs of a group of student participants. This usage of different elements of a learning community, which may in time exhibit the characteristics of a CoP, represents a gap in professional practice: I have been unable to identify any other study in which learners and educators have interacted in precisely the context and ways I outline.

The following research questions (RQ) emerge from the literature review as the principal focus of this thesis:

1. To what extent can a bespoke e-learning resource be effective in supporting the learning of undergraduate students of L2 French and L3 Spanish?
2. What are the (positive and negative) effects of cross-linguistic influence (CLI) on the language-learning experience and knowledge development of undergraduate

students of L2 French and L3 Spanish, and can these effects be demonstrated via a bespoke e-learning resource?

3. What role does metalinguistic awareness (MA) play in the language-learning experience and knowledge development of undergraduate students of L2 French and L3 Spanish, and can MA be demonstrated through exposure to a bespoke e-learning resource?

Research sub-questions of direct interest to the overarching project are the following, which are expressed as aims and serve to contribute robustness to the main RQs:

1. To explore the feasibility of developing a bespoke e-learning resource by harnessing the input of both lecturers and students.
2. To explore whether the involvement of lecturers and students in planning and creating a bespoke e-learning resource can be considered to constitute the endeavour of a Community of Practice (CoP).

In Chapter 3, I discuss the conceptual framework within which these RQs are addressed.

Chapter 3

Conceptual Framework

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I articulate the conceptual framework I created to give structure, direction and robustness to the development of this project.

Firstly, I expand upon the research problem identified in Chapter 1, relating to the possible role of cross-linguistic influence (CLI) and metalinguistic awareness (MA) in the Spanish L3 production of students with French as their L2. Secondly, I discuss the elements of my philosophical stance, arguing for an epistemological stance of constructivism and a theoretical perspective of interpretivism in addressing my research questions. Thirdly, I explore more deeply existing models of learning communities to determine whether the collaborative endeavour of this project demonstrates characteristics of a Community of Practice (CoP) (Wenger, 1998). Fourthly, I discuss my selection of Action Research (AR) as the approach to underpin this project. I end the chapter with a brief conclusion.

3.2 The Research Problem

At the root of this project is an observation I made early in my academic career teaching Spanish at undergraduate level in the UK: that students studying two ML might be influenced in their L3 Spanish production by the embeddedness of their L2 French. This prompted me to begin to explore theories of CLI and MA, as well as to hold informal discussions with colleagues teaching French and Italian – other languages in the Romance Language (RL) family – to see if they had encountered similar experiences with their students.

A review of literature failed to reveal relevant examples of research undertaken to address the specific phenomenon of whether, and to what extent, L2 French can be proven to exert positive and negative influence on a learner's L3 Spanish. I therefore decided to conduct research into this area of academic life, via a project that would foreground the lived

experiences and the current reality of language-learners, drawing also upon the input of departmental teaching colleagues to provide an additional, professional dimension to the endeavour. This collaborative approach was designed to identify the experiences, perceptions and authentic problems encountered by current students, and to contribute to the development of a resource, optimised to address the L2/L3 issues identified.

As a professional linguist and educator, it was important for me to conduct this research in a way that, as well as being ethically appropriate, was pedagogically and intellectually stimulating for all the participants. Equally, I wanted to ensure that the project was structured and carried out in keeping with my professional principles and philosophical underpinning.

3.3 Philosophical Stance

The cornerstone of my belief system is that education is a shared, democratic experience (Dewey, 2011). The principles of Dewey are fundamental to how I approach my professional activity, in particular his espousal of the open sharing of information and experiences in a collaborative learning environment, and his belief in the importance of continually identifying, discussing and resolving problems. Dewey (2015: 79) stresses that it is part of the responsibility of the educator to link the two concepts of collaboration and problem-solving, noting that:

The new facts and new ideas thus obtained become the ground for further experiences in which new problems are presented. The process is a continual spiral.

Throughout my HE teaching career, my preferred style of professional practice has involved discussions with students to learn more about their linguistic backgrounds, their perceptions of what is difficult and easy about the language-learning process, how they compare their experiences learning different languages, and what factors would assist them in their endeavour. In these conversations, the element that has held most interest for me is the comparative, cross-language aspect of students' learning, and I have always encouraged them to engage in discussions not only with me, but with peers studying identical or different

language combinations, to share experiences and gain a broader understanding of the learning processes in which they are involved.

From an epistemological point of view, this collaborative work with students brought me to a position of constructivism, whereby the sharing and interpretation of experience is a key element in the development of understanding and attaching meaning to language-learning activity. Such sharing allows for the input and consideration of multiple realities, on the basis that each participant's background, experiences and viewpoints are different. This is important to me, in that I advocate a milieu in which I can construct and nurture a mutually beneficial working relationship with the individuals participating in my research and teaching: participants should feel valued, and their contributions should be embraced. Equally, a constructivist environment allows for the generation of a rich breadth of data from the multiple realities of the group of participants. Constructivism therefore differs significantly from what I deem to be a less democratic, less inclusive and more binary position such as realism, in which:

there is a reality, a world, which exists independently of the researcher [...] conclusions of the research are true or false, depending on whether they match up to that reality (Pring, 2015: 76).

Koshy (2010: 24) notes that epistemologically, within a constructivist worldview: 'what people say and how we interpret what they do and say are important [...] for knowledge creation'. The mutual benefit to be potentially derived from research underpinned by a constructivist approach is discussed by Creswell (2014: 8), for whom 'participants can construct the meaning of a situation, typically forged in discussions or interactions with other persons [...] the researcher listens carefully to what people say or do in their life settings'. In the context of language-learning, Oxford (1997: 448) notes that 'linguistic ideas are best shaped through reflective inquiry with other people.'

Brockbank and McGill (2007: 27) assert that 'learning contexts are socially constructed by learners themselves, who create meaning through their interactions with each other'. In working closely with students in this way, both in the classroom and in a research setting, I invite them to view their foreign-language production from a new, comparative perspective.

This has the potential to empower them to develop, and identify with, their own learning context.

By means of this interaction with me and with each other, students undergo processes of assimilation and accommodation of information, and are thus enabled to construct their own knowledge (Fani and Ghaemi, 2011), 'identifying new and increasingly complex patterns, acquisition of novel concepts and construction of new understandings' (Kaufman, 2004: 3). They are then invited to think about their learning and to share their reflections with me and with their peers (Wallace, 2012). The data produced by such interactions are key to analysis of students' language-learning processes; this allows for interpretation of how the students understand and negotiate their learning of French L2 and Spanish L3.

My theoretical standpoint, therefore, aligns naturally with the features of interpretivism, in particular the importance of gathering, reflecting on and interpreting participants' input (Hughes and Sharrock, 1997). Interpretivism favours the deployment of small-scale research methods to explore, discuss and interpret individuals' views on how they view their realities. It involves the acquisition of *Verstehen* (a full and empathetic understanding) of participants' conditions and experiences. Discussing the role of interpretivism in research into language-learning, Brooke (2013: 432), notes:

Research participants are not data but human voices deeply connected with and concerned about the topic of investigation [...] There is value in each individual's beliefs and research should strive to portray them.

This perspective is highly appropriate for the type of project I designed, based on the sharing, discussion and interpretation of multiple realities. It is deployed using an inductive approach, whereby the data from discussions can trigger the identification of themes and hence foster understanding (Nowell et al., 2017).

3.4 The Development of a Learning Community

As discussed in section 3.2, I considered it necessary to involve students of L2 French and L3 Spanish in my research, to weave their multiple experiences and realities into the development, piloting and evaluation of the resource.

I began my planning of this involvement with three central ideas in mind:

- i) It would be of interest, and in keeping with my pedagogical principles, to create a platform to promote free democratic discussion (Dewey, 2011) among a group of linguists with some commonality of language-learning experience (L2 French and L3 Spanish) but potentially very diverse experiences and perspectives;
- ii) The data generated could potentially be of use in allowing me to monitor the ongoing evolution of my living educational theory (see sections 1.4 and 6.4);
- iii) The members of the group would also have the potential to be invited to participate in activities such as interviews, discussions and tasks relating to the development and piloting of the learning resource.

Such collective endeavour would also provide a platform to examine the reality of ML lecturers and students working together on a project of this nature. In the next section, I discuss this collaboration in the context of a language-learning community in a UK HEI, to determine whether there is evidence among the group of research participants of the existence of a Community of Practice (CoP) (Wenger, 1998).

3.4.1 The Language-learning Community within an HE Institution

The community of focus for this project is the Modern Languages (ML) department at a UK university, which is typical in its function of providing both a location and a structure for staff and students to engage in activities related to the teaching and learning of foreign languages. Of particular interest to me is the sharing, among lecturers and students, of linguistic knowledge. This area of knowledge can be referred to as a *domain*, described by Wenger

(2004) as the type of environment – in the case of this project, an academic discipline – that provides the community with an *identity* and a focus for its activity. These activities and interactions constitute what may be referred to as *practice*. In this study, I adopt Brown and Duguid's (2001: 203) definition of 'practice' as 'undertaking or engaging fully in a task, job or profession'.

3.4.2 The Community of Practice (CoP)

It was important for me to begin to think about whether the collaborative work to be undertaken in this project would constitute the endeavour of a Community of Practice (CoP) or another type of grouping. For Wenger (N.D.: 1), 'Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly'. The harnessing of such a group for the purposes of the project was an attractive prospect, particularly as the sharing of experiences and realities within a CoP 'has usefulness to the community of practice and to the individual researcher, and it has the potential to generate theory' (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs, 2010: 4).

However, as I discuss in Chapter 2, a CoP cannot be artificially created – it must emerge organically and be nurtured by its constituent members (Wenger, 1998). This triggered a great deal of reflection on my part: I considered the tension between trying to set a group up in a forced way (which would not qualify as a CoP) and attempting to create the *environment* for a CoP to emerge (which could potentially sow the seeds of CoP development).

An additional factor weighing against the classification of my group of participants as a CoP was the list of characteristics stipulated by Wenger (1998: 125-6; see Appendix 15) as essential for such a categorisation. It became clear to me that, whilst some of these features had relevance to the collaborative work I was proposing to do with groups of colleagues and students (e.g. 'shared ways of engaging in doing things together', 'knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to an enterprise' and 'mutually defining identities'), many others (such as 'absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process', 'specific tools,

representations, and other artefacts', 'local lore, shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter' and 'jargon and shortcuts to communication as well as the ease of producing new ones') were unlikely to be present. Most importantly, the time-limitedness of the project, and hence the absence of the required 'sustained mutual relationships' (Wenger, 1998: 125-6) meant that it was unlikely that a CoP would exist in this context.

As a feasible alternative format for the collective functioning I was planning, in the event of this not constituting a CoP, I was most convinced by two styles of grouping: (1) the collectivity of practice proposed by Lindkvist (2005), whereby a group may be formed, usually over a short period of time, with a specific project on its agenda. Whilst lacking the longevity and the gradual evolution of the CoP, such a collective nevertheless possesses the 'group factor' and objective-focused interactions of a CoP, as well as drawing upon the multiple experiences, realities, knowledge and expertise of its members; (2) the project team, as defined and exemplified by Wenger and Snyder (2000: 142), which is a plausible fit for the type of group with which I proposed to collaborate.

In this project, the community of focus is interpreted as a community in which knowledge of ML is held, shared and created, and in which participants share not only their knowledge of ML but a common engagement in building their academic knowledge of L2 and L3 to achieve degree status. I argue for a structure in which specific groups of students and lecturers collaborate in overlapping combinations to discuss language-learning and share experiences. Of interest to this project is also an exploration of how different categories of membership interact (a) purely within a particular category and (b) across categories. Wenger (1998: 126) describes the existence of 'constellations of interconnected practices', whereby 'related enterprises' can be conducted and all members can experience a heightened sense of belonging to their organisation. The involvement of both staff and students in the developmental structure that I propose has the ability to inspire meaningful, collaborative participation, as well as a heightened sense of identity within the learning community (Wenger, White and Smith, 2009).

3.5 Research Approach: Action Research

Having articulated my philosophical stance and the collaborations I had planned in order to proceed with the project, the remaining element of the design of my conceptual framework was to decide upon a research approach.

With an epistemological stance of constructivism and a theoretical perspective of interpretivism, a feasible choice for a research approach was Action Research (AR). Reason and Bradbury (2008) refer to AR as having its origins in a broad range of philosophical stances, including both constructivism and pragmatism. Along with its practical nature and appropriateness for tackling problem-solving investigative ventures, AR lends itself to research involving the sharing of experience and ‘the development of living knowledge’ (Reason and Bradbury, 2008a: 5). My project was designed to involve a high degree of interaction and sharing of experiences and perspectives. Furthermore, operating within an AR framework, the project also attaches great importance to enabling each participant to have their voice heard and their input acted upon: for McNiff (2014: 14), AR is ‘about collaborative and *democratic* practices’ [my italics].

Another perspective supporting the choice of AR as a research approach is its suitability for linking research activity to promoting and effecting change in professional practice; I find this to be particularly relevant to the context of a Professional Doctorate. AR ‘starts with everyday experience and is concerned with the development of living knowledge [...] a living, evolving process of coming to know’ (Reason and Bradbury, 2008: 5). This rootedness in everyday professional practice also gives me as an action researcher ‘the advantage of authenticity’ (Gergen and Gergen, 2008: 164).

In summing up the advantages of AR, Herr and Anderson (2005: 54) note that it facilitates:

- (a) the generation of new knowledge, (b) the achievement of action-oriented outcomes, (c) the education of both researcher and participants, (d) results that

are relevant to the local setting, and (e) a sound and appropriate research methodology.

An additional, equally significant aspect of my choice of AR as a logical approach for this study is the importance of careful and continuous reflection at each stage of the project. Given the complexity of the series of interactions I had planned, I required an approach that allowed for flexibility in carrying out the stages of the project. It was important for me to be able to ponder retrospectively the effectiveness of each phase, correct any emerging errors and, where necessary, re-attempt particular tasks if repetition were required. I was influenced in this by my reading of Dewey (2012), for whom learning activity takes the form of a spiral involving experience, reflection, conceptualisation and experimentation. This is consistent, too, with the style of AR championed by Fulton et al. (2013: 58), who note that ‘action research is cyclical in nature [...] reflection is integral to the process’. For Wallace (2012), too, AR is a form of structured reflection. Reflection is a concept that is central to my approach not only to the practical phases of this project, but also to the overarching Professional Doctorate and, indeed, my professional activity as a linguist and an educator.

In selecting AR as my research approach, I was also alert to the criticisms and limitations identified in the literature and how these might be relevant to my research. Rainey (2000) reports concerns among participants that AR might be restrictive in its potentially very narrow scope, where the central issue may be small-scale and tightly focused. Selwood and Twining (2005) also refer to the specificity of AR, conceding that it can be problematic to generalise the findings, a view shared by Baumfield, Hall and Wall (2013), who observe that while an AR project may be extremely valid for a practitioner in a specific context, there may be question marks over the reliability and transferability of the findings it generates. In response to this, my defence is that, while this project is small-scale, its specificity nevertheless has the potential to provide meaningful outcomes to enhance the language-learning experience of students with different combinations of languages, and beyond the walls of the HEI in which it was conducted. This is not to claim that my findings will be automatically *generalisable*; rather, my research has the potential to offer *transferability*, a concept described by Polit and Beck (2010: 1453) as providing ‘detailed descriptions that allow readers to make inferences about extrapolating the findings to other settings’.

An AR approach allows me to conduct an in-depth exploration of the processes behind the development of an e-learning resource, while also focusing simultaneously on the workings of the language-learning community.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented my decision to adopt an epistemological stance of constructivism and a theoretical perspective of interpretivism, and have argued for AR as a suitable approach to conduct this project. I have also discussed my understanding of different types of working group within an organisation, and reached conclusions as to the nature of the groupings of language-learning-community members taking part in the project.

The next chapter deals with the selection of research methods stemming from this conceptual framework.

Chapter 4

Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with a discussion of my positionality as a researcher within a language-learning community. I then introduce and discuss each of the research methods used in this project, before concluding with an explanation of how the selected methods were deployed within a two-phase action research (AR) structure. The two phases of the project's implementation are detailed in section 4.6.

4.2 Positionality: The Insider-Researcher

Throughout my career in HE, the driving force behind my professional practice has been my interest in identifying, and seeking to solve, problems associated with students' language-learning activities. This interest developed into the current project, which has at its core a detailed focus on lexical and syntactic choices I had noticed being made by language-learners in their L3, potentially triggered by influence imposed by their L2. This type of awareness is championed by Laurillard (2002), who discusses the appropriateness of teaching staff being alert to repeat errors in their students' work. Such alertness, Laurillard argues, can benefit lecturers not only in their teaching and research, but also in the design of subsequent learning materials.

In my professional practice, where this problem-solving has been most rewarding, intellectually stimulating and socially inclusive is when a problem identified can be explored through collaboration with a community of learners (Dewey, 2015). Participants (both students and lecturers – see section 4.5.1) are encouraged to share experiences, add in suggestions and views, reflect continually and hence contribute to the creation of meaning. In my research, this has sharpened my focus on 'a specific problem or set of problems that are regarded as particularly significant in relation to the advancement of knowledge',

[problems that are] 'about shared practice' [and] 'involve a sense of shared community' (Denscombe, 2008: 276).

The involvement of other members of the language-learning community, therefore, is central to my research philosophy. In designing this project, I thought deeply about my positioning in my research endeavour, and positioned myself in the centre of an ongoing, collective undertaking among other members of a community to which I belonged. My approach aligned with the characteristics of insider research: 'that which is conducted within a social group, organization or culture of which the researcher is also a member' (Greene, 2014: 1).

In an insider research environment, Whitehead (1989) discusses the potential for tension between the first-person pronoun 'I' and the inseparableness of the researcher from the community in which the research is carried out. This necessary connection means that, for McNiff (2016: 16), 'the researcher adopts an insider position: consequently, they interrogate their own practices in relation with other people'. The positioning of my research illustrates the concept of situatedness discussed by Lave and Wenger (1991) and requires me to reflect closely on my choice of project, how I approach it and which research methods I select to conduct it.

Linked to my consideration of my role as researcher within a language-learning community are the various subcategories of insider-researcher. Chavez (2008) makes a distinction between the total insider, who has a significant overlap of professional identity and experience with other participants, and the partial insider, who has some professional identity in common with the participants, but also has a notable detachment from other members of the group or community. My situation, in relation to the group of student participants assisting me with this project (see section 4.5.1), belongs to the latter category.

Costley, Elliott and Gibbs (2010) describe the duality present in the professional milieu of the insider-researcher: in this position, not only am I equipped with a strong, discipline-specific insider knowledge; I also have access to potential participants who share some elements of my background and professional environment and can be instrumental in developing my knowledge. Mercer (2007) notes that whilst the researcher may have a high level of credibility

and have easy access to participants, the latter may feel at ease in sharing their experiences and perceptions, but may equally be reluctant to do so for fear of triggering a 'black mark' against their names in cases where the researcher is also their tutor. The ethical concerns and the potential for bias and power inherent in such situations are discussed later in this chapter.

This is not the only challenge associated with adopting such a collaborative approach. HEIs are increasingly metrics-driven, engendering a performative culture which can easily pervade the mindset of students and nurture a friction between the intrinsic joy of exploratory learning and the extrinsic magnetism of qualifications and a subsequent career path (Thiel, 2019).

My response to these concerns in the context of this project was to use my knowledge, experience, professionalism and personality to work clearly and transparently with students, discussing at each stage of the project their role, my use of the data generated, and the farther-reaching potential of their input. My positioning as an insider within the language-learning community allowed me to be the centre of research activities with the potential to radiate out through my immediate group of students of French L2 and Spanish L3, to germane studies and interactions involving other combinations of students and languages. This, in turn, had the potential to take on an extra-institutional, national dimension whereby my findings could contribute to the practice of colleagues and students at other universities.

4.3 Access, Sampling and Ethics

This section comprises three subsections which discuss my approach to the recruitment and treatment of participants for the various discussions and interactions I had planned. Firstly, I explain my access to the groups of students and teaching colleagues who would be taking part, before focusing on the process by which I conducted the sampling. The section concludes with a discussion of the issues of ethics, power and bias that had to be addressed to enable the proposed interactions to be transparent, appropriately and democratically conducted, and deemed meaningful and useful by all participants.

4.3.1 Access

Access, in the context of research methodology, may be described as ‘the process by which a researcher and the sites and/or individuals he or she studies relate to each other, through which the research in question is enabled’ (Riese, 2019: 669).

During the planning and implementation of this project, I was employed as a principal lecturer in the Modern Languages (ML) department of a UK HEI. This gave me access both to colleagues teaching a broad range of ML, and to students enrolled on degree courses involving one or more ML. My criteria for selecting a sample of both of these categories to participate in this project are discussed in the next section.

4.3.2 Sampling

The selection of individuals to engage as participants in this project required careful thought. Firstly, I drew up a set of criteria based on the languages, qualifications and characteristics I needed each participant to have in order to contribute meaningfully to the project. I was also clear from the outset that the sampling would embrace two separate groupings within the Modern Languages departmental community: (a) student participants and (b) a group of teaching colleagues. The criteria and rationales are listed below.

(a) Student Participants

Over the course of the project, I engaged with two groups of student participants: one for Phase 1 of the research and another for Phase 2. In both cases, the selection criteria were identical:

- i) That the participants would have obtained a French A Level before enrolling as undergraduates (and would hence possess a solid existing knowledge of that language) but would not have engaged with Spanish prior to starting their degree.

This would eliminate the possibility of any French/Spanish contemporaneity in their formative language-learning years;

- ii) That they would then have started Spanish at university via the Accelerated Beginners' route, thus adding a second RL to their language-learning portfolio;
- iii) That the optimum conditions would be for me to approach students fulfilling the above criteria and currently engaged in the Final Year of their undergraduate degree. This would mean that they had studied Spanish as L3 alongside L2 French for three years, and would have lived in both countries the previous year on either a study or a work placement, adding a 'living' dimension to their experience and language usage.

As this was the precise category of student at whom my proposed e-learning resource was aimed, their input into the development, and their opinions on the iterations of the resource's design would be both welcome and meaningful.

By accessing the class-list for the Final Year Spanish Language module in each of the two academic years in which sampling took place, and cross-referencing with individual students' module histories, I was able to determine which students fitted the criteria outlined above. Figure 3, below, details the numbers in each sample.

Academic Year	Phase of Project	No. of students fitting criteria and invited to participate	No. of students fitting criteria and agreeing to participate
2017/18	1	5	5
2018/19	2	3	3

FIGURE 3: Numerical detail of sampling in the recruitment of student participants

In the first tranche, five students met the selection criteria, and formed a group comprising three males and two females, all white, UK-born and in their early 20s. In the second group there were three students who fell within the sampling criteria: two female and one male; again, all were white, UK-born and in their early 20s. Owing to limitations of time and space,

an analysis of sociocultural factors does not form part of the current project, but such a study would be of interest beyond the parameters of this project, for example to explore the possible role of gender in an ethnically homogenous sample group. Figure 3 shows that in both groups there was a 100% acceptance rate. The ethical steps I took in recruiting these students and my subsequent treatment of them are discussed in section 4.3.3.

(b) Staff Participants

For Phase 2 of the project, I invited a group of my HEI language-teaching colleagues to form a group with me, to provide language-specific expertise to assist my research. The invitation was limited to three individuals, based on my knowledge of which languages were known (as L1, L2 or L3) by members of the RL teaching staff in the department. The three colleagues had several years' experience of teaching RL to undergraduate students in the ML department in which we worked, and I had long been convinced of both their pedagogical skill and their linguistic prowess in French and Spanish. After discussing with me the nature of their involvement, all three agreed to take part. The ethical dimension to this is explained in section 4.3.3.

Specifically, their role was to identify linguistic items and examples to be used in the piloting of the e-learning resource, based on a list of grammatical concepts compiled by a student focus group in Phase 1 of the project (see Appendix 4). The group's involvement essentially took the form of a planning meeting, the data from which would not be subjected to formal thematic analysis. The inclusion of this group in the sequence of data-generating events was also designed to give additional academic trustworthiness to the project.

The group comprised (alongside me) three colleagues whose linguistic and academic backgrounds lie in the French and Spanish languages, and who gave their consent to be part of the establishment of an informal group to provide discussion and clarity on the items of language to be included and piloted in the resource. The sampling of this group was predicated on three factors:

- i) High-level knowledge of both French and Spanish (as L1, L2 or L3). My familiarity with the colleagues through working alongside them for several years, together with my knowledge of their degree-level and postgraduate linguistic studies and their levels of fluency in particular languages, satisfied me that their linguistic credentials were strong;
- ii) A shared confidence – confirmed via initial discussions – in the value of harnessing CLI and MA in developing novel approaches to improving both our professional practice and the language-learning experience of our students (Jessner, 2008);
- iii) A strong belief in the appropriateness of the sharing of ideas and experiences among colleagues. Discussions about the formation of this group were founded on Wenger's (2018) ideas on participation within a community.

4.3.3 Ethics, Power and Bias

As an important requirement for conducting research involving other members of the language-learning community, I applied to the HEI's Research Ethics Committee for ethical approval to proceed with my research; this was granted. Consequently, and in accordance with the conditions of the approval, I issued the potential participants with full written details of the project in a participant information and consent form which adhered to BERA 2018 (see Appendices 1 and 2).

In the case of the teaching colleagues from my academic department, I explained the project and their participation in it fully, making it clear that they were entitled to withdraw in the same way that the student participants were; they expressed their understanding and agreed to take part. One aspect of the incipient research relationship with the group of colleagues was that these individuals were work colleagues whom I knew very well. In such situations, there is the potential for scrutiny and judgement by colleagues, but in this instance I was confident that my relationship with the participants was sufficiently robust to remove any fear of undue influence or power. It was noteworthy, too, that they consented freely to take

part in an activity that did not form part of their employment contract, and did so voluntarily, driven by the intrinsic interest of contributing to a project that could enhance students' learning experience.

I considered it vital to inform student participants of the context, the content and the function of the project (Greene, 2014), so that they would have a clear understanding of how the research, and their role in its progression, could have a positive influence on their own learning and that of future students of the same and similar language-pairs. I also made them aware of the amount of time they would be investing in taking part, and specified their right to withdraw and details of privacy, openness and disclosure (see Appendices 1 and 2). Greene (2014: 6) also underlines the role of disclosure in managing the relationship with participants: 'it is certainly important, and not only from an ethical standpoint, that the researcher be as forthcoming about their own identity as is necessarily relevant to their research'.

I was particularly aware of ethical considerations in designing the student focus groups that feature in both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of this study (see section 4.5.1), as the members were current students of mine. In this context I was mindful of Kvale's (2007) concerns about asymmetries of power, and of Puchta and Potter's (2004) caution against leading a discussion in a way that makes participants feel they must respond in the manner or direction the moderator wishes them to. I was therefore careful in my preliminary explanations to express clearly that all types of input – both positive and negative – would be welcomed. As part of the initial discussions with the student participants, prior to the beginning of Phase 1, I used the analogy of feedback given upon the return of corrected academic coursework: how it may appear negative in parts, but is not to be taken personally, seeking rather to prompt deeper understanding and improvements in the quality of subsequent work. In this regard, I was as confident as I could be that the participants were prepared to participate fully and speak candidly.

Similarly, in working with the student focus groups I was eager to guard against any suspicion on the part of the participants that my questions might be seeking to influence them. This is a tricky task, as by nature human beings are open to influences in all types of dialogue, but as an ethical researcher I strove to be constantly aware of the potential for excessive influence

and to seek to minimise this. Kvale (2007: 14) warns against power being exerted, even unintentionally, by a questioner or moderator, producing a situation in which 'students may, more or less deliberately, tell what they believe the interviewer authority wants to hear'. This was a very difficult ambition to realise, as the wariness remained that, out of respect for me and because I was their tutor and hence would continue to grade their coursework and exams, the participants might have been reluctant to speak negatively about what I was asking them to do in the research activities.

At the start and the end of each interview or focus group meeting I reiterated the participants' right, up to the point of data analysis, to withdraw their involvement and have their data destroyed (see Appendix 2), and I explained the process for them to request such a withdrawal. Only with the consent of each member did I proceed to the next stage of the research.

In summary, I therefore sought to ensure, both via the Ethics paperwork, and through informal discussion and the interactions that would follow, that participants were fully briefed on their role in the research and its significance in exploring solutions to problems linked to the language-learning experience in the academic department.

4.4 Piloting a Focus Group

Prior to embarking on the sequence of activities described in section 4.5, below – in particular, focus groups – I wanted to test the effectiveness of such discussions as a method for generating data. This led me to conduct a pilot meeting with a student focus group, which would allow me to adhere to the cyclical principles of planning, action, evaluation and reflection proposed by McNiff and Whitehead (2009). Furthermore, I considered that this was an important step for two main reasons:

- i) As an action researcher, I felt the need to be continuously aware of the appropriateness and effectiveness of my actions, and to be in a position to make changes at any stage of a project if I considered this necessary;

- ii) Ethically, given that I would be working with a group of participants on whose interaction with each other I would be depending, it was appropriate to allow them the opportunity to engage in a 'mock' version of the kind of exchange I had designed; this would enable me to gauge the working dynamic among the members of the group and to check that everybody was comfortable contributing.

I therefore set up a pilot focus group, involving the group of five students belonging to the first tranche identified. I had resolved that, were any aspect of the pilot meeting not to go as well as I had hoped (e.g. one or more participants feeling unable or unwilling to work in this way with the rest of the group; being unable to contribute ideas; or feeling uncomfortable expressing their experiences or perspectives in front of other people), I would think closely about the circumstances and make adjustments to the arrangements for subsequent events.

The meeting took the form of a short discussion, with me in attendance but in the capacity of a peripheral observer, not taking notes. The students were asked, a few days ahead of the meeting, to prepare ideas about their experiences of learning L2 French and L3 Spanish at university. I formulated no specific questions for the event itself, so as to distinguish it from what would be the subsequent focus group and interview events (Kvale, 2007). My intention was for the discussion among the students to evolve organically, serving principally to give an indication of how well the group would engage in discussion.

The pilot meeting went smoothly, with apparent comfort and relaxation across the group and with no obvious imbalances in terms of participants' willingness to speak in depth about their experiences. To check my feeling, I asked the students at the end what they had thought of the discussion. They replied that they had found it enjoyable, and would welcome the opportunity to take part in further discussions.

I therefore concluded that, from a methodological, an ethical and a practical perspective, the assembly of a student focus group as a mechanism for generating data was sound and fit for purpose.

4.5 Research Methods

In this section I discuss and justify the research methods I selected as being the most appropriate for deployment in the interactional phases of this project.

4.5.1 Focus Groups

As a method to generate data, I chose to minimise the directness of interviews (Kvale, 2007), preferring to generate data principally via discussions in focus groups (FG). FGs can create a platform for a relaxed exchange of views and, from the Action Research perspective, are also instrumental in contributing to the desired cyclicity of activities (McNiff and Whitehead, 2009). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) defend focus groups over interviews in that they offer economy of time and can produce large quantities of data and unexpected insights.

Wilkinson (1998) discusses the ability of FGs to explore a topic or produce data in an initial phase, and subsequently to focus on items of interest emerging from the analysis of the data. Martin, too, highlights the importance, within research design that includes focus group work, of including 'processes to follow up on whatever emerges. In other words, position such processes as moments in the ongoing learning process, not as ends in themselves' (Martin, 2008: 403). This had specific relevance to my project, with its deliberate progression of FGs through a pre-designed sequence of interactions: for example, the structure would allow for a set of raw linguistic concepts to be generated in an early FG meeting, and for these to be discussed and exploited for developmental purposes at subsequent events.

Central to the function of the FGs I had planned was the contribution of participants' experiences and current, multiple realities of L2 and L3 language-learning. The non-confrontational nature of FGs had the potential to create a relaxed atmosphere in this context. For Morgan (1997: 20), this can lead to a 'livelier group dynamic – people are more than happy to compare their different experiences, whereas they might be reluctant to challenge someone else's opinion.'

For a focus group to function effectively and generate natural outcomes of meaningful use to the researcher, it is vital that the experiences described and opinions offered by participants be spontaneous. 'If those opinions appear to have been planted by the moderator, either directly or through some implicit influence, then their validity is called into question' (Puchta and Potter, 2004: 42).

FGs are not universally supported in the literature, however. Reed and Payton (1997), for example, express concerns about the succession and retention of key areas of focus in FGs, and about the robustness of the data generated, when it is considered alongside other types of data forming part of a study's overall dataset. From a different perspective, MacDougall and Baum (1997) note the potential for a fluent exchange of ideas and opinions to be restrained in FGs, as well as cautioning against conducting FGs in situations where there may be imbalances of power within the dynamic of a group. Above all, I absorbed cases highlighting the importance of ensuring that there is clarity and a sense of usefulness in the minds of all participants. For instance, the experience of Lai (2008: 542) had shown that:

although participants were willing to be involved, the goals and plans of the projects were not necessarily fully understood by everyone, nor were they necessarily aligned with participants' interests [...] continual explanation, guidance and feedback were necessary to maintain or renew everyone's commitment to the project.

These were issues for me to contemplate in setting up the FGs within the project.

Various focus groups were established over Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the project. The sequencing of these is discussed in section 4.6 (The Implementation of an Action Research Project), but for ease of reference I consider it useful to provide an overview here of the various events that made up the sequence of interactions.

Phase 1 – Exploration of student participants’ language-learning experiences

Phase 1 of the project comprised a series of interactions designed to explore student participants’ language-learning histories and realities, with particular focus on generating data relating to the effects of CLI on their learning of French L2 and Spanish L3, and the use of MA in their foreign-language production. These events were the following:

- Focus Group 1 (FG1) – a plenary meeting of the five members of the first of the two student cohorts taking part in the project (see Figure 3, section 4.3.2 for numerical detail). This FG (see Appendix 3 for relevant fragments of the transcription) generated a list of linguistic points raised by the students as representing ‘helps’ or ‘hindrances’ in their navigation of French L2 and Spanish L3 (see Appendix 4). This meeting also triggered a set of follow-up questions which I was able to use in the subsequent sub-groups FG1a and FG1b (explained below). This list of questions is provided in Appendix 5.
- Focus Groups 1a (FG1a) and 1b (FG1b) – parallel sub-groups of the plenary FG1 (see above). These FGs each contained two students, therefore four of the five members of the first student cohort of participants were involved. The purpose of these meetings was to follow up, in more detail, on discussions begun in the plenary FG1, using the set of questions generated in FG1 (see Appendix 5). The transcriptions for FG1a and FG1b are provided in Appendices 6 and 7 respectively.
- Interview 1 (I1) – A single, one-to-one, semi-structured interview was included in the sequence of interactions with the student participants taking part in Phase 1 of the project. The student involved had been ill at the time of the FG1a/FG1b follow-up focus group meetings, but was able to attend the interview. The purpose of the interview was to dig deeper into the lived and living language-learning experiences of the student participant and gain fresh perspectives on CLI and MA. The interview questions are provided in Appendix 8, and a transcription of relevant sections of the interview can be found in Appendix 9.

Phase 2 – Development, Piloting and Evaluation of the Prototype Resource

Phase 2 of the project involved a sequence of events designed to harness the data generated in Phase 1. Specifically, Phase 2 focused on the development of a set of linguistic materials to be used in the prototype resource; the design of the resource in terms of its technical features; a pilot event; and a post-pilot debriefing session to evaluate and reflect on the experience of engaging with the resource. The interactions were the following:

- Focus Group 2 (FG2) – a group of three teaching colleagues from the HEI’s Modern Languages Department, assembled to use the linguistic data generated by student participants in Phase 1 (see Appendix 4), to develop a set of exercises to be utilised in the piloting of the prototype resource. Relevant sections of the transcription of the meeting of FG2 are provided in Appendix 11.
- Focus Group 3a (FG3a) – a plenary meeting of the three members of the second tranche of student participants taking part in the project (see Figure 3, section 4.3.2). The purpose of this FG was to discuss technical and supportive features to be included in the piloting of the resource (such as the repeatability of engagement with questions, and the provision of feedback). The transcription of FG3a can be found in Appendix 12.
- Pilot of the prototype resource – The pilot event was designed to test the linguistic materials generated by FG2 (staff) and the technical features discussed in the pre-pilot student focus group FG3a (see above). The three students involved in FG3a also formed the group of three who engaged with the pilot. The operationality of the pilot is discussed in depth in section 4.6, and a selection of the materials piloted – including examples of automatically generated feedback – can be seen in Appendix 10.
- Focus Group 3b (FG3b) – a post-pilot FG, again involving the same group of three student participants who had constituted the pre-pilot FG3a and who had engaged with the pilot itself. The purpose of FG3b was to debrief on the experience of the pilot, with opportunities for reflection and evaluation. Relevant sections of the transcription from FG3b are provided in Appendix 13.

In each of the student-constituted focus groups, I assigned myself the role of moderator. This decision was based on my status as sole researcher in the project, and on the participants' familiarity with, and trust of, me as their tutor. My involvement was limited to asking key questions to trigger discussion; otherwise, I sought to remain as peripheral as possible. I devised these questions (see Appendix 5) in an attempt to generate the data I required but phrased them in a way that was designed to promote clear and natural discussion. Puchta and Potter (2004) highlight the importance of a moderator's ability to generate discussion of a range of different topics and views, but without allowing the discussion to descend into a heated argument. The questions themselves were created by drawing on linguistic points raised by participants in the earlier, plenary Focus Group 1 (FG1) discussion, and I sought to ensure that they provided a platform to promote two elements: (a) the open sharing of lived experiences as a means of contributing to understanding (Dewey, 2011 and 2015), which would be consistent with the philosophical stance articulated in my conceptual framework (see section 3.3); and (b) a stimulus for discussion that would generate data to illustrate the theories of CLI and MA I had explored in my literature review (see sections 2.7 and 2.8 respectively).

My aim was to enable the participants to contribute their input in the form of short answers on each topic in a round-robin fashion (Puchta and Potter, 2004). Prior to each meeting I explained this to the participants and sought their consent for the discussions to be audio-recorded. I recorded each session using a portable, digital audio-recorder, whose quality both in capturing audio and in playing it back with clarity I had ascertained in advance. I then transcribed the recordings myself using naturalised transcription (Oliver et al., 2005). By undertaking the transcription process myself, I was able to ensure that the contributions (which were always likely to contain elements of three languages: English, French and Spanish) were accurately reproduced, and avoided recruiting an external transcriber, which would have involved acting outside the ethical framework of the study. The resultant transcripts were then used in the data analysis phase, discussed later in this chapter. Representative sample pages of the transcripts from all the FGs can be found in Appendices 3, 6, 7, 11, 12 and 13.

In terms of note-taking, while listening to the participants' discussion during the FG meetings, I made a series of descriptive field notes (Lodico, Spaulding and Voegtle, 2010) of potentially useful observations, linguistic concepts and other items raised and discussed by the group. These, in tandem with reflective field notes written after each interaction, facilitated my subsequent analysis of the transcription of the event (see section 4.5.3 Thematic Analysis). An example of a field note, combining in-situ observations and post-event reflections, is provided in section 5.3 (Figure 4).

4.5.2 Interviews

As discussed in section 4.5.1, the selection of focus groups as the primary method of data generation was predicated on a desire to stimulate a democratic environment that foregrounded the contribution of collective experiences, perspectives and opinions.

The literature on the appropriateness of interviews as an alternative technique for generating data reveals a range of concerns. Prominent among these is the potential for asymmetries of power, even if an interviewer does not actively intend to assert power over the interviewee (Kvale, 2007). My feeling, on deciding whether to include interviews as one of my research methods, was that there is potentially a fine line between an interviewer being fully candid to an interviewee about the purpose of an interview, and inadvertently producing an excess of information, which serves only to create an inappropriate steer in the mind of the interviewee. Puchta and Potter (2004: 121) describe the risk of the interviewer being 'seen as having an investment' in the discussion, and hence having to 'manage the potential for participants to produce positive assessments, whatever they think.' Similarly, Kelly (2007: 23) notes the importance of 'skilful and sensitive questioning [...] drawing on participants' actual experiences, and taking care not to project the researcher's own interests.'

Whilst recognising the potential shortcomings of interviews as a method for generating data, I nevertheless decided to conduct a small number of interviews with student participants as part of the sequence of Phase 1 interactions. This decision was based on a desire to include a means of picking up on points raised during earlier student focus group meetings, and

exploring a concept in more detail. I was eager to understand each participant's real-world experience as fully as possible (Kvale, 2007), to add robustness to the data I hoped to generate in the development of an e-learning resource.

I thus elected to conduct semi-structured interviews as a means of following up on earlier discussions, to check on aspects of individuals' lived experiences, to verify data already obtained, and to expand on any areas where gaps may have remained. The flexibility of the semi-structured interview (Puchta and Potter, 2004) would also allow the discussion to broaden and cover any new contributions or insights that had not hitherto emerged.

After the Phase 1 focus group meetings (FG1, FG1a and FG1b) had been completed, I invited all five student participants to be interviewed individually. Four students were unavailable on the dates suggested; a fifth student (the one who had been ill during FG1a and FG1b) agreed to be interviewed. The questions asked in this interview are provided in Appendix 8, and a transcription is given in Appendix 9.

4.5.3 Analysis of Data (Thematic Analysis)

Thematic Analysis (TA) is 'the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data' (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017: 3352). I selected TA as the most appropriate framework for analysing the data emerging from the interview and focus group events that formed part of this study, as this approach constitutes 'an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 77).

Having selected TA, my first decision was whether to subject the findings of all the interactional events to this form of analysis. I thought carefully about the appropriateness of using TA to analyse the data from FG2 in Phase 2 (comprising the group of teaching colleagues), given that the purpose of that meeting was simply to generate ideas for use in the subsequent pilot of the learning resource. I concluded that, in this context, formal TA was not necessary. For the FGs composed of student participants, however, TA was a good and

appropriate match, and would allow me to use both the transcriptions and my field-notes to establish codes and themes.

Braun and Clarke (2006) identify six phases in conducting TA, and I sought to adhere closely to these as I scrutinised the transcripts from the focus groups:

1. A process of familiarisation with data, to include transcription, reading and identifying initial ideas;
2. The generation of initial codes to embrace salient features of the data;
3. Searching the data for themes, with clustering of relevant data;
4. A review of the emerging themes to check they interact well with coded extracts, and the development of a thematic map;
5. Clear definition and naming of themes, following refinement of their specific features;
6. Selection of the most noteworthy themes and writing up of the analysis, with clear mapping to research questions.

A commentary on how I operationalised these steps is provided in section 4.5.3.1.

In following this system, I reasoned that a clear identification of themes within the data was essential for me to reach a number of conclusions upon which subsequently to reflect. For the student FGs I employed an inductive approach to achieve this, allowing the data from the discussions to drive the subsequent identification of themes (Nowell et al., 2017). To be inductive in scrutinising the data was the only logical way to approach the task, as it was impossible to predict, before each FG meeting, what types of data would emerge. Alhojailan (2012) highlights the appropriateness of such an approach, which permits specific items of data, even if wholly unexpected, to be identified in isolation and systematically clustered into broader groupings, and subsequently into themes.

Whilst the data emerging from the teaching colleagues' FG did not undergo formal TA, I nevertheless wanted to be systematic in arranging it. To accomplish this, I used a deductive approach, in the sense that the participants were working with a document containing a list of areas of grammar previously identified by students of French L2 and Spanish L3 as

problematic (although the list itself was originally constructed using an inductive approach – see Fitzsimons, 2018). The information sought in the teaching colleagues' FG was:

- i) Confirmation of which of the items from the list of grammatical areas would be used in the pilot, and in what format;
- ii) The basis on which the FG reached its decisions;
- iii) The group's perception of the usefulness of an e-learning resource.

4.5.3.1 Tagging and Coding to Establish Themes

To structure the analysis of the transcripts from the full data set, I adhered to the process described by Strauss and Corbin (1990: 61) as open coding: 'the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising and categorising data'.

In drawing up the questions to be asked in the student interview and FG sessions, I was conscious that these were broadly closed in their nature (Kvale, 2007), and that this would be likely to have an impact on how I tagged and coded the responses in the transcripts. For clarity, I selected a coding system of colours to highlight categories I identified in the data.

In each case, I began my analysis by reading (Braun and Clarke, 2006, Stage 1) a printout of the transcript from each event, together with the field notes I had taken, to familiarise myself with the content and start to identify and tag initial ideas. A full explanation of the tagging and coding system I used is outlined in Chapter 5, with examples of annotated transcripts presented in the Appendices (see Appendices 11, 12 and 13). For illustration, examples of initial tags were the following:

FG3a (students, during Phase 2 – pre-pilot):

- The first thing I noticed when studying the participants' responses to each question was a range of indications of positivity and negativity. I found this interesting and

decided to note it in the transcripts (Braun and Clarke, 2006, Stage 2). Bearing in mind that the questions were closed in nature, I considered it sufficient to tag each utterance with a positive [POS] or negative [NEG] indicator. An example of this can be seen in the transcript in Appendix 12, Lines 9 and 39.

FG3b (students, during Phase 2 – post-pilot):

- As was the case in the pre-pilot FG, above, I also started to notice positive and negative reactions in the post-pilot discussion and decided to make a note of this (Braun and Clarke, 2006, Stage 2). Again, in a context of closed questions I was able simply to tag each utterance with a positive [POS] or negative [NEG] marker. An example of this can be seen in the transcript in Appendix 13, Line 5.
- Next in my initial read-through, I spotted references to which of the exercises had been the favourite exercise undertaken in the view of certain participants. The responses are tagged [VT] for the translation exercise involving verb tenses, and [NG] for the item on the gender of nouns. Examples of this can be seen in the transcript in Appendix 13, Lines 15 and 17.

For the process of clustering the codes into initial themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006, Stage 3), I decided on a colour-coding approach, using a highlighter to mark initial categories of data. This enabled me to begin to cluster the fragments into the beginnings of a meaningful order. Full details of the initial clusters and colours are included in Appendices 12 and 13, but for illustration, one example from each of FG3a and FG3b is provided below:

FG3a (students – pre-pilot):

GREEN highlighting – any reference to students of the same combination of languages / working together / collaboration (e.g. Appendix 12, Lines 5-6);

FG3b (students – post-pilot):

YELLOW highlighting – any reference to the group of students having the same combination of languages / collaborating / sense of mini-community (e.g. Appendix 13, Lines 6-7).

Having completed the colour highlighting in each case, I conducted a process of further refinement, revisiting the broad categories and their content in order to focus in finer detail on what they represented and how meaningful they would be to the progression of the project (Braun and Clarke, 2006, Stage 4). Examples of this process include the following:

- A re-reading of the yellow items in the transcript of FG3b (see Appendix 13) led me to conclude that these were utterances demonstrating clear engagement and positivity with what the group were doing.
- A final stage of coding involved generating a means of separating the selected items of grammar in the transcript of FG2 (see Appendix 11) from the examples that emerged to illustrate them. I did this by changing the script to red for these items and labelling them to denote “identification of a category of grammar” (e.g. [ID 1]) and “examples to illustrate this category” (e.g. [1 EG 1, 1 EG 2]).
- A revision of the coloured fragments in the transcript of FG3a (Appendix 12) to consider re-clustering them to identify consolidated themes. In particular, at this stage I noted positive indications, across the colours, of both individual and collaborative benefit in the proposed resource and found that the red and olive codes dovetailed well.
- The bulk of the data in Appendix 13 referred to how helpful the student participants in FG3b had found both the concept and the small-scale pilot of this e-learning resource. I looked again at the colour-coded categories to see whether any distinct themes could be consolidated or any new ones added, but found that the outcomes were few but strongly defined.

Having performed the above steps, I wanted to be confident that I had scrutinised the data thoroughly and could thus conclude that my analysis had appropriate rigour and trustworthiness. To achieve this, I considered the concept of saturation, described by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011: 601) as the point in data analysis at which:

no new insights, properties, dimensions, relationships, codes or categories are produced even when new data are added, when all of the data are accounted for in the core categories and subcategories.

Larger studies can reach a point at which the scrutiny of additional individual cases only produces repetition. Mine was a small, qualitative study, in which my interpretation of saturation would come when the participants had exhausted all the perceptions and experiences they could bring to the interactions and I was satisfied that, after due analysis, I had reached the point at which 'the coding that has already been completed adequately supports and fills out the emerging theory' (Ezzy, 2002: 93). After due reflection, I deemed this to be the case.

I was now able to group the items into three refined themes with names (Braun and Clarke, 2006, Stage 5):

1. Pedagogical aspects relating to the development of the resource;
2. Metalinguistic awareness;
3. The development of a learning community.

A grid showing the relationship between codes and themes, with indicative quotations contributing to the establishment of each theme, is provided in Appendix 14.

These were the themes to be written up in the formal data analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, Stage 6). This analysis is presented in Chapter 5, Findings and Discussion.

4.6 The Implementation of an Action Research Project

The practical, interactional elements of this AR project divided into two broad phases, detailed below. These were conducted following the cyclical approach of PLAN > ACTION > EVALUATION > REFLECTION championed by McNiff and Whitehead (2009).

Phase 1

The central objective of Phase 1 was to engage in a series of interactions with a group of student participants, to explore their language-learning experiences as undergraduates studying French and Spanish. I planned these meetings thoroughly: the participants' input was structured as a phased series of differently conceived events (focus groups and interviews), designed to shed light on two distinct facets of their language-learning experience:

- a) Their perceptions and experiences of CLI between L2 French (their first foreign language) and L3 Spanish (their second);
- b) The effects of MA in both their language-learning process and their high-level use of both languages.

A meticulous evaluation of the data generated by these interactions, with careful reflection at each stage, allowed me to derive conclusions prior to progression to Phase 2.

Phase 2

Phase 2 involved using the data generated in Phase 1 to contextualise, devise, pilot and evaluate a set of materials to be used in the development of an e-learning resource to support the language-learning experience of undergraduate students of L2 French and L3 Spanish.

The pilot was conducted on the VLE of the HEI in which this project is located. In considering various environments to pilot and host the resource, I consulted widely and noted which platforms featured most significantly in fora and discussions. I selected two, Moodle and Edmodo, partly to prompt comparison and reflection, but mainly given the constraints of space and time in this project. I thought about these platforms' functionality and affordances, and their attractiveness in comparison with the in-house VLE of the HEI. To make a final decision, I consulted two former students, both with the L2 French / L3 Spanish combination, who had taken part in focus groups FG1, FG1a and FG1b in Phase 1 of this project and had

since graduated. Their instinct was that the pilot activities for the resource should be housed within the familiar environment of the institution's VLE. They agreed that platforms such as Edmodo or Moodle had much to offer, but felt that it would be more comfortable for students to pilot and comment on new activities using the platform with which they were most familiar. My conclusion, therefore, was to use the in-house VLE to pilot the prototype e-learning resource.

The pilot itself comprised a set of online exercises developed from the findings of the focus group of teaching colleagues (FG2). These exercises were planned and implemented with close attention paid to the pedagogical concerns discussed in Chapter 2. Screenshots of these exercises, including examples of instant feedback provided, can be seen in Appendix 10.

Having taken part in FG3a (pre-pilot), the student participants were given access online to the pilot exercises and invited to engage with them over a period of a few days, in the manner and sequence of their choosing, including the ability to have repeat attempts in the event of answering a particular question incorrectly. They then reconvened as FG3b, in a post-pilot debriefing meeting, during which they provided their thoughts on how the pilot had gone.

Putting the plan into action therefore involved not only devising and executing a practical pilot, but also harnessing a specific sequence of focus groups (one comprising teaching colleagues, the others made up of students) forming part of a language-learning community. Each stage in the sequence was carefully scrutinised upon its completion, to evaluate what had happened and to reflect upon its potential impact on the subsequent stage.

4.7 Summary

In this chapter I have discussed my positionality within this project, and explained the issues of access, sampling and ethics that needed to be addressed in my work with the participants. I have detailed and justified the research methods selected to undertake the two phases of the project, and provided an explanation of how these phases were structured and implemented.

The findings from both phases are presented and discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5

Findings and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a synthesis of the findings of the project. These findings are discussed and reflected upon in the context of the research questions identified in section 2.10:

1. To what extent can a bespoke e-learning resource be effective in supporting the learning of undergraduate students of L2 French and L3 Spanish?
2. What are the (positive and negative) effects of cross-linguistic influence (CLI) on the language-learning experience and knowledge development of undergraduate students of L2 French and L3 Spanish, and can these effects be demonstrated via a bespoke e-learning resource?
3. What role does metalinguistic awareness (MA) play in the language-learning experience and knowledge development of undergraduate students of L2 French and L3 Spanish, and can MA be demonstrated through exposure to a bespoke e-learning resource?

The discussion and findings in this chapter also embrace the following research sub-questions, which are expressed as aims in section 2.10 and which contribute robustness to the main RQs:

1. To explore the feasibility of developing a bespoke e-learning resource by harnessing the input of both lecturers and students.
2. To explore whether the involvement of lecturers and students in planning and creating a bespoke e-learning resource can be considered to constitute the endeavour of a Community of Practice (CoP).

The chapter divides into three main sections for discussion, based on thematic analysis undertaken in the project:

1. Pedagogical aspects relating to the development of a bespoke e-learning resource;
2. Metalinguistic awareness;
3. The development of a learning community.

The final section of the chapter offers some reflections on the findings and discussion, leading into the main, overarching conclusions for the project, which are provided in Chapter 6.

5.2 Pedagogical Aspects Relating to the Development of a Bespoke E-learning Resource

This section begins with a brief presentation of the areas of language identified by the student participants in Phase 1 Focus Group 1 (FG1). These items are discussed in more detail in section 5.3 Metalinguistic Awareness, but they are also relevant here, as obtaining a list of key grammatical concepts was vital as I began to think about the pedagogical design of the resource being developed.

Subsequently, the main part of this section focuses on a discussion of the pedagogical design itself.

5.2.1 The Identification of Grammatical Aspects Requiring Pedagogical Consideration

Throughout the various data-generation activities conducted with students in this project, I was keen to explore their language-learning experiences and realities (Oxford, 1997). It was instructive to learn how they viewed the teaching they had received in L2 French prior to starting their degree course, as that had laid the foundations for their subsequent language-learning endeavours as they approached L3 Spanish. This, in turn, enabled me as the researcher to identify their needs and gauge their preferred styles of learning, to inform the

pedagogical considerations in the development of the resource and hence maximise its effectiveness (Rovai, 2004; McCarten and Sandiford, 2016).

The interactions in Phase 1 revealed a certain amount of dissatisfaction with how the participants had been taught French structures at secondary school. Notable in particular was a perceived superficiality and disjointedness in how grammar had been taught. As Interview Participant 1 noted in a discussion about the extent to which usage of the subjunctive in French had been embedded at school:

It was quite messy, actually, the way they approached it – they just threw it at us, saying “you can use it in this way and that way; these words trigger it”. It felt very random, throughout the course – saying “oh, by the way, this word triggers the subjunctive, too”. There was never a specific lesson devoted to it – there probably should have been (Appendix 9, Fragment I5, lines 13-17).

The importance, in the participants’ minds, of acquiring a solid grammatical foundation in L2 as a prelude to learning L3, was highlighted numerous times in the interactions. Interview Participant 1’s comparative view confirmed this trend in my analysis:

... in the ab initio Spanish [at university] we went into a lot of depth with grammar, and because at school we weren’t taught properly, and we hadn’t really scratched the surface with grammar, so when I got to uni and we had actual grammar classes, it was very helpful. It was very hard, but in the Spanish classes they just covered everything and it all sank into my brain (Appendix 9, Fragment I5, lines 27-31).

This insistence on the significance of formal grammar acquisition, and the positivity with which comparative French/Spanish linguistic attention was viewed, confirmed via analysis that grammar needed to be the main focus of the resource. This, in turn, resulted in a list of the areas of grammar the participants found to be problematic (see Appendix 4).

I undertook a detailed scrutiny of the Phase 1 data provided in Appendix 4, and developed a more streamlined cluster-list for focus, comprising the grammatical items raised in the Phase 1 discussions:

1. Difficulties with differences between the usages of comparable past tenses in French and Spanish, particularly in respect of the interaction between the perfect and the preterite/past historic tenses;
2. The perfect tense in French differs from its Spanish counterpart in a number of ways, principally in terms of its agreement in number and gender – this can cause difficulties;
3. The subjunctive mood is used far more widely in Spanish than in French, although there are some areas of overlap;
4. Conditional sentences (essentially, those involving ‘if’ clauses) are seen to differ structurally in the two languages – some examples seem easier to transfer between French and Spanish; others less so;
5. The existence of two verbs ‘to be’ in Spanish (*ser* and *estar*) is a source of confusion for the learner, but particularly when coming from the single French verb *être*;
6. The Spanish prepositions *por* and *para* require special attention, when viewed from the perspective of the relatively straightforward French cognate *pour*;
7. A list of other, similar prepositions could be identified across both languages, but with usage differing, particularly when inserted before an infinitive verb – some aspects of this phenomenon are considered difficult, and others straightforward;
8. Cognate nouns whose gender differs between French and Spanish can cause difficulty;
9. Patterns of adjective formation differ between French and Spanish, and may be a source of confusion for the learner;
10. Such a difference is also visible in the use of superlative adjective structures.

Of these, items 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8 and 10 are noted by Butt and Benjamin (2013) as worthy of particular caution by learners of Spanish who have also studied French. This level of concurrence reassured me that the data emerging from Phase 1 of this project would be reliable for analysis in Phase 2.

5.2.2 Pedagogical Aspects in the Design of a Bespoke E-learning Resource

Informed by the findings from Phase 1 of the project, the focus on the pedagogical design of the resource was concentrated mainly in Phase 2. During Phase 2 focus groups, student

participants commented on a range of pedagogical factors associated with the development of the resource, and their input was very useful in shaping design-related decisions.

Firstly, as all the participants were necessarily studying the same combination of languages, they spoke very positively about the provision of a specialised resource to support their specific learning needs. Participant 2, for instance, noted that:

having a resource to support students with our combination would be incredibly helpful (Appendix 12, Lines 31-2).

This eagerness coincides with my professional, pedagogical and philosophical interest in the personalisation of undergraduate learning experiences. The appropriateness, in the student perception, of a bespoke tool that can contribute to successful and enjoyable learning is discussed by McCarten and Sandiford (2016), who highlight the importance of the personalisation of learning resources.

The participants' positivity in the pre-pilot focus group (FG3a) was echoed in the post-pilot debriefing (FG3b), in which they were invited to talk about the experience and the usefulness of the prototype resource. In the latter discussion, participants remarked on the carefully targeted nature of the material that had featured in the pilot. Participant 1 observed that:

you could tell it [the resource] had been thought out for students in our position (Appendix 13, Lines 41-2);

I think the fact that it's got us in mind, with our combination of languages, is brilliant (Appendix 13, Lines 67-8).

This enthusiasm bears out the recommendations of Rovai (2004), who discusses the importance of tailoring online resources to students' prior language-learning knowledge and experiences.

In considering the pedagogical approach to be taken in developing the resource, I was interested to hear the participants' motives for seeking such resources. Participant 1 stated that:

when I want to practise grammar I always look online (Appendix 12, Lines 23-4).

Drawing on the evidence of the data, the relevance of providing a resource that offered grammatical training and practice became apparent, as this was identified as a key reason why students search for online materials. Such provision was fundamental to my research: to cater for students' motivation to find materials, by actively developing resources that in turn motivate them to study more deeply and successfully (Leakey and Ranchoux, 2006). Participant 3, meanwhile, highlighted the performative function of identifying relevant online materials as part of their learning techniques, as:

revision for your exams (Appendix 12, Line 22).

This contribution led me to ponder whether this group of students were eager to participate simply for the intrinsic pleasure of learning together, or whether there was perhaps a performative agenda in their motivation. This would be a valuable topic for a subsequent study.

In FG3a, there were repeated mentions of self-managed blended learning (i.e. working with self-sourced materials to complement those provided by a tutor), with the participants noting the usefulness of seeking out good-quality online resources to support in-class learning. Regarding the search for suitable grammar-related online resources, Participant 1 commented:

it's difficult to find relevant ones [and to have to] search through thousands of websites to find a good one (Appendix 12, Lines 24-5 and 29-30).

A key ambition of this project was to explore the potential for removing the requirement for students of L2 French and L3 Spanish to search at length online for suitably relevant resources to support their learning. It is clear from the focus group discussions that, in the students' view, such materials must be accessible and suitable to be self-managed.

A consistent area of focus for the student participants was the interface between pedagogy and the inclusion of a series of features that would enable the resource to be self-managed in ways that suited their individual learning needs.

Participants reflected on the importance of time management within their learning opportunities, with Participant 1 championing the benefits of a relaxed, flexible self-managed model including online material, which is:

good to do in your own time (Appendix 12, Lines 36-7).

This opinion chimed with the findings of Sönmez et al. (2018), who highlight the advantages of online material being accessible at a time and in a place of the learner's choice, while Johnson and Marsh (2014) discuss the value of learning a language through activities undertaken online, away from the classroom and at the learner's preferred pace.

Alongside the time *at which* engagement with a resource might occur, another element on which I was keen to learn the participants' views was the time *allowed* for such engagement. This was vital in establishing the extent to which, when they worked with the resource, I would be inviting them to demonstrate the success of their learning against the clock. The reverse stance in this context would be to allow participants as much time as they needed, so as not to restrict their engagement with the materials and the potential benefit to be derived. The latter approach is very much in keeping with my beliefs on flexible learning, and is consistent with the views of Mason and Rennie (2006), who support the elimination of timed assessment and the pressure it can cause.

The participants were asked for their views before the pilot on particular exercises being timed. Their views were harmonious in demonstrating opposition to their responses to challenges within the resource being time-constrained. Participant 1 revealed that:

I'm not sure I'd like being hassled by time or that kind of pressure (Appendix 12, Lines 38-9).

Participant 3 agreed that:

being able to answer at your own pace is absolutely essential (Appendix 12, Line 43).

However, it is worth noting that in the post-pilot debriefing, Participant 3 offered a nuanced response that:

[an indication of] time taken [...] would be useful (Appendix 13, Line 61).

This view did not argue for a time-limit for exercises to be imposed, but it did suggest that it would be desirable to include a means of indicating the time taken to complete a particular task. As a result, I concluded that an optional timing device could be incorporated into a refined version of the resource to allow users, if they so wished, to measure the time taken and use this as a tool to compare the speed of initial and subsequent engagements.

In the pre-pilot focus group (FG3a), the repeatability of exercises was discussed, and opinions suggested this was a highly desirable feature. Participant 2 noted that:

it's good to be able to fiddle around to get to grips with what the right answer is and why it's right (Appendix 12, Lines 49-50).

This view was supported by Participant 3, who stated that:

I'm big on repeating stuff when I'm revising [...] I'd prefer something that allows me as many goes as possible (Appendix 12, Lines 55-6).

It was reassuring to note the participants' opinions on repeatability of exercises in the resource. Their responses provided confirmation that allowing the exercises to be repeated was a worthwhile step. McCarten and Sandiford (2016) highlight the appropriateness of enabling multiple attempts at online language-learning tasks, a view shared by Gillespie et al. (2007). This approach allows users of a resource to be in control of their learning processes,

as well as offering a more supportive environment to learners who are less confident in their ability.

In the post-pilot focus group (FG3b), this perspective was sustained, with the noteworthy addition from Participant 3 that:

[an indication of] attempts made would be useful as then you'd get to see which areas you need to work on further. I think that would help me improve my skills to get a better score next time (Appendix 13, Lines 61-3).

The notion of receiving a score for a particular exercise was also discussed. Participant 1 observed that:

I find it useful to get marked out of 10 or however many questions there are, so when I repeat the exercise I can see how I've improved by looking at the grade (Appendix 13, Lines 51-3).

Participant 2 noted that:

I didn't feel a lack of marks or results but if there's going to be more exercises then having some sort of statistic at the end or at the end of each section could be useful to see overall and recognise where your weaknesses are (Appendix 13, Lines 54-7).

In the literature I reviewed, I considered discussions (e.g. Butler and Nisan, 1986; Black et al., 2004) of the appropriateness of the award of a numerical score to reflect a candidate's performance in a task or an assessment. In the review, I was unable to identify any research on this issue in the specific context of online language-learning exercises of the type piloted in this project. However, I noted the student participants' preference for such a score to be included, and deem this a worthy point for consideration in the subsequent development of the resource.

Furthermore, it was instructive to reflect on the participants' views on the specific points of language on which the sample exercises in the prototype resource had focused. Given that these points had originally been proposed by an earlier group of participants (see Appendix

4), then developed into exercises via discussion within the teaching colleagues' focus group (FG2), it was important to gauge the success of the resource from this perspective.

Participant 1 noted that:

I found the translation useful because, for me, the obvious answer is not always the case when it comes to grammar (Appendix 13 Lines 15-6).

Participant 2 felt that:

I thought the gender comparison activity was very useful because I normally assume that the genders are the same across both languages, but it was interesting to realise how many words I know of but didn't realise are different genders (Appendix 13, Lines 17-20).

The participants also put forward their opinions on the provision of feedback in the resource. They were unanimous in viewing this as a vital feature of any resource of this type, and also offered their thoughts on the timing of the feedback provided. Participant 3 stated that:

I think instant feedback is essential (Appendix 12, Line 63).

This opinion resonates with my own view: in my teaching and examining activity, I have always found that students appreciate detailed feedback being provided on long, formative pieces of assessment, but they acknowledge that there might be a long gap before this reaches them after submission. However, for a short, task-specific challenge such as working through an online grammar activity, it is both possible and desirable for formative feedback to be issued immediately. Discussing this point, Gillespie et al. (2007) favour the provision of instant feedback to offer both solutions and encouragement while the exercise and the grammatical areas it covers are still fresh in the user's mind. It was also reassuring to note the participants' overwhelmingly positive reactions to the prospect of hints and explanations being provided as part of the instant feedback. Participant 1 said that:

it's best if you get an explanation as to where you went wrong or if you're right, it tells you why you're right (Appendix 12, Line 61-2).

Participant 3 agreed:

if I've got an answer wrong it gives me a hint to make me think about the answer [...] hints also make you think, so I find I can learn much more than just seeing afterwards that they were wrong (Appendix 12, Lines 65-9).

Data evidence provided a robust confirmation that the features I had programmed into the resource to provide immediate, automatic and explanatory feedback to user responses were viewed with satisfaction by the participants. In particular, the success of the inclusion of a hint towards success at the next attempt tallies with the findings of Mason and Rennie (2006), who support the issuing of appropriately targeted feedback, which will not only inform the learner that a specific answer is incorrect, but also provide an explanation as to why the answer had been wrong and some tips towards answering correctly at the next attempt.

Reviewing the transcripts of the student FG meetings, I could identify no negative views expressed regarding the design and piloting of the prototype resource from the point of view of its pedagogy and its features. It was nevertheless appropriate for me to reflect again on the potential for asymmetries of power in these encounters, and to consider whether the participants may have been responding with what they felt I wanted to hear (Puchta and Potter, 2004). However, I remained as confident as I could be that, given the preliminary work I had undertaken to ensure that the participants knew that all views – positive and negative – would be welcomed (see section 4.3.3), the discussions generated honest and meaningful data.

The relevance and usefulness of the specific targeting of the resource was summarised by Participant 1 who, in a concluding remark, observed:

I've never come across anything like it, and I'm always looking out for grammatical exercises online (Appendix 13, Lines 66-7).

This provided me with encouragement that, both from the pedagogical perspective and in respect of the affordances I had programmed into the resource to support the language-learning needs of its users, the pilot had been productive and informative.

5.3 Metalinguistic Awareness

a) Phase 1

An important aspect of the early stages of this project was to explore in depth student participants' experience of CLI – in particular the 'negative' manifestations of CLI, whereby their L3 Spanish production is detrimentally affected by L2 French influence. However, of greater relevance as the project progressed was a focus on MA, through which participants demonstrated their ability to harness their L2 skills and knowledge in approaching L3 study (Jessner, 1999; Blake and Delforge, 2004).

In Phase 1 of the project, the student focus groups (FG1, FG1a and FG1b) revealed a range of mentions of how participants navigated the similarities and differences between L2 French and L3 Spanish. I scrutinised the transcripts and field notes from each meeting, analysing the data using thematic analysis.

i) Focus Group 1 (FG1)

The plenary student focus group FG1 generated discussion of a variety of grammatical elements. A grid showing a comprehensive list of these concepts, with my initial analysis of the participants' positive or negative views on each concept, is included in Appendix 4.

Figure 4, below, combines the content of a field note taken during FG1, with comments added after the event when I re-listened to the audio recording. The representation shows examples of both descriptive and reflective input as I gathered evidence of the participants' engagement with MA:

PRIMARY (DESCRIPTIVE) FIELD NOTE			POST-EVENT COMMENTS	
Concept	Mentioned by...	Incidence	Pos/Neg Tone	Reflective Notes
Gender of nouns	4, 2, 1, 2, 5, 4, 1, 3	IIII III (8)	POS x 3 NEG x 5	Some evidence of awareness of differences in gender of cognate nouns between F & S, but also of strategies to combat this
Verbs	2, 2, 3, 4, 1, 5, 3, 4, 5, 2, 1, 4, 1, 4, 3, 2, 1, 4, 4, 2, 4, 1, 3, 5, 5, 3, 2, 1, 5, 4, 3, 1, 2, 4, 2, 4, 2, 1, 3, 2, 5, 4, 1, 3	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII (44)	Approx 50% POS and NEG	Some areas of comparative verb systems mentioned as easy to handle (future and imperfect tenses), but past tenses seem problematic. Also difficulties mentioned re: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ser/estar • Use of perfect tense • Agreement of past participle • Verbs of thinking • Verbs with 'when' to express a future idea • Conditional sentences • Use of the subjunctive mood

FIGURE 4: Example of a primary field note from FG1, with post-event comments added

In the above field note, I logged whether participants seemed to consider a particular area of language to be problematic in terms of their mastering it in both L2 and L3 (which would perhaps signify 'negative' CLI) or whether they had found their L2 French knowledge of that concept helpful in mastering its equivalent in L3 Spanish (which would denote some level of MA). Whilst there were differences of opinion around the table, it was clear that the data appeared to be beginning to correspond to the CLI and MA I had raised in my research questions.

A simple but clear tagging system facilitated the clustering of data: I added '+' to any item appearing to indicate MA and '-' to any item suggesting problematic CLI. Examples of this can be seen in the fragments of the FG1 transcript reproduced in Appendix 3.

It was noteworthy from the outset of FG1 that participants broadly deemed it to have been beneficial to their L3 Spanish to have learned French as their L2. Speaking in general terms about beginning Spanish as L3, Participant 1 stated:

the main thing for me was that I found Spanish wasn't a major shock when I started (Appendix 3, Fragment FG1-01, Lines 2-3).

Participant 2 agreed:

After the first couple of classes, where you start to look at little dialogues and see the verbs starting to fit together, I remember thinking I'd hit the ground running (Appendix 3, Fragment FG1-01, Lines 10-12).

These views are in line with the positive findings of Bardel and Lindqvist (2006), whose study focuses on capturing the perceptions of students engaged in learning an L3.

Participant 2's comment on verbs was the first of many mentions of the Spanish verb system (either as a standalone element of the language, or in comparative terms with the French verb system): indeed, seven of the 11 fragments reproduced in Appendix 3 refer to verbs. This echoes the weight attached to verbs in Butt and Benjamin (2013), who devote 18 of 39 chapters of their comprehensive grammar book to coverage of the Spanish verb system.

In discussing their experiences of the Spanish verb system as L3 learners, FG1 generated data that were roughly split between positive responses that suggested the deployment of MA, and mentions of finding Spanish verbs difficult because of the French system being embedded in their brains. Typical of these discussions was the exchange shown in Appendix 3, Fragment FG1-07. There are several expressions of dismay at experiencing complications in engaging with the Spanish perfect tense. Participant 1 noted:

but the usage isn't the same, or it doesn't overlap as much as you'd think (Appendix 3, Fragment FG1-07, Line 7).

However, whilst agreeing about the perceived difficulty of using the perfect tense in both languages, Participant 3 gave a clear indication of awareness of how usage differs, suggesting an ability to offer a confident comparative overview and hence strong MA (Bono, 2011):

There's also the agreement thing in the perfect, not just the timings. You've got to make so much agree in French, but less so in Spanish (Appendix 3, Fragment FG1-07, Lines 11-12).

Further evidence was offered in the same fragment of positivity in engaging with the verb system of Spanish L3 after that of French L2. In both cases, there is evidence of MA in discussing the progression from L2 to L3 (Blake and Delforge, 2004):

I think we'd done the hard work first in French, so Spanish was easier in that sense (Appendix 3, Fragment FG1-07, Lines 14-15, Participant 2);

I actually like the preterite in Spanish. I wish French used the past historic more, so that you had a parallel (Appendix 3, Fragment FG1-07, Lines 18-19, Participant 1).

Data emerging from discussions within FG1 on the formation and usage of adjectives and the gender of nouns revealed a combination – again, with an approximate 50/50 split – of focus on the negative elements of engaging with Spanish L3 after French L2, and indications of strong MA in stepping back from both languages and offering a clear sense of being in control of the similarities and differences in play (Malakoff, 1992). An example of this is the following exchange from Appendix 3, Fragment FG1-02:

Participant 2: 'I got into a tangle coz I was trying to say "in-depth analysis" and I said *profunda*, the feminine, instead of *profundo*' (Lines 4-5);

Participant 1: 'It's masculine in Spanish' (Line 6);

Participant 5: 'I always think of *l'analyse*, so I suppose you don't get the gender from that' (Line 8);

Participant 4: '*El análisis* sounds right in Spanish' (Line 9).

The FG1 data produced a list of linguistic points (see Appendix 4) which I subsequently explored more deeply in the smaller focus groups FG1a and FG1b.

ii) Focus Groups 1a (FG1a) and 1b (FG1b)

Based on the data from FG1, I drew up a list of questions to provide focus for the smaller FG1a and FG1b meetings. This list is shown in Appendix 5. A set of indicative fragments from the transcripts I typed up after the meetings of FG1a and FG1b had taken place, are included in Appendices 6 and 7 respectively.

As was the case with the FG1 discussions, the data revealed a mixture of indications of negative CLI from embedded L2 French affecting participants' engagement with L3 Spanish, and some strong suggestions of MA being deployed. A discussion of participants' views on the use of the subjunctive mood in French and Spanish verb constructions (see Appendix 7, Fragment FG1b-22) is illustrative of the complexity of the discussions.

There is a clear difference in perspective visible in the exchange. Participant 1 talks about the difficulty of manipulating the Spanish subjunctive in comparison with its French counterpart:

I wonder whether I should be using it in French (Lines 4-5);

in Spanish it's this whole range of usages waiting to trip you up (Lines 14-15).

Participant 2, on the other hand, adopts a more positive tone in discussing how a prior knowledge of French had proved valuable:

I already knew the concepts of, say, the perfect and the pluperfect, but then you had to learn when to use it and why to use it, and it was really helpful to have the concepts beforehand (Lines 16-18).

Participant 2 also demonstrates clear MA:

I understand it now, because it's been made obvious through using it in both languages (Lines 9-10).

When learning two foreign languages simultaneously, the ability to make informed decisions based on comparative analysis is illustrative of the approach discussed by Bono (2011: 31), who refers to MA as ‘a sophisticated toolbox for problem-solving or, alternatively, the ability to anticipate problems and to overcome linguistic, discursive or pragmatic shortcomings.’

In analysing the data emerging from the focus groups, it became clear that the participants were broadly of the view that a prior knowledge of French (as L2) had had a positive influence on their learning of L3 Spanish. Furthermore, their contributions to the FG discussions revealed more evidence of (positive) MA than (negative) CLI. They displayed evidence of a common, pragmatic approach to their foreign-language-learning activities: absorbing the basic rules associated with a particular grammatical concept in both languages, and observing how much transferability there was between the two. While there were some expressions of frustration that the two languages did not coincide more fully in their structure, the discussions revealed a shared readiness to deploy common-sense, adaptation strategies in formulating their language production in both French and Spanish (Jessner, 2008).

This was evidenced in discussions of a range of aspects of language-learning, where deployment of MA can be clearly witnessed. Examples are the following:

‘You see patterns in, for example, the past tense – that’s really helpful’ (Appendix 6, Fragment FG1a-11, Participant 1, Line 13);

‘I do try and confront it because that’s part of the language, and I recognise it’s important’ (Appendix 7, Fragment FG1b-22, Participant 1, Lines 22-24);

‘I still make mistakes, but I think it’s about recognising those mistakes and understanding why it’s wrong, so you don’t make the mistake again’ (Appendix 6, Fragment FG1a-14, Participant 1, Lines 14-15).

In these observations, the participants displayed evidence of the type of analytical thought in comparing two foreign languages that is championed by Malakoff (1992). Equally, their ability to demonstrate high-level awareness of the subtleties of their L2 and L3 – both in isolation and in comparative terms – echoes the findings of Murphy (2003: 10), for whom a student of L3 deploys L2 at a ‘high level of activation’ in their L3 production.

b) Phase 2

In this subsection, I present the MA-related findings that emerged from the data generated by focus groups FG2 (teaching colleagues) and FG3b (student debrief after the pilot).

i) Focus Group 2 (FG2)

Phase 2 of the project began with a meeting of FG2 (a focus group made up of ML department teaching colleagues, assembled to agree on a set of materials to be used in the pilot of the prototype learning resource). FG2 scrutinised a list of grammatical concepts compiled in Phase 1 by student focus groups (see Appendix 4) in the context of French L2 / Spanish L3 learning, and developed three concepts that embraced some of the content of the list:

1. **Structures involving verbs and prepositions:** FG2 cited an example of a common grammatical error that can be made by a student of L2 French and L3 Spanish, in the context of a verb requiring or not requiring a particular preposition. The linguistic differences across the three languages are detailed below:

ENGLISH

My teacher	asks	me	to do	these exercises
SUBJECT	MAIN VERB	INDIRECT OBJECT	INFINITIVE	OBJECT

FRENCH

Mon professeur	me	demande	de	faire	ces exercices
SUBJECT	INDIRECT OBJECT	MAIN VERB	PREPOSITION	INFINITIVE	OBJECT

SPANISH

Mi professor	me	pide	que	haga	estos ejercicios
SUBJECT	INDIRECT OBJECT	MAIN VERB	CONJUNCTION	VERB IN SUBJUNCTIVE	OBJECT

A member of the group suggested that this item could be dealt with via a multiple-choice question, whereby users were given the sentence in French and invited to choose which of four possible Spanish translations was the correct one. The group used its knowledge of L2 French and L3 Spanish to compose the required material (see Appendix 10). Their reflection was that, with its requirement for users to deploy high-level L2/L3 activation (Murphy, 2003) in recognising key differences between the two languages, the draft exercise would be appropriate to test the structures under scrutiny.

2. **Gender of nouns:** FG2 compiled a list of ten common English nouns whose French and Spanish equivalents are cognates (bearing derivational similarities to each other) but differ in terms of their gender (e.g. ‘the end’ is ‘la fin’ [feminine] in French and ‘el fin’ [masculine] in Spanish). The ten nouns were:

- i) method
- ii) tooth
- iii) blood
- iv) salt
- v) end
- vi) preface
- vii) nose
- viii) honey
- ix) limit
- x) milk

For this item, the group worked up a true/false exercise, in which the cognate French and Spanish nouns were supplied in pairs and assigned genders, some correct and some incorrect. In this way, users would be required to think comparatively across their two foreign languages and use MA to inform their chosen responses (Bono, 2011). The group concluded that this approach would foster depth of thought as users considered and submitted their responses. Examples of this exercise can be seen in Appendix 10.

3. **Past tenses of verbs:** FG2 constructed a sample sentence in English, whose translation into French and into Spanish would demand two different past tenses – the perfect

tense (e.g. 'I have written') in French and the simple past or preterite (e.g. 'I wrote') in Spanish. Users would be invited to fill a gap in a partially-written Spanish translation of a French sentence, inserting what they judged to be the correct verb form. This approach was considered by the group to be an ideal means of testing whether the users were able to avoid CLI and use their MA to arrive at the correct answer. In particular, the users would be demonstrating whether they were drawing (incorrectly, on this occasion) on their L2 French or deploying MA to identify the correct tense required (Hufeisen and Jessner, 2009). The material is given below, and screenshots of the exercise are provided in Appendix 10.

ENGLISH: Yesterday my sister listened to the radio

FRENCH: Hier ma soeur a écouté la radio

SPANISH: Ayer mi hermana escuchó la radio

While reflecting further, after the meeting, on the materials that FG2 had produced, I consulted Butt and Benjamin (2013), to check the cross-linguistic (L2/L3) relevance of each of the examples provided. I concluded that these had the potential to reveal evidence of CLI and MA when attempted by the student participants, and that they were therefore suitable for use in the pilot.

Screenshots showing the implementation of these materials in the various types of exercise that made up the pilot – including examples of instant feedback based on correct and incorrect answers being given – are provided in Appendix 10.

ii) Focus Group 3b (FG3b)

After the student participants had engaged with the exercises in the pilot, I considered the views they had expressed on the usefulness of the prototype resource in the context of MA.

During the discussion in the post-pilot debriefing focus group (FG3b), there were various references to participants having drawn on their knowledge and learning of both French and Spanish and using comparative analysis to arrive at their answers to the exercises. This is

indicative of a strategic approach of the type discussed by Gajo (2001). The conclusion was that the pilot had prompted in the participants a specific way of thinking and deciding on their linguistic choices. Participant 2 noted that:

it made me think about a direct comparison between French and Spanish grammar (Appendix 13, Lines 6-7).

Meanwhile, Participant 3 underlined the importance and value of how the prototype resource had been constructed, noting that it required a dualism of thinking to respond correctly in engaging with the structures of both foreign languages:

[the pilot] highlighted the grammatical differences of each language, and forced me to think in terms of each language respectively (Appendix 13, Lines 22-4).

This observation is supported by the findings of Bono (2011), who describes the role of MA in a learner being actively aware of, and able to manipulate, both the *similarities* and the *differences* between two languages. Pratt and Grieve (1984) also discuss the appropriateness of L2/L3 language students learning to separate the structures of both languages in their mind, and harnessing their sensitivity to CLI and their high-level MA to identify and resolve difficulties of production in L3 that may be influenced by prior knowledge of L2.

Participant 3 had given thought to why the exercises in the pilot had been set up in the way they had, and offered the following nuanced comment:

I agree that it seemed to have kind of predicted the things we might have got wrong because of the language combination we do (Appendix 13, Lines 45-7).

It was clear that this participant had engaged with the exercises as presented to them and had used MA to answer them correctly; however, as a consequence of the pilot, the participant appeared also to have started to think in a more targeted way about the potential French/Spanish pitfalls that were at the core of the exercises. This style of analytical thinking is discussed by Malakoff (1992) and Bono (2011).

The participants also found it valuable that key linguistic elements from both languages had been combined in a single exercise. The group were obliged not only to consider French and Spanish in isolation and reach conclusions, but also to engage comparatively with two different linguistic systems mentally in real time before selecting the answer they would submit to a particular question. Participant 3 noted that:

combining the two languages together in a single exercise was very beneficial as you can directly compare your knowledge of both languages and test your ability to work with both foreign languages at once (Appendix 13, Lines 9-12).

This evidence was valuable in confirming the usefulness and the accurate targeting of the prototype resource. It also tallied with the views of Jessner (2008), who highlights the importance of students of two cognate foreign languages using comparative analytical skills to solve cross-linguistic L2/L3 problems.

The findings emerging from the data in Phase 2 of the project were noteworthy in confirming that the participants had deployed MA in their engagement with the prototype resource; equally, it was clear that they appreciated the requirement for them to do so. They were aware, from their engagement, of the extent to which the resource had been targeted at students with their specific language combination, and they commented on how notably it had caused them to think about both French and Spanish and about their language-learning approaches. As Participant 2 observed:

we've never really thought about why we might be making French-style mistakes in Spanish, so it's got us thinking (Appendix 13, Lines 69-71).

It was consistently clear to me in analysing the data from Phase 2 of the project that both the discussions and the engagement with the prototype resource itself had triggered in the participants a deeper and more analytical consideration of their language-learning strategies. In doing so, they were exemplifying Sharwood Smith's (1996: 71) discussion of 'the way language systems interact in the learner's mind', and were demonstrating a keen, high-level awareness of how they perceived and addressed both the similarities and the differences between their L2 and L3 (Bardel and Lindqvist, 2006).

5.4 The Development of a Learning Community

In Phase 1 of this project, the main purpose of the focus groups and interview was to discuss the student participants' individual language-learning experiences, and to compile a set of linguistic data which would feed into the development of an e-learning resource during Phase 2. As such, there was relatively little focus on any learning community of which they may or may not have felt part. Whilst there was a commonality of experience and an overlap of academic trajectory among the participants, I had not yet discussed with them in any depth how they viewed themselves (and perhaps identified) as a group and what benefit, if any, they may have derived from their shared activity.

In Phase 2, however, the pre-pilot focus group (FG3a) attached great importance to the sense of community the members felt as a group. In the literature I had reviewed earlier in the project, I had not been able to identify any research that provided a close analysis of the experience of a group of French L2 and Spanish L3 language-learners. I therefore felt it was very important for me to pay careful attention to how the participants saw themselves, both individually and collectively, in the milieu of their language-learning experience. The data that emerged were very encouraging. Participant 3, for example, referred to the group as:

a working group where we've all got stuff in common (Appendix 12, Line 17).

It would be an overstatement to assert that having 'stuff in common' constitutes a robust example of Wenger's (2018) description of learning communities and the development of a shared identity based on such a community. Nevertheless, Participant 3's observation does lean towards reflecting Lave and Wenger's (1991: 115) view that 'learning and a sense of identity are inseparable'.

Allied to the sense of community felt by the participants was their strong enthusiasm for the prospect of learning together as a group, with Participant 2 noting that the members:

think similarly in regards to Spanish (Appendix 12, Line 9).

Similarly, Participant 3 observed that the participants were:

in the same boat (Appendix 12, Line 15) [and would benefit from being able to] communicate [as a community] (Appendix 12, Line 14).

In earlier FG discussions, the student participants had explored *individual* engagement and production in language-learning activities. Now, however, I began to focus more on the *collective, collaborative* angle expressed, noting the acknowledgement that the group had identified and accepted their specific language-learning community and were aware of some of its characteristics. Furthermore, Participant 2's assertion implied that a group discussion had already taken place, from which they could conclude that the participants 'think similarly', and Participant 3 spoke enthusiastically of the prospect of developing further a mechanism for learning-related communication among the group members. The idea of a learning resource that would offer a digital space for participants to work together as a community was applauded by Participant 2, who observed:

I could definitely see the benefit in having a place where students studying the same combination of languages can work together and learn (Appendix 12, Lines 5-7).

A platform of this type has the potential to allow students to create, reflect on and discuss their own meaning, to take part in a learning curriculum that 'evolves out of participation in a specific community [...] engendered by pedagogical relations' (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 97).

Additionally, it is noteworthy that the FGs had generated spontaneous face-to-face conversations about language-learning issues among members of this community. As Participant 3 recalled in the post-pilot debriefing discussion:

the fact that we were chatting about French and Spanish comparisons this morning, having not done so for the last three years, was kind of unusual but we found it very helpful (Appendix 13, Lines 74-6).

The FG discussions consolidated my conviction that a community of learners with a specific, shared set of language-learning experiences was already in place in the HEI in which this study is located. In addition, I was persuaded, as a result of the interactions I had planned and facilitated, that the members had been galvanised into functioning as a unified community with a high level of engagement (Duguid, 2001). Their candid, enthusiastic and reflective contributions to the pre- and post-pilot FGs, and their engagement with the development of the prototype resource, convinced me of the growing strength and identity of this learning community. This level of involvement and bonding confirmed the view of Wenger, White and Smith (2009), that there is a strong link between meaningful collaboration and a heightened sense of identity within a learning community.

The value the participants derived from being encouraged to engage with each other as a group with commonality of experience was synthesised in an informal comment made by one of the members, who was standing to leave at the end of one of the FG sessions:

That was really useful. It's something we never get the chance to do in normal classes, and it was good to share everybody's experiences and difficulties. It's good that you organised it.

Whilst not constituting formal evidence in support of Wenger's (2018) discussion of learning communities and identity, this observation nevertheless provides confirmation of the benefit and usefulness the group had experienced as a result of their endeavours in a collaborative context.

5.5 Summary

In this chapter, I have presented and discussed the findings from Phases 1 and 2 of this project, focusing on pedagogy, metalinguistic awareness and the nurturing of a learning community, all within the context of the development of a prototype e-learning resource to support students of L2 French and L3 Spanish.

In addition to generating data and reflections to influence the development of the e-learning resource, the interactions forming part of the project also prompted ideas for a range of additional foci for separate, future studies. These, together with overall conclusions, reflections and recommendations, are presented in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

6.1 Introduction

The final chapter of this thesis offers a set of concluding discussions to synthesise the process and the findings of this project. It begins by responding to the research questions listed in Chapter 2, in the context of the findings presented in Chapter 5. An analysis of student motivation in the context of the project is then provided, followed by a discussion of the proposed living educational theory (LET) outlined in section 1.4, and its development over the course of the project.

Both in this thesis and throughout my Professional Doctorate studies, I have posited my research as making an important contribution to professional practice in the context of foreign language learning in UK Higher Education. This claim is discussed and consolidated in this concluding chapter, on the evidence resulting from the data collected as part of the project, underpinned by theories of metalinguistic awareness (MA) and cross-linguistic influence (CLI), and by the development of a language-learning community.

I also identify a number of limitations in respect of the scope and the execution of the project. These focus mainly on the restricted language combination and the small number of student participants involved. Close attention is paid to some of the operational and positional challenges I have overcome by careful and ethically mindful planning and facilitation of the various types and stages of participant interaction.

The final section of the chapter reflects on the thesis as a whole, noting the successes and challenges of the study, and identifies the potential for future research into areas linked to the procedures and findings of the project. It concludes by offering a set of recommendations for advancements in professional practice, arguing strongly in favour of the adoption of my ideas and techniques by other HEIs to support the learning of their students of L2 French and

L3 Spanish, and noting the potential for transferability into other language combinations and the domain of staff development.

6.2 Research Questions

Following a detailed review of the academic literature in relation to L2 and L3 language-learning in Higher Education, and the identification of a gap in knowledge and understanding, three principal research questions (RQ) framed the research design for this project. They are discussed below.

1. To what extent can a bespoke e-learning resource be effective in supporting the learning of undergraduate students of L2 French and L3 Spanish?

The development of an e-learning resource to support students of L2 French and L3 Spanish was the vehicle that drove the sequence of focus groups, interviews and piloting activities conducted in this project.

The effectiveness of the prototype resource can be gauged through the debriefing comments (from focus group FG3b) offered by the student participants who engaged with the pilot (see Appendix 13). The members of FG3b expressed satisfaction with the fact that the resource was bespoke to their specific language combination. They spoke enthusiastically about the relevance to their language-learning experience of the focused nature of the pilot exercises – in particular, they noted the benefit to their learning provided by the items on verb tenses and the gender of nouns. They expressed their satisfaction with technical features of the resource, such as the repeatability of exercises. Furthermore, they articulated their approval of the instant, targeted and explanatory feedback which the resource had been programmed to issue automatically.

In section 6.6, in my discussion of the limitations identified in this project, I refer to the limited number and range of the exercises included in the pilot of the resource. Nevertheless, on the basis of the data collected, I am confident that this resource, in its pilot format, worked well

in allowing students to engage with bespoke materials highly relevant to their L2/L3 combination, to think more deeply about their comparative use of French and Spanish, and to draw meaningful conclusions about the similarities and differences between the two languages.

2. What are the (positive and negative) effects of cross-linguistic influence (CLI) on the language-learning experience and knowledge development of undergraduate students of L2 French and L3 Spanish, and can these effects be demonstrated via a bespoke e-learning resource?

The data collected in this project highlight a variety of ways in which student participants had found CLI to be a problem in their French L2 / Spanish L3 language combination. In section 5.3, I discuss the experiences shared by the participants, in which they report CLI-related difficulties – occurring particularly in navigating the French and Spanish verb systems (see Appendices 3, 6 and 7, *passim*).

However, these negative experiences were also counterbalanced by instances of CLI working in the participants' favour. Examples of this emerged in a discussion of the initial stages of learning L3 Spanish, in mentions of how the participants had experienced positive CLI in general syntactic terms (Appendix 3, Fragment FG1-01) and in navigating the use of adjectives in Spanish (Appendix 3, Fragment FG1-03).

Although the pilot of the learning resource was limited in its scope, nevertheless there was evidence in the reactions offered by the participants that in their engagement with the exercises presented to them, they had experienced both positive and negative CLI. As an illustration of this, in the post-pilot debriefing meeting of FG3b (see Appendix 13), Participant 2 spoke of the example of the gender of nouns in French and Spanish. The reflection indicated positive CLI in it being possible sometimes to transfer (successfully) the known gender of a French noun into its cognate in Spanish; negative CLI was suggested in the sense that a learner might incorrectly assume that genders will always be common across French and Spanish cognate nouns.

The resource allowed participants to experiment with their L2 and L3 and engage in self-managed learning in the context of CLI. For example, Participant 2 (see Appendix 13) reported having answered a few questions incorrectly through negative CLI, but given the interactive nature of the resource, was able to click around other possible responses and draw meaningful conclusions as to what element of negative CLI had been in play. This was deemed useful.

In more general terms (see Appendix 13), Participant 2 also noted that their engagement with the prototype resource had caused the group members to consider more explicitly why they might commit French-influenced errors when writing in Spanish.

I found this to be very valuable evidence to absorb in pondering further iterations of the resource.

3. What role does metalinguistic awareness (MA) play in the language-learning experience and knowledge development of undergraduate students of L2 French and L3 Spanish, and can MA be demonstrated through exposure to a bespoke e-learning resource?

The various student-constituted focus groups produced discussions rich in evidence of what strategies the members used to transfer information from French to Spanish, and in particular how they did so during the pilot. This was key in the identification of aspects of MA in their linguistic behaviour. For instance, in the post-pilot debriefing focus group FG3b (see Appendix 13), Participant 3 spoke of tending to resolve a Spanish L3 grammatical difficulty or lexical gap by drawing on knowledge of L2 French, rather than L1 English. This approach is in line with the examples of MA exhibited in experiments by Williams and Hammarberg (1998), and is redolent of techniques described by Malakoff (1992) and Gajo (2001).

I conclude from the data generated in the various focus group discussions that engagement with the prototype resource caused the participants to think more carefully and in a more lateral manner about their linguistic strategies, and that their MA was brought into sharper focus by their exposure to the exercises within the pilot resource.

The evidence from the data gathered for this study makes it clear that the student participants in the project felt that the resource was both welcome and supportive to them in being targeted specifically to learners of their L2/L3 language combination. The views they offered after the pilot confirmed that, with regard to their knowledge development, their engagement in the pilot had succeeded in clarifying aspects of their domain knowledge. This was notably so in their descriptions of how they coped with issues of noun gender, how they approached translation tasks (where they deployed MA to avoid CLI-related hazards), and how more generally they took a more comparative, cross-language approach to negotiating the grammatical differences between French and Spanish. Such strategies were, they felt, clearly useful in helping them resolve linguistic challenges.

In concluding this study, a further question emerged. It is recognised that although the students acknowledged and expressed satisfaction with the CLI- and MA-related benefits they had enjoyed in engaging with the development and piloting of the resource, it would be of interest to conduct further research in order to quantify any increase in their knowledge and measure any tangible improvement in their L3 Spanish writing. I address this in point 4 of section 6.6 (Limitations of this research), noting the possibility of undertaking a mixed methods study to measure improvements registered in Spanish production as a result of exposure to the resource, such as the research conducted by Felix (2016).

Additionally, I identified two research sub-questions of direct relevance to the project. Expressed as aims, they were pertinent to the development of the learning resource and were designed to add robustness and contribute knowledge and understanding to the main RQs.

1. To explore the feasibility of developing a bespoke e-learning resource by harnessing the input of both lecturers and students.

From the data collected in this study, it is clear that the approach to planning, developing and piloting the resource – drawing upon the contributions of both teaching staff and current students – worked effectively. Following thematic analysis of the collected data, there is evidence in two areas to justify this claim:

- a) The assembly of FG2 (the focus group made up of academics from the HEI Modern Languages department) constituted one phase of my innovative approach to harnessing different elements of the HEI's language-learning community to carry out a sequential set of stages in the development of the resource. This coming-together permitted a group of professional linguists and language teachers, with a deep knowledge of, and sensitivity to, their students' strengths and weaknesses, to contribute valuable input to the project. Specifically, they worked to pool their experiences of CLI and MA in their day-to-day professional practice, in the formulation of a set of materials to be used in the resource's pilot. These materials proved to be enthusiastically received by the students taking part in the pilot, who noted the usefulness and appropriateness of the materials to enhancing their learning. Samples of the transcript from FG2's meeting, as well as examples of the materials themselves, are presented in Appendices 11 and 10 respectively.
- b) The evidence shows that the various meetings of student-constituted focus groups (FG1, FG1a, FG1b, FG3a, FG3b) all worked effectively in making their respective contributions to the planning, development, piloting and evaluation of the prototype resource. In Phase 1 of the project (FG1, FG1a, FG1b) the groups spoke freely of their individual and collective language-learning history, and of their successes and challenges in learning L3 Spanish after the embedding of L2 French. Equally, in the Phase 2 interactions (FG3a, FG3b) the members participated openly and honestly, offering contributions on a range of linguistic and experiential factors relating to the development of the resource. In FG3a (the pre-pilot focus group – see Appendix 12), there is evidence of enthusiasm regarding both collaborative learning in a French L2/Spanish L3 context, and the attractiveness of a bespoke resource being provided to support students with this specific language combination. Similarly positive were the contributions of FG3b (the post-pilot debriefing focus group – see Appendix 13), where the success of the project from the students' perspective is clearly articulated.

Consequently, it can be concluded from the above reflections that the involvement in the project of members of sub-groups of a language-learning community – both staff and students – facilitated the productive execution of a sequence of stages in the development of

the resource. The evidence presented leads me to the strong conclusion that the student participants felt their learning had been supported.

2. To explore whether the involvement of lecturers and students in planning and creating a bespoke e-learning resource can be considered to constitute the endeavour of a Community of Practice (CoP).

The data provided as part of this project are persuasive in suggesting that harnessing the language-learning community in an HEI to contribute meaningfully to the study was productive, and that there is emerging evidence to suggest the existence and effective functioning of this community. However, a key concern at the outset of this thesis was whether such interaction could be deemed the endeavour of a Community of Practice (CoP).

In Chapter 3, I discussed the community of focus in this project, declaring my interpretation of it as a community in which knowledge of ML is held, shared and created by staff and students, and in which student participants share not only their knowledge of ML but a common engagement in building their academic knowledge of L2 and L3 to achieve degree status. In this sense, the activities in which members of the ML learning community within the HEI have engaged, in support of this project, have indeed displayed the characteristics of a CoP. However, there are two strong elements arguing against the applicability of the term 'CoP' in this context:

- a) Wenger (1998) states clearly that a CoP cannot be created intentionally or in a forced, artificial manner: on the contrary, a CoP must develop naturally, evolving over time with the encouragement, dynamism and nurturing of its constituent members. Whilst the community that was active during this project did display many of the characteristics described by Wenger (1998) as pertaining to a CoP, it was clear that the staff and student groupings were assembled at my invitation, and thus did not form organically out of a simple sense of shared identity and a desire to engage in collective endeavour.

b) Furthermore, in differentiating between CoPs, formal work groups, project teams and informal networks, Wenger and Snyder (2000: 142) describe a CoP as being composed of members who 'select themselves' and lasting 'as long as there is interest in maintaining the group'. This description is at odds with the operability of the groupings with which I engaged in this project: in particular, the question of prolonged interest on the part of the members did not arise. Lave and Wenger (1991: 98) also refer to an additional dimension of a CoP as 'developing with time and in relation to other tangential and overlapping CoPs'. This, too, was lacking in the interactions among community members in my research, given the timeframe and the purposes of the project.

More pertinent to the function of the community operating within this project is Lindkvist's (2005) description of the collectivity of practice. This refers to the assembly of a group for the purpose of addressing a specific task or project, usually over a short period of time, after which the group would disband. Such an assembly lacks the organic genesis, the development and the longevity of a CoP as described by Wenger (1998), but does nevertheless share with a CoP the group dynamic, the objective-oriented focus, and the requirement for the group to draw upon the members' knowledge and experience.

I therefore conclude that the interactions among members of the learning community within this project constitute not the activity of a community of practice, but the endeavour of a collectivity of practice.

6.3 Student Motivation

The data generated by the student-constituted focus groups in this project demonstrated in a number of ways the members' different forms of motivation.

In the context of working together as a group predicated on their shared language-learning backgrounds and current studies, the three students in FG3a (see Appendix 12) exhibited individually held intrinsic motivations, which coalesced into a collective feeling of positivity at

the prospect of collaborating with each other as a group. In this exchange, extrinsic motivation was not apparent.

I could definitely see the benefit in having a place where students studying the same combination of languages can work together and learn [...] having other students in my lectures on the same course as me has been beneficial to me because we think similarly in regards to Spanish (P2, Lines 5-9);

I think it would be a good way to learn and strengthen knowledge. You can do this kind of thing in your own time. It would give us the chance to discuss grammar and things [...] I think it would really benefit students (P1, Lines 10-13);

That type of platform to communicate with other students in the same boat would be ideal. I chat to [P1] sometimes when there's an awkward bit of Spanish grammar or whatever, but I'd never thought about a kind of working group where we've all got stuff in common (P3, Lines 14-17).

In the same focus group FG3a, when the discussion moved to the desirability of a resource being developed to support students with their specific language combination, the participants displayed an interesting mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation could be seen in the following statements (see Appendix 12):

I'd find it useful if we had exercises that were put online and created by the lecturer so that they are 100% relevant and I don't have to search through thousands of websites to find a good one (P1, Lines 28-30);

[...] having a resource to support students with our combination would be incredibly helpful. I like the idea that I'd be revising for both of my languages and learning comparatively between them (P2, Lines 31-33).

Extrinsic motivation was visible in the following parts of the discussion, where two participants displayed hints of performativity in expressing the use to which the resource could be put:

I think that kind of thing would be invaluable when it comes to... when you're doing revision for your exams (P3, Lines 21-22);

When I revise for exams or when I want to practise grammar I always look online for exercises on that topic (P1, Lines 23-24).

The language-learning motivation demonstrated by the student participants in this project also reflects recent research. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021) highlight the intensified motivation to master an additional language, on the part of a student who is already an experienced language learner. Dörnyei and Al-Hoorie (2017) discuss the specificity of the objectives that may encourage an individual to learn a foreign language, noting the types of intrinsic and extrinsic factors present in the histories explored in the current study. The conflict between external pressures and an internal wish to learn is among the salient themes in work by Lanvers (2016), who examines a gamut of positions, ranging from the extrinsic extreme of feeling obliged to learn, through to the ideal set of language-learning circumstances freely chosen by the learner. Both Thompson and Vásquez (2015) and Lanvers (2016) discuss the defiant stance of a language-learner motivated to be rebellious, to react against social expectations (especially when located in a predominantly monolingual or a notably ethnocentric society). Whilst a close examination of this type of otherness was beyond the scope of this thesis, there was nevertheless a sense of feeling part of a very specific L2/L3 language-learning community, different from other sub-groups within the wider cohort, and with corresponding sensations of identity and increased motivation to learn together. It would be of interest, in a subsequent study, to examine the extent to which the language-learning motivation of students of L2 French and L3 Spanish matches the notion of the 'ideal multilingual self' (Henry, 2017: 548), whereby, individually or collectively, learners might experience a notable sense of feeling different from, or possibly superior to, other members of their peer group on account of their multilingualism and a cosmopolitan worldview acquired through exposure to, and absorption of, target-language societies and cultures.

In summary, when reviewing the entirety of the transcripts from the student-constituted FG meetings, I noted that individually the participants felt strongly motivated by the quest to master their foreign languages (Busse and Williams, 2010; Stolte, 2015). Equally, the sense of collectivity they experienced as a group meant that they felt an attachment to both the development of the group and the provision of a new resource, which heightened their motivation (Norton, 2013). Finally, a key aspect of their motivation was the targeted relevance of a bespoke resource (Hockly and Dudeney, 2014), the development of which had

borne in mind their own experiences, suggestions and input in the form of piloting and feedback.

6.4 Living Educational Theory (LET)

The LET on which I have worked throughout my Professional Doctorate is presented and outlined in Chapter 1 (section 1.4) as comprising three core beliefs at the start of this project:

- a) that it is useful, and good practice, to develop online resources to support the learning of L1 English speakers who have learned L2 French followed by L3 Spanish, taking account of issues of CLI and MA;
- b) that members of a language-learning community can potentially work collaboratively in the development of an e-learning tool for the students described above;
- c) that through collaborative activity in a language-learning domain, a sharing of ideas and understanding can take place.

The planning and execution of this project have provided a range of interactions with members of a university's language-learning community that have been both symbiotic and synergistic. The benefits accrued by the student participants emerge clearly from the data, and the benefits to me as a professional linguist and educator have been considerable. A central aspect of this mutual benefit has been the sharing of the participants' experiences, both past ('lived') and present ('living'). This has allowed me to gain a greater insight into how they have negotiated CLI and deployed MA in their language production, and has been key in shaping the e-learning resource around which this project has been based.

It is clear that the input contributed by the language-learning community has generated tangible data such as the list of linguistic items (see Appendix 4) compiled in Phase 1 for use in Phase 2 of the project. At the same time, the collaboration itself has been positive simply as a means of allowing the group members to share their experiences and develop a sense of mutual support and shared endeavour (Wenger, 1998). The focus groups at each stage of the project have added data and conviction to my LET, and I envisage the LET as continuing to

develop beyond the bounds of this thesis. This is consistent with the views of Whitehead (1989) and Elliott (2009), who describe a LET as being a phenomenon in continual evolution.

In considering the evolution of my LET, I have reflected at length on the involvement of the student participants in this endeavour. All the students taking part in the various focus groups, the interview and the pilot of the resource were also, away from the project, taught and assessed by me. The ethical implications of this are discussed in section 4.3, where I pay close attention to issues of influence and potential asymmetries of power in research relationships of this nature (Kvale, 2007). Whilst the students' contributions throughout were overwhelmingly positive, it is appropriate to acknowledge the potential contention that the group – individually or collectively – may not have felt empowered to offer any negative opinions on their language-learning experience or less-favourable feedback on the piloting of the resource. It could also be argued that my emerging LET shaped my research design in a way that was more likely to produce self-confirming data than evidence that was negative or contradictory.

I accept these contentions, but would respond by asserting my belief that I have been appropriately ethical, rigorous and transparent at each stage of the project. In addition, the complex sequence of interactions involving constituent groups of the language-learning community has lent an extra layer of trustworthiness to how I form my conclusions as to the success of the project.

As a result of the experiences and interactions of this project, my reflections on them, and the evidence provided by the data, my LET has now evolved, and can be articulated in the following way:

- (a) that it is both possible and desirable, through the planned or ad hoc assembly of groups within a learning community, to determine a set of linguistic factors (both 'helps' and 'hindrances') stemming from the experiences of L1 English speakers who have learned L2 French followed by L3 Spanish;

- (b) that a language-learning community can be collaboratively instrumental in discussing, devising, piloting and evaluating an e-learning tool that will allow undergraduates to engage with French and Spanish structures with a greater level of understanding;
- (c) that through collective activity in a language-learning domain, a sharing of ideas and understanding can exist and be developed.

As the project ends, my LET will continue its evolution, but I remain persuaded of its significance and its relevance both to my research and to my professional practice.

6.5 Contribution to Professional Practice

It has been fascinating to reflect on the impact this project has had, not only on the learning experience of my students, but also on me as a professional linguist and educator and as a researcher.

It was clear from reviewing the relevant literature at the start of the project (see Chapter 2) that whilst there was a wealth of studies focusing on providing solutions to support L1 students in their learning of L2, and a lesser number looking at problems in L3 learning, no attention appeared to have been paid to the area I was interested in exploring. I was unable to identify a single study that harnessed a language-learning community through focus groups, pinpointing aspects of CLI and MA in the development of a bespoke digital resource to support the specific audience of English L1 students learning L2 French and L3 Spanish.

It was this identification of a gap in professional practice that enthused me and guided the design and execution of the project. The innovation lay in a combination of factors: a base of an existing academic community (of which I involved both teaching and student members in focus groups); frank and in-depth discussion of language-learning experiences and the identification of items of language viewed as potentially 'tricky' for students of L2 French and L3 Spanish; exploration of aspects of CLI and MA affecting the student participants' linguistic behaviour; and the planning, development, construction, piloting and evaluation of a learning resource aimed specifically at this L2/L3 learning community.

I have welcomed the opportunity to disseminate my research. Colleagues in the Modern Languages department at the University of Hull invited me to present my ideas to them, and the event included an insightful discussion which convinced me of the potential for explicit harnessing of CLI and MA in developing online learning materials to support L2/L3 learning in other HEI communities. The Nottingham Institute of Education invited me to deliver a paper on my project, including a Q&A session, as part of its Education Digest series. This presentation was well received. I plan to produce a journal article based on my LET, as well as material to encourage awareness of CLI/MA among teaching communities. I also had a meeting with the commissioning editor for Language and Linguistics at Palgrave Macmillan about the possibility of publishing my research as a monograph in the Palgrave Pivot series. Discussions on this opportunity are continuing.

My belief is that the above approach to student support, with its multiple constituent elements, represents innovation in the context of the learning of modern languages in the HE sector in the UK. Equally, I remain persuaded that my research has the potential to create impact beyond the current study. As Jessner (2008: 100) notes:

Comparative grammars and other [...] material that supports contrastive analysis between the languages known by the students and the target language would constitute highly valuable tools for teachers of multilingual students.

I conclude that my research in this project has been sufficiently robust, in-depth and transparent to offer transferability to language practitioners in other UK institutions (Polit and Beck, 2010).

6.6 Limitations of This Research

The most obvious limitation in this project has been its small scale. I chose to focus on the interplay between only two languages (French and Spanish), whereas potentially a third Romance Language (Italian) was available within the HEI's ML department for inclusion,

together with two non-Romance languages (German and Mandarin). This decision was taken on the basis that the French/Spanish combination has, for some years, been the dominant pairing in the subjects studied by students on the institution's BA Modern Languages programme. As such, it was the combination most likely to provide buoyant numbers of students meeting the criteria to participate in the project. However, although this factor remained valid, the numbers of students taking part were also low (between three and five, depending on the phase of the project and the type of interaction). It would have been preferable to have worked with a larger cohort of relevant participants. Nevertheless, I feel that the numbers have been sufficient for me to explore a worthwhile selection of learning histories; to generate meaningful information about students' perceptions of CLI, MA and the challenges of L2/L3 learning; and to obtain trustworthy data and a reliable sense of how members of the language-learning community viewed both the usefulness of the research and the desirability of a resource being produced to support their learning.

It is also true that the number and the range of exercises included in the prototype resource which was piloted in Phase 2 of the project was limited. This was a deliberate choice on my part, as I wanted to build a manageable, straightforward pilot environment and obtain swift, targeted feedback that would confirm the proof of concept I was seeking in involving student participants (who were also giving up their time free of charge to assist me). Their approval served as confirmation that the pilot had worked well operationally and pedagogically, and gave me the reassurance that an extended version of the resource, potentially incorporating more of the linguistic structures identified by students in Phase 1 of the project (see Appendix 4) would be likely to be well received.

The involvement of the group of teaching colleagues (FG2) was limited, in that they were essentially assembled to produce a set of materials for inclusion in the prototype e-learning resource being developed. A more protracted involvement could have yielded benefits in terms of the range of languages, linguistic structures and styles of exercises discussed above, but could also have added an interesting angle to the research dynamic: in effect, we could have worked as a more equitable team and adopted a formal Participatory Action Research approach (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000), with students potentially playing a fuller role as co-members. This remains an attractive prospect for future research projects.

One of my hopes stemming from this project was to form a combined focus group made up of both teaching staff members and current students, with the potential to engage in discussions of MA, CLI and the further development of L2/L3 learning resources. This proved not to be possible, partly due to conflicting commitments and time pressures and, latterly, as a result of difficulties brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, I remain convinced of the usefulness of such a grouping, to explore and experience how sub-sections of the language-learning community who would not ordinarily coincide can be brought together to generate stimulating and meaningful discussion. This would be a complex example of the 'constellations of interconnected practices' described by Lave and Wenger (1991: 126).

In the LET discussion in section 6.4, I mention the possibility of my positionality being open to challenge in my decision to engage with my students in a collaborative research situation. This can be viewed as a potential limitation of the project. Had circumstances been different, I might have been able to involve students who were not ordinarily taught and assessed by me, which could have produced a scenario with fewer ethical concerns. Nevertheless, I am satisfied that the ethical and operational steps I took to inform, communicate with and protect the participants were as robust as they could have been.

Given more time and space, further concepts could potentially have been included in a project of this type. Each item in the list below arose during focus group discussions, and I believe they could all offer persuasive dimensions to future research in this field.

1. A discussion of whether L2/L3 students engaging with a bespoke e-learning resource might prefer to do so individually for performative reasons, or collaboratively, out of the enjoyment of working together;
2. An exploration of the extent to which students seek quantification of their progress via e-learning resources of this type;

3. An expansion of the range of L2/L3-related points of grammatical complexity, to generate data on the extent to which MA is used strategically;
4. A study of the potential for improvement in L3 writing quality as a result of exposure to an e-learning resource of the type developed in this research. The current project has focused on the process of developing the resource and collecting the students' reported feelings about it. However, it is acknowledged that it would be helpful to triangulate these insights with further research demonstrating the efficacy of the resource – for example through post-testing tasks such as asking student participants to undertake one or more of the following, all of which could be subjected to checking by a relevant tutor, to identify any improvements or instances of CLI:
 - (i) to write a piece of Spanish, then spend time engaging with the e-learning resource, and subsequently re-attempt the piece of writing;
 - (ii) to write a piece of French then translate it into Spanish;
 - (iii) to engage with an English text containing a range of the types of potential CLI pitfalls identified in this research, and translate it first into French, then into Spanish.

From the performative perspective, such improvement would need to be measured via a mixed methods study, such as that undertaken by Felix (2016).

6.7 Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, I am satisfied with the planning, the execution and the findings emerging from this project.

In practical terms, I was happy that the development, piloting and evaluation of the prototype resource was conducted smoothly in its intended sequence of steps, and that it proved successful in its reception by student participants and in their perception of its helpfulness

and its carefully targeted nature. Their key involvement and willingness to share their learning histories, views on L2/L3 learning and targeted feedback on the resource was the source of great satisfaction to me.

It was also pleasing to see how effective the staff FG was as part of the development process, as a mechanism to formalise, and turn into pilot materials, the initial list of linguistic concepts compiled by the student FGs in Phase 1 of the project.

Equally, I am happy that the evidence has shown the effectiveness of working with other members of a language-learning community in an AR milieu, both to explore theories (which has been intellectually stimulating) and to produce a tangible, student-facing outcome (which satisfies my professional status and mindset as a practical, student-centred, problem-solving educator).

My engagement in this project and my absorption of its findings have persuaded me that a range of potential areas exist for future expansion and development of my ideas. I present these here as recommendations for advancements in professional practice:

- a) The project is ready to expand at departmental level and has the potential to benefit students and teaching colleagues at other HEIs at which French and Spanish are taught. Such an expansion would offer possibilities in both research and professional practice contexts;
- b) It would be interesting to add Italian as a third Romance Language to receive attention and the development of materials using the methods I have employed in my research. Members of the focus group comprising teaching colleagues (FG2) expressed their willingness to expand their involvement into this additional language. This, too, would constitute a useful innovation in professional practice;
- c) There is scope for the use of collective endeavour of this type to facilitate staff development opportunities among colleagues teaching languages in the Romance family. I am confident of the usefulness of making colleagues more aware of issues of CLI and MA in their students' learning experiences (Jessner, 2008), and my experience of working with a staff-constituted focus group has convinced me that this would be

an original and instructive innovation and would address a further gap in professional practice.

References

Alhojailan, M. I. (2012). 'Thematic Analysis: a critical review of its process and evaluation' in *West East Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 1, No. 1.

Allum, P. (2013). 'Principles and practices applicable to the design of successful blended language learning' in *Language, Culture and Communication*, 5, 1-14.

Altman, C., Goldstein, T. and Armon-Lotem, S. (2018). 'Vocabulary, Metalinguistic Awareness and Language Dominance Among Bilingual Preschool Children' in *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 9, article 1953.

Ayoun, D. and Salaberry, M. R. (2005). 'Towards a comprehensive model of the acquisition of L2 tense-aspect in the Romance languages' in Ayoun, D. and Salaberry, M. R. (eds.), *Tense and Aspect in Romance Languages*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Bardel, C. and Lindqvist, C. (2006). 'The role of proficiency and psychotypology in lexical cross-linguistics influence. A study of a multilingual learner of Italian L3' in Chini, M., Desideri, P., Favilla, M. E. and Pallotti, G. (eds.), *Atti del VI Congresso di Studi dell'Associazione Italiana di Linguistica Applicata*, Napoli, 9-10 February 2006, pp. 123-45. Perugia: Guerra Editore.

Bartelt, G. (1989). 'The interaction of multilingual constraints', in Dechert, H. W. and Raupach, M. (eds.), *Interlingual Processes*, 151-77. Tübingen: Narr.

Baumfield, V., Hall, E. and Wall, K. (2013). *Action Research in Education* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

Bawden, A. (2013). 'Modern Languages: Degree Courses in Freefall', *The Guardian* online: <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2013/oct/08/modern-foreign-language-degrees-axed>, accessed 06/02/2017.

Beetham, H. and Oliver, M. (2010). 'The changing practices of knowledge and learning' in Sharpe, R., Beetham, H. and de Freitas, S. (eds.), *Rethinking Learning for a Digital Age*. New York/Abingdon: Routledge.

Black, P., Harrison, C., Lee, C., Marshall, B. and Wiliam, D. (2004). 'Working Inside the Black Box: Assessment for Learning in the Classroom' in *Phi Delta Kappan*, vol. 86 (1), 8-21.

Blake, R. (2008). *Brave New Digital Classroom: Technology and Foreign Language Learning*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press.

Blake, R. and Delforge, A. M. (2004). 'Language learning at a distance: Spanish without walls' in *Distance Education, Distributed Learning and Language Instruction*. Hawaii: National Foreign Language Resource Center.

Blyth, C. (2005). 'From empirical findings to the teaching of aspectual distinctions' in Ayoun, D. and Salaberry, M. R. (eds.), *Tense and Aspect in Romance Languages*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Bono, M. (2011). 'Crosslinguistic interaction and metalinguistic awareness in third language acquisition' in De Angelia, G. and Dewaele, J.-M. (eds.), *New Trends in Crosslinguistic Influence and Multilingualism Research*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Bower, K. (2019). 'Explaining motivation in language learning: a framework for evaluation and research' in *The Language Learning Journal*, 47:5, 558-74.

Bowler, M (2020). *A Languages Crisis? HEPI Report 123*. Oxford: Higher Education Policy Institute.

Brandl, K. (2021). *Communicative Language Teaching in Action: Putting Principles to Work* (2nd ed.). San Diego: Cognella.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006). 'Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology' in *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 2006 (3), 77-101. London: Taylor and Francis.

British Educational Research Association (2018). *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research*. London: BERA.

Broadly, E. (2020). 'Language learning in the UK – taking stock' in *The Language Learning Journal*, vol. 48, no. 5, 501-7.

Brockbank, A. and McGill, I. (2007). *Facilitating Reflective Learning in Higher Education* (2nd ed.). Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Brooke, M. (2013). 'Which Research Paradigm for TESOL?' in *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 430-436.

Brown, J. S. and Duguid, P. (2001). 'Structure and spontaneity: knowledge and organization' in Nonaka, I. and Teece, D. (eds.), *Managing Industrial Knowledge*. London: Sage.

Busse, V. and Williams, M. (2010). 'Why German? Motivation of students studying German at English universities' in *The Language Learning Journal*, 38, 67-85.

Butler, R. and Nisan, M. (1986). 'Effects of no feedback, task-related comments, and grades on intrinsic motivation and performance' in *Journal of Educational Psychology*, vol. 78, issue 3, 210-16.

Butt, J. and Benjamin, C. (2013). *A New Reference Grammar of Modern Spanish* (5th ed.). Abingdon/New York: Routledge.

Bygate, M. (ed.) (2018). *Learning Language Through Task Repetition: 11 (Task-based Language Teaching)*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Cakula, S. and Sedleniece, M. (2013). 'Development of a personalized e-learning model using methods of ontology' in *Procedia Computer Science*, 26, 113-120.

Carvalho, A. M. and Bacelar da Silva, A. J. (2006). 'Cross-linguistic influence in third language acquisition: the case of Spanish-English bilinguals' acquisition of Portuguese', in *Foreign Language Annals* (vol. 39.2, summer 2006). Alexandria, VA: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

Castañer, X. and Oliveira, N. (2020). 'Collaboration, Coordination and Cooperation among Organizations: Establishing the distinctive meanings of these terms through a systematic literature review' in *Journal of Management*, Vol. 46, No. 6, 965–1001.

CBI/Pearson (2018). *Educating for the Modern World: Education and Skills Annual Report*. Cambridge: Pearson.

Cenoz, J. (2001). 'The effect of linguistic distance, L2 status and age on cross-linguistic influence in third language acquisition', in Cenoz, J., Hufeisen, B. and Jessner, U. (eds.), *Cross-linguistic Influence in Third Language Acquisition: Psycholinguistic Perspectives*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Chavez, C. (2008). 'Conceptualizing from the inside: advantages, complications and demands on insider positionality' in *The Qualitative Report*, 13 (3), 474-94.

Clyne, M. (1997). 'Some of the things trilinguals do', in *The International Journal of Bilingualism*, vol 1, 95-116. Los Angeles/London: Sage.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2011). *Research Methods in Education* (7th ed.). London/New York: Routledge.

Coleman, J. A. and Furnborough, C. (2010). 'Learner characteristics and learning outcomes on a distance Spanish course for beginners' in *System*, 38, 14-29.

Collen, I. (2021a). *Language Trends 2020: Language Teaching in Primary and Secondary Schools in England*. British Council.

Collen, I. (2021b). *Language Trends Northern Ireland 2021*. British Council.

Collen, I., O'Boyle, A. and O'Neill, S. (2021). *Language Trends Wales 2021: Language Teaching in Secondary Schools and Post-16 Colleges*. British Council.

Coman, C., Tiru, L. G., Mesesan-Schmitz, L., Stanciu, C. and Bularca, M. C. (2020). 'Online Teaching and Learning in Higher Education during the Coronavirus Pandemic: Students' Perspective' in *Sustainability*, 2020: 12.

Copland, F. and McPake, J. (2021). 'Building a new public idea about language?': Multilingualism and language learning in the post-Brexit UK' in *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 2021, 1-20.

Costley, C., Elliot, G. and Gibbs, P. (2010). *Doing Work-based Research: Approaches to Enquiry for Insider-Researchers*. Los Angeles/London: Sage.

Creswell, J. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th ed.). Los Angeles/London: Sage.

Davies, G., Otto, S. E. K. and Rüschoff, B. (2013). 'Historical perspectives on CALL' in Thomas, M., Reinders, H. and Warschauer, M. (eds.), *Contemporary Computer-Assisted Language Learning*, 19-38. London: Bloomsbury.

De La Fuente, A. A. and Lacroix, H. (2015). 'Multilingual learners and foreign language acquisition: insights into the effects of prior linguistic knowledge' in *Language Learning in Higher Education*, vol. 5 (1), 45-57. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Denscombe, M. (2008). 'Communities of Practice: a research paradigm for the mixed methods approach' in *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, vol. 2, no. 3: 270-83. Los Angeles/London: Sage.

Dewaele, J.-M. (1998). 'Lexical interventions: French interlanguage as L2 versus L3' in *Applied Linguistics*, 19/4, 471-90. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dewey, J. (2012). *How We Think*. Mansfield Center, Connecticut: Martino.

Dewey, J. (2011). *Democracy and Education*. Hollywood, FL: Simon and Brown.

Dewey, J. (2015). *Experience and Education*. New York: Free Press.

Dörnyei, Z. (1998). 'Motivation in second and foreign language learning' in *Language Teaching*, 31 (3), 117-35.

Dörnyei, Z. and Al-Hoorie, A.H. (2017). 'The motivational foundation of learning languages other than Global English. Theoretical issues and research directions' in *Modern Language Journal*, 101(3), 455-68.

Dörnyei, Z. and Ushioda, E. (2021). *Teaching and Researching Motivation* (3rd ed.). New York / London: Routledge.

Doughty, H. (2019). *Language Trends Scotland: 2012-2019*. SCILT.

Dudeny, G. and Hockly, N. (2016). 'Blended Learning in a mobile context: new tools, new learning experiences?' in McCarthy, M. (ed.), *The Cambridge Guide to Blended Learning for Language Teaching*, 219-33. Cambridge: CUP.

- Dudenev, G., Hockly, N. and Pegrum, M. (2013). *Digital Literacies*. London: Routledge.
- Elliott, J. (2009). 'Building educational theory through Action Research' in Noffke, S. and Somekh, B. (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Educational Action Research*. Los Angeles/London: Sage.
- Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based Language Learning and Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ezzy, D. (2002). *Qualitative Analysis: Practice and Innovation*. London: Routledge.
- Fani, T. and Ghaemi, F. (2011). 'Implications of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in teacher education: ZPTD and self-scaffolding' in *Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 29, 1549-54.
- Felix, A. (2016). 'Using Pre/Post-Testing to Evaluate the Effectiveness of Online Language Programs' in *Journal of Second Language Teaching and Research*, Volume 4, Issue 1.
- Fitzsimons, R. (2018). *The Effects of Cross-linguistic Influence on the Learning Experience of UK Students of BA Modern Languages: An Action Research Project*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Fox, S. (2002). 'Communities of Practice, Foucault and Actor-Network Theory' in *Journal of Management Studies*, 37 (6), 853-67.
- Fulton, J., Kuit, J., Sanders, G. and Smith, P. (2013). *The Professional Doctorate*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gaffney, M. (2008). 'Participatory Action Research: An Overview' in *Kairaranga*, Vol. 9.
- Gajo, L. (1996). 'Le bilingue romanophone face à une nouvelle langue romane: un atout bilingue doublé d'un atout roman?' in *Études de Linguistique Appliquée*, 104, 431-40.
- Gajo, L. (2001). *Immersion, Bilinguisme et Interaction en Classe*. Paris: Didier.
- Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social Psychology and Second Language Learning: The Role of Attitudes and Motivation*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Gergen, K. and Gergen, M. (2008). 'Social construction and research as action' in Reason, P. and Bradbury, H. (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Action Research: Participatory Inquiry and Practice* (2nd ed.), 159-71. London/Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ghaye, T. (2011). *Teaching and Learning Through Reflective Practice: A Practical Guide for Positive Action* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Gillespie, H., Boulton, H., Hramiak, A. J. and Williamson, R. (2007). *Learning and Teaching with Virtual Learning Environments*. Exeter: Learning Matters.

Godwin-Jones, R. (2012). 'Emerging technologies: challenging hegemonies in online learning' in *Language Learning and Technology*, 16 (2), 4-13.

Graham, C. R., Woodfield, W. and Harrison, J. B. (2012). 'A framework for institutional adoption and implementation of blended learning in higher education' in *Internet and Higher Education*, 18, 4-14.

Greene, M. J. (2014). 'On the inside looking in: methodological insights and challenges in conducting qualitative insider research' in *The Qualitative Report*, 19 (29), 1-13.

Gregory, J. and Salmon, G. (2013). 'Professional development for online university teaching' in *Distance Education*, vol. 34, issue 3, 256-70.

Grosjean, F. (2001). 'The bilingual's language modes' in Nicol, J (ed.), *One Mind, Two Languages: Bilingual Language Processing*, 1-22. Oxford: Blackwell.

Hammarberg, B. (2001). 'Roles of L1 and L2 in L3 production and acquisition', in Cenoz, J., Hufeisen, B. and Jessner, U (eds.), *Cross-linguistic Influence in Third Language Acquisition: Psycholinguistic Perspectives*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Handley, K., Sturdy, A., Fincham, R. and Clark, T. (2006). 'Within and beyond Communities of Practice: making sense of learning through participation, identity and practice' in *Journal of Management Studies*, 43 (3).

Harris, M. and Vincent, N. (eds.) (1988). *The Romance Languages*. London/Sydney: Croom Helm.

Henry, A. (2017). 'L2 motivation and multilingual identities' in *Modern Language Journal*, 101(3), 548-65.

Herr, K. and Anderson, G. (2005). *The Action Research Dissertation: A Guide for Students and Faculty*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hockly, N. and Dudeney, G. (2014). *Going Mobile: Teaching with Hand-held Devices*. Peaslake: Delta.

Holloway, I. and Todres, L. (2003). 'The status of method: flexibility, consistency and coherence' in *Qualitative Research*, 3, 345-57.

Huertas Barros, E. (2011). 'Collaborative learning in the translation classroom: preliminary survey results' in *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, Issue 16.

Hufeisen, B. (1991). *Englisch als erste und Deutsch als zweite Fremdsprache. Empirische Untersuchung zur fremdsprachlichen Interaktion*. Frankfurt: Lang.

Hufeisen, B. and Jessner, U. (2009). 'Learning and teaching multiple languages', in Knapp, K. and Seidlhofer, B. (eds.), *Handbook of Foreign Language Communication and Learning*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Hughes, J. and Sharrock, W. (1997). *The Philosophy of Social Research* (3rd ed.). London: Pearson Longman.

Hughes, N., Lo, L. and Xu, S. (2017). 'Blended Chinese language learning design: an integrative review and synthesis of the literature' in *The Language Learning Journal*, vol. 45, 1-19. London/New York: Routledge.

Jarvis, S. (2015). 'Influences of previously learned languages on the learning and use of additional languages' in *Content-based Language Learning in Multilingual Educational Environments*, 69-86. Berlin/New York: Springer.

Jessner, U. (1999). 'Metalinguistic awareness in multilinguals: cognitive aspects of third language learning' in *Language Awareness* 8 (3-4): 201-09. London/New York: Routledge.

Jessner, U. (2008). 'Multicompetence approaches to language proficiency development in multilingual education' in Cummins, J. and Hornberger, N. (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Language and Education*, vol. 5: *Bilingual Education*, 91-103. Berlin/New York: Springer.

Johnson, C. P. and Marsh, D. (2014). 'Blended language learning: an effective solution but not without its challenges' in *Higher Learning Research Communications*, 4 (3), 23-41. Baltimore: Laureate.

Kaufmann, D. (2004). 'Constructivist issues in language learning and teaching' in *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, vol. 24, 303-19. Cambridge: CUP.

Kelly, B. (2007). 'Methodological issues for qualitative research with learning disabled children' in *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 10 (1), 21-35.

Kemmis, S. and McTaggart, R. (2000). 'Participatory action research' in Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.), 567-607. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Koshy, V. (2010). *Action Research for Improving Educational Practice* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles/London: Sage.

Kukulska-Hulme, A. and Traxler, J. (2007). 'Designing for mobile and wireless learning' in Beetham, H. and Sharpe, R. (eds.), *Rethinking Pedagogy for a Digital Age*, 180-92. Abingdon/New York: Routledge.

Kvale, S. (2007). *Doing Interviews*. Los Angeles/London: Sage.

Lai, F. C. (2008). 'Health promotion and participatory Action Research: the significance of participatory praxis in developing participatory health intervention' in Reason, P. and

Bradbury, H. (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Action Research: Participatory Inquiry and Practice* (2nd ed.), 534-59. London/Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lanvers, U. (2016). 'Lots of selves, some rebellious. Developing the self-discrepancy model for language learners' in *System*, 60, 79-92.

Lanvers, U. (2017). 'Contradictory "Others" and the "Habitus" of Languages: Surveying the L2 Motivation Landscape in the United Kingdom' in *The Modern Language Journal*, vol. 101, no. 3.

Laurillard, D. (2002). *Rethinking University Teaching: A Framework for the Effective Use of Learning Technologies* (2nd ed.). Abingdon/New York: Routledge Falmer.

Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Leakey, J. and Ranchoux, A. (2006). 'BLINGUA: a blended language learning approach for CALL' in *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 19 (4), 357-72. London/New York: Routledge.

Lindkvist, L. (2005). 'Knowledge communities and knowledge collectivities: a typology of knowledge work in groups' in *Journal of Management Studies*, 42, 6.

Littlejohn, A. and Pegler, C. (2007). *Preparing for Blended E-learning*. Abingdon/New York: Routledge.

Llama, R., Cardoso, W. and Collins, L. (2010). 'The influence of language distance and language status on the acquisition of L3 phonology' in *International Journal of Multilingualism*, vol. 7, issue 1.

Lodico, M., Spaulding, D. and Voegtler, K. (2010). *Methods in Educational Research: From Theory to Practice* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

MacDougall, C. and Baum, F. (1997). 'The devil's advocate: a strategy to avoid groupthink and stimulate discussion in focus groups' in *Qualitative Health Research*, vol. 7, issue 4.

Maguire, M. and Delahunt, B. (2017). 'Doing a thematic analysis: a practical, step-by-step guide for learning and teaching scholars' in *AISHE-J*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 3351-33514.

Malakoff, M. (1992). 'Translation ability: a natural bilingual and metalinguistic skill' in *Advances in Psychology*, vol. 83.

Martin, A. (2008). 'Action Research on a large scale: issues and practices' in Reason, P. and Bradbury, H. (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Action Research: Participatory Inquiry and Practice* (2nd ed.), 350-65. London/Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mason, R. and Rennie, F. (2006). *E-Learning: The Key Concepts*. Abingdon/New York: Routledge.

McCarten, J. and Sandiford, H. (2016). 'A case study in blended learning course design' in McCarthy, M. (ed.), *The Cambridge Guide to Blended Learning for Language Teaching*, 200-15. Cambridge: CUP.

McCarthy, M. (2016). 'Blended learning – introduction' in McCarthy, M. (ed.), *The Cambridge Guide to Blended Learning for Language Teaching*, 1-3. Cambridge: CUP.

McNiff, J. (2007). 'My story is my living educational theory' in Clandinin, D. J. (ed.), *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology*, 308-29. Thousand Oaks, CA/London: Sage.

McNiff, J. (2014). *Writing and Doing Action Research*. Los Angeles/London: Sage.

McNiff, J. (2016). *You and Your Action Research Project* (4th ed.). London/New York: Routledge.

McNiff, J. and Whitehead, J. (2009). *Doing and Writing Action Research*. Los Angeles/London: Sage.

McQuiggan, C. A. (2012). 'Faculty development for online teaching as a catalyst for change' in *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, 16, 27-61.

Meisel, J. M. (1983). 'Strategies of second language acquisition: more than one kind of simplification' in Andersen, R. W. (ed.): *Pidginization and Creolization as Language Acquisition*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Mercer, J. (2007). 'The challenges of insider research in educational institutions: wielding a double-edged sword and resolving delicate dilemmas' in *Oxford Review of Education*, 33-1, 1-17.

Mishan, F. (2010). 'Task and task authenticity: paradigms for language learning in the digital era' in Mishan, F. and Chambers, A., *Perspectives on Language Learning Materials Development*, 149-71. Bern: Peter Lang.

Mishan, F. (2016). 'Reconceptualising materials for the blended language learning environment' in McCarthy, M. (ed.), *The Cambridge Guide to Blended Learning for Language Teaching*, 123-38. Cambridge: CUP.

Moloney, D. and O'Keeffe, A. (2016). 'A case study in language teacher education' in McCarthy, M. (ed.), *The Cambridge Guide to Blended Learning for Language Teaching*, 176-99. Cambridge: CUP.

Morgan, D. L. (1997). *Focus groups as Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Munford, R., Sanders, J., Andrew, A., Butler, P. and Ruwhiu, L. (2003). 'Action research with families whānau and communities' in Munford, R. and Sanders, J. (eds.), *Making a difference in families: Research that creates change*, 93-112. Crows Nest, Australia: Allen & Unwin.

- Murphy, S. (2003). 'Second language transfer during third language acquisition' in *Working Papers in TESOL and Applied Linguistics* vol. 3 (1). New York: Teachers' College, Columbia University.
- Mutch, A. (2003). 'Communities of practice and habitus: a critique' in *Organization Studies*, 24 (3), 383-401.
- Norton, B (2013). *Identity and Language Learning: Extending the Conversation*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E. and Moules, N. J. (2017). 'Thematic analysis: striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria' in *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16 (1).
- Oakes, L. (2013). 'Foreign language learning in a "monoglot culture": Motivational variables amongst students of French and Spanish at an English university' in *System*, 41, 178-91.
- Oliver, D. G., Serovich, J. M. and Mason, T. L. (2005). 'Constraints and opportunities with interview transcription: Towards reflection in qualitative research' in *Social Forces*, 84, 1273-89.
- Oxford, R. (1997). 'Cooperative learning, collaborative learning and interaction: three communicative strands in the classroom' in *The Modern Language Journal*, vol. 81 (iv).
- Pegrum, M. (2014). *Mobile Learning: Languages, Literacies and Cultures*. London: Macmillan.
- Pegrum, M. (2019). *Mobile Lenses on Learning: Languages and Literacies on the Move*. Singapore: Springer.
- Polisca, E., Wright, V., Álvarez, I. and Montoro, C. (2019). *Language Provision in UK MFL Departments: 2019 Survey. Report No. 2, December*. University Council of Modern Languages (UCML).
- Polit, D. F. and Beck, C. T. (2010). 'Generalization in quantitative and qualitative research: myths and strategies' in *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 47, 1451-8.
- Pratt, C. and Grieve, R. (1984). 'The development of metalinguistic awareness: an introduction' in Tunmer, W., Pratt, C. and Herriman, M. (eds.), *Metalinguistic Awareness in Children: Theory, Research and Implications*, 2-11. Berlin: Springer.
- Price, S. (1990). *Comparative Constructions in Spanish and French Syntax*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Pring, R. (2015). *Philosophy of Educational Research* (3rd ed.). London/New York: Bloomsbury.
- Puchta, C. and Potter, J. (2004). *Focus Group Practice*. London/Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rainey, I. (2000). 'Action research and the English as a foreign language practitioner: time to take stock' in *Educational Action Research*, 8:1, 65-91.

Reason, P. and Bradbury, H. (eds.) (2008). *The Sage Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*. Los Angeles/London: Sage.

Reason, P. and Bradbury, H. (2008a). 'Introduction' in Reason, P. and Bradbury, H. (eds.) (2008). *The Sage Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice* (2nd ed.), 1-10. Los Angeles/London: Sage.

Reed, J. and Payton, V. R. (1997). 'Focus groups: issues of analysis and interpretation' in *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, vol. 26, issue 4.

Richards, J. and Rodgers, T. (2001). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Richardson, V. (2005). 'Constructivist Teaching and Teacher Education: Theory and Practice' in *Constructivist Teacher Education: Building a World of New Understandings*. London: Taylor and Francis.

Riese J. (2019). 'What is "access" in the context of qualitative research?' in *Qualitative Research*, 2019, 19 (6), 669-684.

Roberts, J. (2006). 'Limits to Communities of Practice' in *Journal of Management Studies*, vol. 43 (3), 623-39.

Rovai, A. (2004). 'A constructivist approach to online college learning' in *The Internet and Higher Education*, 7, 79-93.

Salaberry, M. R. (2005). 'Evidence for transfer of knowledge of aspect from L2 Spanish to L3 Portuguese' in Ayoun, D. and Salaberry, M. R. (eds.), *Tense and Aspect in Romance Languages*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Salmon, G. (2013). *E-tivities: The Key to Active Online Learning* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.

Salmon, G. (2014). *E-moderating: The Key to Teaching and Learning Online* (3rd ed.). London: Routledge.

Sangrà, A., Vlachopoulos, D. and Cabrera, N. (2012). 'Building an inclusive definition of e-learning: an approach to the conceptual framework' in *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 2012, 13 (2): 145-59.

Selwood, I. and Twining, P. (2005). *Action Research*. Becta Practitioner Research.

Sharples, M., de Roock, R., Ferguson, R., Gaved, M., Herodotou, C., Koh, E., Kukulska-Hulme, A., Looi, C-K., McAndrew, P., Rienties, B., Weller, M., & Wong, L. H. (2016). *Innovating Pedagogy 2016: Open University Innovation Report 5*. Milton Keynes: The Open University.

Sharwood Smith, M. (1996). 'Cross-linguistic influence with special reference to the acquisition of grammar' in Jordens, P. and Lalleman, J. (eds.), *Investigating Second Language Acquisition*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Sharwood Smith, M. and Kellerman, E. (1986). 'Crosslinguistic influence in second language acquisition: An introduction' in Kellerman, E. and Sharwood Smith, M. (eds.), *Crosslinguistic Influence in Second Language Acquisition*. New York: Pergamon Press.

Simpson, A. (2016). 'The successful incorporation of blended learning into the language curriculum' in *Advanced Education*, 5, 96-107. Kiev: National Technical University of Ukraine.

Simpson, R. and Obdalova, O. (2014). 'New technologies in higher education: ICT skills or digital literacy?' in *Procedia: Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 154, 104-11.

Singleton, S. (1987). 'Mother and other tongue influence on learner French' in *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* (vol. 9, issue 3). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sönmez, A., Göçmez, L., Uygun, D. and Ataizi, M. (2018). 'A review of current studies of mobile learning' in *Journal of Educational Technology & Online Learning*, 1 (1), 13-27.

Stolte, R. (2015). *German language learning in England: Understanding the enthusiasts*. PhD thesis, University of Southampton.

Strauss, A. M. and Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of Qualitative Research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Thiel, J. (2019). 'The UK National Student Survey: an amalgam of discipline and neo-liberal governmentality' in *British Educational Research Journal*, 45 (3), 538-53.

Thomas, J. (1988). 'The role played by metalinguistic awareness in second and third language learning' in *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 9 (3): 235-46. London/New York: Routledge.

Thompson, A.S. and Vásquez, C. (2015). 'Exploring motivational profiles through language learning narratives' in *Modern Language Journal*, 99(1), 158-74.

Tranquillo, J. and Stecker, M. (2016). 'Using intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in continuing professional education' in *Surgical Neurology International*, 2016: 7.

Ushida, E. (2005). 'The role of students' attitudes and motivation in second language learning in online language courses' in *CALICO Journal*, 23: 49-78. Sheffield: Equinox.

Wallace, M. (2012). *Action Research for Language Teachers* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: CUP.

Wei, L. (2003). 'Activation of lemmas in the multilingual lexicon and transfer in third language acquisition', in Cenoz, J., Hufeisen, B. and Jessner, U. (eds.), *The Multilingual Lexicon*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wenger, E. (2004). 'Knowledge management as a doughnut' in *Ivey Business Journal*. Available at:

<http://iveybusinessjournal.com/publication/knowledge-management-as-a-doughnut>, accessed 13/12/2021.

Wenger, E. (N.D.). *Communities of Practice: A Brief Introduction*. Available at:

<https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/11736/A%20brief%20introduction%20to%20CoP.pdf>, accessed 13/12/2021.

Wenger, E. and Snyder, W. (2000). 'Communities of Practice: The Organizational Frontier' in *Harvard Business Review*, January-February 2000.

Wenger, E., White, N. and Smith, J. D. (2009). *Digital habitats: Stewarding Technology for Communities*. Portland, OR: CPSquare.

Whitehead, J. (1989). 'Creating a living educational theory from questions of the kind "How do I improve my practice?"' in *Cambridge Journal of Education*, vol. 19 (1). London: Routledge.

Wilkinson, S. (1998). 'Focus groups in health research: exploring the meanings of health and illness' in *Journal of Health Psychology*, 3 (3), 323-42. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Williams, S. and Hammarberg, B. (1998). 'Language switches in L3 production: implications for a polyglot speaking model' in *Applied Linguistics*, vol. 19, issue 3.

Willis, J. (1996). *A Framework for Task-based Learning*. Harlow: Longman.

Appendices

Appendix	Details	Page
1	Ethical Considerations – a summary of issues	130
2	Ethical Considerations – Participant Information and Consent Form	131
3	Transcription: Focus Group 1 (FG1)	134
4	List of Linguistic Concepts discussed in Focus Group 1 (FG1)	139
5	Questions for Focus Groups FG1a and FG1b	141
6	Transcription: Focus Group 1a (FG1a)	143
7	Transcription: Focus Group 1b (FG1b)	146
8	Interview: Questions asked	149
9	Transcription: Interview	150
10	Screenshots of various stages of the piloting of exercises	156
11	Transcription from Focus Group 2 (FG2) meeting: Staff members	161
12	Transcription from Focus Group 3a (FG3a) meeting: Students, pre-pilot	164
13	Transcription from Focus Group 3b (FG3b) meeting: Students, post-pilot	167
14	A grid showing the relationship between themes and codes, with relevant quotations from FG3a and FG3b transcripts (see Appendices 12 and 13)	170
15	List of characteristics indicating the existence of a Community of Practice (CoP). Adapted from Wenger (1998: 125-6).	174

Appendix 1

Ethical Considerations

A summary of the specific aspects of the research requiring ethical consideration, and how I envisaged each would affect my dealings with the participants, is provided below:

- i) **Voluntary informed consent** (BERA, 2018: 9-16) – I will ensure that the students are briefed fully on the rationale behind the research; the reason for their involvement; the nature of their participation; how the data will be collected, stored and used; and where the findings of the research will be reported.
- ii) **Openness and disclosure** (BERA, 2018: 16-18, 25-26) – The research is fully open and involves no deception. The participants will be informed of this.
- iii) **Right to withdraw** (BERA, 2018: 18-19) – I will explain fully, and respect without question, the students' right to withdraw (a) their involvement in discussions, (b) their permission for exemplars of their written work to be analysed in the research, and (c) their permission for stored data stemming from their involvement to be used in the findings of the project.
- iv) **Privacy** (BERA, 2018: 21-25) – References in the project to participants' experiences and outputs will be made in such a way that no individual is recognisable. Equally, they will be given written assurance that their data will be stored and used in compliance with the Data Protection Act (1998). All recordings and transcripts arising from their involvement will be destroyed within six years of the completion of the project.

Appendix 2

Ethical Considerations

The following is the Participant Information and Consent Form presented to participants

Ronan Fitzsimons Professional Doctorate (Doctor of Education) Programme

Participant Information and Consent Form

Introduction

This form details the project in which you have been invited to take part, giving you information about its rationale; why you have been invited to participate; the nature of your involvement; how the data will be collected, stored and used; and where the findings of the research will be reported.

Rationale

“What is the effect of cross-linguistic influence on UK undergraduates taking French as their first foreign language (L2) and Spanish as their second (L3)?”

I am currently studying towards a Doctor of Education degree under the university’s Professional Doctorate programme. The project harnesses my work within the field of Romance languages in Higher Education, and seeks to examine the experience of UK Final Year students of Modern Languages who began their degree having already achieved an A Level in French (their first foreign language: L2) and added ab initio Spanish (a second foreign language: L3). It is hoped that the findings will contribute towards a theory of how the skills and usages embedded in your language-learning experience through French have been a help or a hindrance in your subsequent learning of Spanish.

Your involvement

You have been invited to participate as part of a small group of students whose degree structure is that outlined above. The involvement is twofold:

1. I will interview you to discuss your language-learning experience. The discussions will focus specifically on ways in which your prior knowledge of French may have been a help or a hindrance in your subsequent learning of Spanish. The discussions – two or three in total, each lasting between one and two hours – will take place in mutually convenient slots.
2. I will invite you to take part in, and feed back to me on, a pilot of some prototype online activities involving grammatical aspects of French and Spanish, to test the findings of the interviews and discussions noted above. Your feedback, and your engagement with the pilot both as individuals and as a small community of language learners, will assist me in making improvements to what will eventually become an e-learning resource.

This study of your syntactic and lexical output in L2 and L3 will also help me to determine the extent to which the embeddedness of your L2 has helped or hindered your L3 production.

Ethical Issues

Specific aspects of the research and my dealings with you are detailed below. Please ensure that you understand these fully before granting your consent:

- i) **Voluntary informed consent** – You have been invited to take part in the project on the basis of your specific degree combination. You are invited to be interviewed by me – individually and/or as a group – to discuss your experiences in learning Spanish against a background of already having learned French. We will discuss how helpful or otherwise you found your prior knowledge of French to be in your subsequent learning of Spanish and, to illustrate this, will explore your views on the formation of certain grammatical structures in Spanish. All audio recordings and notes taken by me will be used purely for this project and will be stored securely and not shared further. I will then invite you to translate a set of sentences, so that I can analyse exemplars of your written French and Spanish production, to test the findings of the discussions. The outcomes of the research will be presented in various documents submitted by me to the university in fulfilment of the requirements of the award I am pursuing.
- ii) **Openness and disclosure** – The research is fully open and involves no deception (i.e. you are not led artificially astray in order to produce a particular output).
- iii) **Right to withdraw** – You have the right to withdraw at any stage, up to the point of data analysis, (a) your involvement in discussions, (b) your permission for exemplars of your written work to be analysed in the research, and (c) your permission for stored data stemming from your involvement to be used in the findings of the project.
- iv) **Privacy** – In the project, all references to your experiences and outputs will be made in such a way that no individual is recognisable. Equally, I confirm that your data will be stored and used in compliance with the Data Protection Act (1998). All recordings and transcripts arising from your involvement will be destroyed within six years of the completion of the project.

Consent

If, having read the conditions outlined above, you are happy to participate in the project, please sign and date this form in the space below. A copy of the form will be provided for your records.

Thank you.

Ronan Fitzsimons

I hereby agree to participate in this research project, and grant my consent to the emerging data and exemplars of my written French and Spanish to be analysed for the purposes of this project, in accordance with the conditions outlined above	YES	NO (delete as appropriate)
Student's name		
Student's signature		
Date		
Researcher's name		
Researcher's signature		
Date		

Appendix 3

Transcription: Focus Group 1 (FG1)

Here I present various fragments of the transcription of the Focus Group 1 (FG1) discussion, selected for their relevance to the development of the project and the move towards a theory. The fragments provide illustrations of the initial coding system used to highlight the positive and negative aspects – indicated by [+] and [-] respectively – commented upon by the participants in their experience of learning L2 French and L3 Spanish.

Abbreviations relating to participants:

- R = Researcher
- P1, P2 etc. = Number of the participant speaking each utterance. Anonymity was guaranteed, so I used numbers, on the basis of participants' sitting order around the table, starting clockwise from where I was sitting.

Key to coding tag system:

Primary Coding Tag	Secondary Coding Tag	Linguistics Concept Represented
GEN		General linguistic structure
N		Noun
	NG	Gender of nouns
A		Adjective
	AF	Formation of adjectives
	AS	Superlative adjectives
P		Preposition
	PPM	Prepositions of place and movement
	PI	Prepositions used before an infinitive
	Pppp	Prepositions: French <i>pour</i> versus Spanish <i>por/para</i>
V		Verb
	VT	Issue of verb tenses
	VAPP	Verbs: agreement of past participle
	Vese	Verbs 'to be': French <i>être</i> v. Spanish <i>ser/estar</i>
	Vth	Verbs of 'thinking'
	VFI	Verbs using the idea of 'when' to express a future idea
	VC	Verbs in conditional sentences
	VS	Verbs in the subjunctive mood

Fragment FG1-01

		Line
R	Right, that's on. Away you go.	
P1	OK, shall I start? I don't know what you guys think, but the main thing for me was that I found Spanish wasn't a major shock when I started [GEN+]. I think that the years I'd done French meant it wasn't scary or...	

P4	Yeah, same for me. You kind of knew what to expect, or you were relieved that it wasn't so massively different [GEN+].	5
P5	I actually found it really exciting. I wanted to branch out from French, and for some reason I was really attracted to Spanish, but I was terrified I might not be able to handle it, or that I'd get them confused or...	
P2	Me too. After the first couple of classes, where you start to look at little dialogues and see the verbs starting to fit together, I remember thinking I'd hit the ground running [GEN+].	10
P3	Because you'd done French?	
P2	Yeah.	
P3	Right, yeah, that's pretty much how I found it [GEN+].	15

Fragment FG1-02

		Line
P2	Actually, there was a thing cropped up in class the other day that made me think, after what Ronan had asked us to do for this meeting.	
P4	Was that the 'analysis' thing?	
P2	Yeah. I got into a tangle coz I was trying to say 'in-depth analysis' and I said <i>profunda</i> , the feminine, instead of <i>profundo</i> . [NG-]	5
P1	It's masculine in Spanish. [NG+]	
P2	Yeah, but I think <i>analyse</i> in French is feminine.	
P5	Is it? I always think of <i>l'analyse</i> , so I suppose you don't get the gender from that. [NG-]	
P4	<i>El análisis</i> sounds right in Spanish [NG+]. Do you know things like that because they sound right, or is there some way of...?	10
P1	I always assume things are the same gender in Spanish as they are in French, but I know that's not 100% [NG-].	
P3	I think 'blood' is another one: <i>le sang</i> in French but <i>la sangre</i> . [NG+]	
P4	Oh, yeah!	14

Fragment FG1-03

		Line
P3	One of the easy things was knowing instinctively where to put adjectives – the word order. That was dead easy after doing French. I remember feeling quite smug. [AF+]	
P2	Yeah, that's a good one. I think adjectives are really easy in Spanish, after French, don't you? [AF+]	5
P5	It's pretty straightforward for me [AF+], but I did find that 'most' thing a pain – the way of saying someone is the tallest in the class, or whatever. [AS-]	
P4	Superlatives.	
P5	Yeah, I took ages to stop doing the double <i>le</i> thing when I was trying to say it in Spanish: like <i>el chico el más alto</i> , which is just completely French. [AS-]	10

Fragment FG1-04

		Line
P2	I think it's handy that you've got some quite similar prepositions in the two languages, like <i>de</i> and <i>de</i> , <i>a</i> and <i>à</i> , [PPM+] but it's sometimes annoying when they don't work the same way. [PPM-]	
P1	Yeah, it's great when you recognise them early on, but then you've got to be careful. I'm always getting them wrong in Spanish, sticking the wrong one in before an infinitive, or putting one where there shouldn't be one. [PI-]	5
P1	I need to revise those. I've got a list somewhere, if you want me to make some copies?	
P4	That would be really useful.	
P3	The thing about 'in' a city is a bit mad when you compare Spanish to French. It's <i>à Paris</i> in French but <i>en París</i> in Spanish. That took a bit of getting used to. [PPM-]	10
P5	Yeah, countries as well. [PPM-]	13

Fragment FG1-05

		Line
P1	Do you reckon you've cracked <i>por</i> and <i>para</i> ?	
P4	No way. That's probably the biggest nightmare. I mean, some of the basics are OK, like you can learn some of the standard things and just memorise them, then they sound right instinctively, but there's so many exceptions, or bits where you just don't know. [Pppp-]	5
P2	It would be so much easier if there was just the one word, like in French. [Pppp-]	
P3	I try to avoid it in essays if I can. I'm never sure. [Pppp-]	
P1	There's a good section on studyspanish.com – have you been on that? It's quite good for refreshing grammar.	9

Fragment FG1-06

		Line
P2	And don't get me started on <i>ser</i> and <i>estar</i> .	
P3	I don't know why Spanish has to have two verbs for 'to be', when French manages with just one. [Vese-]	
P4	At least, though, the rules are a bit easier to distinguish than <i>por</i> and <i>para</i> . I mean, you've got the permanent and temporary thing, which kind of makes sense. [Vese+]	5
P1	Yeah, that gets you thinking. You have to kind of think through what someone 'is' by nature, or what they 'currently are' and all that. I've always found that really challenging, but I think I've got it sorted. [Vese+]	
P5	I think the Year Abroad helped with that.	10
P3	That's true. You get to see and hear a lot of usages, and some of them just stick, yeah. I still use the wrong verb with <i>bien</i> and <i>bueno</i> in Spanish, though – I think that's the French influence. [Vese-]	

P4	Me too. It's a nightmare. [Vese-]	14
----	-----------------------------------	----

Fragment FG1-07

		Line
P5	I think, with the verbs, it's the past tenses that get me [VT-]. What do you guys think?	
P2	Definitely. The basic structures are OK, Actually, some of the tenses are pretty much the same, like the imperfect, and even the future [VT+]. But the other past tenses...	5
P1	For me it's mostly the perfect tense [VT-]. Forming it's OK in both languages [VT+], but the usage isn't the same, or it doesn't overlap as much as you'd think [VT-].	
P4	I remember drawing a diagram with all sorts of timeframes, just to try and learn which tense is used for which period in which language.	10
P3	There's also the agreement thing in the perfect [VT-] [VAPP-], not just the timings. You've got to make so much agree in French, but less so in Spanish [VAPP-]	
P2	Yeah, I think we'd done the hard work first in French, so Spanish was easier in that sense [VT+]. But you've also got to remember to dumb it down in Spanish – well, not dumb it down, but not go mad with making the past participle agree all the time [VT+].	15
P1	I actually like the preterite in Spanish [VT+]. I wish French used the past historic more, so that you had a parallel [VT-]. It's much more comfortable to say, like, <i>fui</i> for 'I went somewhere yesterday'.	20
P4	You get used to using it, yeah, I agree.	

Fragment FG1-08

		Line
P4	Isn't there something weird about 'thinking verbs' in French and Spanish? One's different from the other, or something? [Vth-]	
P2	What do you mean? Like 'I think that...?'	
P4	Yeah, isn't it that you use the subjunctive in questions, or negatives? [Vth+]	
P1	I'm not sure. Maybe you...	5
P3	I think you use the subjunctive when it's 'I don't think...' in both languages. Is that right? [Vth+]	
P5	I think we need to check this, guys [laughs]	8

Fragment FG1-09

		Line
P5	The other thing was that 'when I'm 64' structure. [VFI-]	

P3	Oh, that's a killer. That's completely hardwired in French for me. I can't get my head round the Spanish one, or I can, but I never remember to do it properly. [VFI-]	4
----	--	---

Fragment FG1-10

		Line
P2	There's quite a bit of difference in the 'if' clause sentences, as well – the conditionals. [VC+]	
P1	Yeah. That's the kind of thing I find OK to learn, but then putting it into practice I often get it wrong. [VC+/-]	
P5	Some of them work in parallel, but then Spanish kicks in with the subjunctive and it all goes mad. [VC+/-]	5
P4	The thing is with Spanish, it's kind of logical, like the 'if I were' thing, but what's difficult is that French works so differently. [VC+/-]	
P3	It does my head in sometimes. [VC-]	
P1	We should put together a check-list in both languages.	10
P2	Or make an app, like DuoLingo. [laughs]	
P4	Do you still use that?	
P2	Yeah, all the time. It's really good for brushing stuff up and learning vocab.	
P4	Will it sort out the subjunctive for me?	
P2	It might.	15

Fragment FG1-11

		Line
P1	Actually, the subjunctive's probably the biggie here, wouldn't you say?	
P3	Definitely.	
P2	It's another one of those things where you did the hard work getting your head around it in French first, then you come across it in Spanish and you're, like, OK, here we go. [VS+]	5
P5	We weren't really taught the subjunctive in French at school. We learned how to form it, but then they just gave us a list of a few triggers and said 'right, you can use it here'.	
P4	We were a bit luckier. They tried to do a whole concept thing of what it was and why it was used. I kind of got it.	10
P1	I kind of accept it like a parallel thing, where sometimes you need it. I'm OK with it, and it's good that it exists in both French and Spanish, so you sort of know what's going on, but the fact that the usage isn't the same is a bit unfortunate. [VS+/-]	
P3	I need to do so much work on that.	15

Appendix 4

Linguistic Concepts discussed in Focus Group 1 (FG1)

The following table lists the linguistic concepts mentioned by participants in the plenary Focus Group 1 (FG1) session. It offers a definition or description of each concept, and an early indication of whether the participants seemed to consider each point to be problematic in terms of their mastering it in both foreign languages (perhaps suggesting 'negative' cross-linguistic influence) or helpful (possibly denoting the harnessing of some level of metalinguistic awareness). It is an informal document drawn up in parallel to the more formal field notes and transcriptions.

No.	ITEM	DESCRIPTION	POSITIVE?	NEGATIVE?
1	'General structure'	The first point made was that prior study of French had been beneficial to 'hitting the ground running' in Spanish	X	
2	Gender of Nouns	Issue of similar words (e.g. the translations of the English 'analysis') being masculine in one language and feminine in the other	X	X
3	Adjectives	Adjective formation, word order and the superlative form were all raised	X	X
4	Prepositions	Generally considered manageable across both foreign languages, but the correct use of adjectives of 'place' and 'movement' was considered tricky, as were some prepositions coming before the infinitive form of a verb	X	X
5	French <i>pour</i> v. Spanish <i>por/para</i>	The respective terms for 'for' continue to cause difficulty, specifically when coming from French (which has one word) into Spanish (which has two).		X
6	French <i>être</i> v. Spanish <i>ser/estar</i>	Where French has one verb for 'to be', Spanish has two. This was deemed to cause confusion		X

7	Verbs in the perfect tense	Hints of a multiplicity of difficulties in usage across both languages		X
8	Verbs of thinking	Suggestions of both commonality and discrepancy in how verbs of thinking (e.g. ' <u>I believe that</u> this is important') are used across both languages	X	X
9	Verbs expressing 'when' + a future idea	This was considered tricky, given the difference in structure between French and Spanish to express ideas such as ' <u>when I retire</u> , I'll move to the coast'		X
10	Conditional sentences	Structures such as 'if I were rich' or 'if I had acted differently' – there was universal agreement that this is an awkward point to master as French and Spanish work very differently		X
11	Use of the subjunctive mood	Mention was made of the relatively small overlap (positive) and huge difference (negative) in usage across the two languages.	X	X

Appendix 5

Focus Groups FG1a and FG1b: Questions

The following is a series of questions drawn up from linguistic points raised by participants in the plenary Focus Group 1 (FG1) discussion, and recorded in the field notes I took as a peripheral observer. The questions were devised as a means of exploring in greater depth, during the subsequent, smaller focus group sessions (groups FG1a and FG1b), items of language-learning interest.

1. Generally, do you find it has been a help or a hindrance to have learned French as your first foreign language, and Spanish as your second?
2. Do you feel, at this stage of your learning, that your views might have been different if you had learned Spanish first, followed by French?
3. How embedded do you feel your knowledge of French was when you started to study Spanish?
4. How have you coped with similarities and differences relating to the gender of nouns in French and Spanish?
5. How well do you feel you are able to separate the formation and use of adjectives (in particular, comparative and superlative forms) in French and Spanish?
6. Have you found it difficult to use a full range of superficially similar prepositions across both languages?
7. To what extent has the existence and use of the Spanish prepositions *por* and *para* been a problem to you, in comparison with the single French equivalent *pour*?
8. Have you ever reflected on how many verb endings you've learned? Was it a mountain to learn the Spanish verb system?
9. To what extent has the existence and use of the Spanish verbs *ser* and *estar* been a problem to you, in comparison with the single French equivalent *être*?
10. How have you found the comparative use of the imperfect and future tenses in both foreign languages?
11. Was it a help or a hindrance to have the conventions for the formation and usage of the French perfect tense already embedded before learning the perfect tense in Spanish?
12. How have you dealt with issues of agreement of the past participle in French and Spanish?
13. How effectively do you choose a tense in each foreign language to convey a single, repeated action? Did you identify any complicated differences between French and Spanish?
14. Is it tricky to handle conditional sentences in Spanish, given your prior knowledge of equivalent structures in French?
15. How do you view your absorption of, and fluency in, the use of the subjunctive mood in French and Spanish?
16. Are there specific points of difficulty you would identify in how the subjunctive differs in the two foreign languages?
17. Generally, do you strategically cross-reference between French and Spanish when seeking to articulate an idea?
18. Do you compartmentalise aspects of French structure, and aspects of Spanish structure, in any way?

19. Do you make your own theories to transfer ideas from one language to the other?
20. Can you say that your Spanish might have overtaken your French in certain aspects?
21. Is there any sense in which your learning of Spanish, being more recent, might have had a beneficial influence on your French?

Appendix 6

Transcription: Focus Group 1a (FG1a)

Here I present various fragments of the transcription of the Focus Group 1a (FG1a) discussion, selected for their relevance to the development of the project and the move towards a theory. The fragments provide illustrations of the initial coding system used to highlight the positive and negative aspects – indicated by [+] and [-] respectively – commented upon by the participants in their experience of learning L2 French and L3 Spanish.

Abbreviations relating to participants:

- R = Researcher
- P1, P2 etc. = Number of the participant speaking each utterance. Anonymity was guaranteed, so I used numbers, on the basis of participants' sitting order around the table, starting clockwise from where I was sitting.

Key to coding tag system:

Primary Coding Tag	Secondary Coding Tag	Linguistics Concept Represented
GEN		General linguistic structure
N		Noun
	NG	Gender of nouns
A		Adjective
	AF	Formation of adjectives
	AS	Superlative adjectives
P		Preposition
	PPM	Prepositions of place and movement
	PI	Prepositions used before an infinitive
	Pppp	Prepositions: French <i>pour</i> versus Spanish <i>por/para</i>
V		Verb
	VT	Issue of verb tenses
	VAPP	Verbs: agreement of past participle
	Vese	Verbs 'to be': French <i>être</i> v. Spanish <i>ser/estar</i>
	Vth	Verbs of 'thinking'
	VFI	Verbs using the idea of 'when' to express a future idea
	VC	Verbs in conditional sentences
	VS	Verbs in the subjunctive mood

Fragment FG1a-11

		Line
R	Generally, do you find it has been a help or a hindrance to have learned French as your first foreign language, and Spanish as your second?	

P1	I'd err on the side of it being good, rather than being a hindrance, especially in the initial stages. [GEN+]	
P2	Yeah. I remember going into my first Spanish class and making the link between French '-er' verbs and Spanish '-ar' verbs, and '-re' compared to '-er'. [GEN+]	5
P1	I could see that in a lot of cases, it was the same kind of conjugation – though other times it can be very different. But it's helpful – even now, I think 'OK, if that's how it's done in Spanish, how would I do that in French?' [GEN+]	10
P2	Yeah, you could tell 'that's a first person plural', 'that's a third person plural' and so on. [GEN+]	
P1	And you see patterns in, for example, the past tense – that's really helpful. [GEN+]	
P2	I thought it would be hard, but it wasn't too bad. I got the hang of it quite quickly. [GEN+]	15
P1	I think I just did it – it became obvious. [GEN+]	

Fragment FG1a-12

		Line
R	How have you coped with similarities and differences relating to the gender of nouns in French and Spanish?	
P1	I was kind of imagining 'it's this gender in French, so it must be the same in Spanish'. Then you realise that sometimes it differs, so that can be difficult. [NG-]	5
P2	For me, I would try to stick to the Spanish gender rules first, so if a noun ends in '-ión' or '-a' I'd know that it's likely to be feminine, then you've got exceptions like 'día', for example... [NG+]	
P1	I think I also try see it in context – 'buenos días', rather than 'buenas días' – and work it out from that. The example of 'problema', I remember my lecturer telling me that it's masculine in every language, but then there's 'la mano' – I found that odd. [NG+/-]	10
P2	This is where we vary...	
R	It's interesting to see the different perceptions.	14

Fragment FG1a-13

		Line
R	Have you ever reflected on how many verb endings you've learned? Was it a mountain to learn the Spanish verb system?	
P1	I used masses of cue cards when I first started, just to drill it into myself.	
P2	I did that with the irregular ones, especially with the preterite, just to get it properly learned. [VT+]	5
P1	I didn't like that tense. I was comfortable with the perfect tense 'he llegado' style... [VT-]	
P2	Yeah, the rules in Spanish verbs did my head in... [VT-]	

P1	Yeah, I mean, I still find it hard to form the preterite, compared with the others – like, ‘he llegado’ is really easy to form. Whereas when you get into the irregular preterites, it’s a bit crazy. [VT-]	10
P2	I know it’s quite rigid, where you use the perfect and when you use the preterite, but I still find it hard to get it right – when it’s things that happened today or yesterday, so recent history, then I feel like the distinction could be a bit clearer. [VT-]	15
P1	I didn’t understand why it had to be the perfect for this morning and not the preterite. [VT-]	
P2	Yeah, why it had to be different from today to yesterday.	
P1	I feel it’s more natural to use the perfect form. So if I’m in a conversation with a Spanish friend and I’m struggling for the preterite, I’ll just use the perfect, because they’ll understand what I mean even if it sounds funny to them. I know it’s not ideal, but it gets me by. [VT+/-]	20

Fragment FG1a-14

		Line
R	Have you found it difficult to use a full range of superficially similar prepositions across both languages?	
P2	I think it’s easier in Spanish, less complicated, because there are fewer ways of saying it – it’s easier to learn, a bit like the English difference between ‘to’ and ‘in’. Spanish is also easier with ‘en’, which has conflicts in French with ‘dans’ / ‘sur’, and the English ‘on’ / ‘in’ and so on. [PPM+]	5
P1	Yeah, that en/a thing isn’t too bad for me [PPM+], but por/para [Pppp-] and ser/estar [Vese-] are cases where you’ve just got to learn the rules surrounding them, whereas in French I think it’s a bit more forgiving in those cases. [Vese+]	10
P2	Learning it and getting your head around all the comparative usages was definitely a challenge... [P-]	
P1	I think initially it’s about learning the basic rules, then trying to use it in context. I still make mistakes, but I think it’s about recognising those mistakes and understanding why it’s wrong, so you don’t make the mistake again. [P+]	15

Appendix 7

Transcription: Focus Group 1b (FG1b)

Here I present various fragments of the transcription of the Focus Group 1b (FG1b) discussion, selected for their relevance to the development of the project and the move towards a theory. The fragments provide illustrations of the initial coding system used to highlight the positive and negative aspects – indicated by [+] and [-] respectively – commented upon by the participants in their experience of learning L2 French and L3 Spanish.

Abbreviations relating to participants:

- R = Researcher
- P1, P2 etc. = Number of the participant speaking each utterance. Anonymity was guaranteed, so I used numbers, on the basis of participants' sitting order around the table, starting clockwise from where I was sitting.

Key to coding tag system:

Primary Coding Tag	Secondary Coding Tag	Linguistics Concept Represented
GEN		General linguistic structure
N		Noun
	NG	Gender of nouns
A		Adjective
	AF	Formation of adjectives
	AS	Superlative adjectives
P		Preposition
	PPM	Prepositions of place and movement
	PI	Prepositions used before an infinitive
	Pppp	Prepositions: French <i>pour</i> versus Spanish <i>por/para</i>
V		Verb
	VT	Issue of verb tenses
	VAPP	Verbs: agreement of past participle
	Vese	Verbs 'to be': French <i>être</i> v. Spanish <i>ser/estar</i>
	Vth	Verbs of 'thinking'
	VFI	Verbs using the idea of 'when' to express a future idea
	VC	Verbs in conditional sentences
	VS	Verbs in the subjunctive mood

Fragment FG1b-21

		Line
R	Do you feel, at this stage of your learning, that your views might have been different if you had learned Spanish first, followed by French?	

P2	Yeah, I remember when we were doing – bearing in mind the preceding direct object – we were doing the perfect tense, and I remember being tempted to write ‘una cosa que he vista’. [VAPP+/-]	5
P1	When I learned those, I think it was easier because I’d done French previously, and I did find that the Spanish structure was quite straightforward. [VAPP+]	
P2	I think I lucked out with Spanish – it was so much easier. Yeah, so you’ve got ‘je suis allé’ with the past tense, but in Spanish you don’t have worry about the ‘être’ thing – you just say ‘he ido’. I much prefer how it’s done in Spanish. I think the auxiliary can be problematic, though. [V+/-]	10
P1	Well, if you think of English as your first language, ‘have’ is an auxiliary really, so in that sense, I think it’s easier just to base it on that. I didn’t really mind it, but that similarity did make the process easier. [V+]	
P2	For me, I just try and avoid French in the sequence because I know that I’ll get myself into pitfalls if I try and think of French. It might be a subconscious thing but I try to work from English into Spanish because I know that’s the way it’ll work best for me. Then if I’m really struggling with a structure, I might think ‘oh, how would I say this in French?’, but that’s only really if I’m struggling. [V+]	15 20
P2	I’ve always found it interesting that there are things I know how to say in one language and not in the other, and I find myself crossing over. Like the other day I said ‘sondaje’ in Spanish, based on the French ‘sondage’, where it should have been ‘sondeo’.	

Fragment FG1b-22

		Line
R	How do you view your absorption of, and fluency in, the use of the subjunctive mood in French and Spanish?	
P1	For me, the Spanish subjunctive is a lot broader than the French one, so having learned the Spanish subjunctive, there are times when I wonder whether I should be using it in French, but in fact the French one is much more limited, and set [VS-].	5
P2	I remember in French at school they tried to explain it as a mood, and I never really got that to make sense. So it was literally just a matter of learning the lists of structures that triggered it. I understand it now, because it’s been made obvious through using it in both languages [VS+], but I still don’t know the exact, perfect explanation of it [VS-].	10
P1	In Spanish it’s just so much broader, there are so many more set phrases where you’d use the subjunctive, and there’s the imperfect subjunctive – I mean there is in French as well, but you don’t really use it, whereas in Spanish it’s this whole range of usages waiting to trip you up... [VS-]	15
P2	It was a challenge, because I already knew the concepts of, say, the perfect and the pluperfect, but then you had to learn when to use it and why to use it, and it was really helpful to have the concepts beforehand [VS+]. I didn’t find the conjugation of it all too bad – not exactly my idea of fun, but OK.	

P1	I wouldn't say it was exactly a joy for me to learn the Spanish subjunctive. I know how to use it and I'm fine with it, but if it didn't exist I wouldn't miss it. If there were more similarities to the French, I would be a lot happier [VS-]. I do try and confront it because that's part of the language, and I recognise it's important, but...	20
----	--	----

Fragment FG1b-23

		Line
R	How have you coped with similarities and differences relating to the gender of nouns in French and Spanish?	
P2	It really did help to have the French ones in advance, to help with the Spanish. When it wasn't an '-o' or an '-a', I would use French knowledge to sort the Spanish out. [NG+]	5
P1	How I dealt with that originally in French was to try and always use it with 'un' or 'une', so I could embed the gender. Then I tried to do the same when it came to Spanish. [NG+]	
P2	Yeah, me too, but I still get lost sometimes. I'm more or less there in French, but the comparisons with Spanish... it's just one of those things where you know you just can't rely on French. There are some awkward genders that you just can't predict. [NG-] Sorry I can't think of an example...	10
P1	I think it's an area where it does generally carry across from French... if you recognise a word but don't know its gender, you'd got some rules to try and work it out, and if not, at least you've got another language to try and guess from. [NG+]	15

Appendix 8

Interview: Questions asked

1. What do you find are the easiest and the hardest bits about learning Spanish, in tandem with French? Are there any structures or concepts that really stand out?
2. Do you think of your French as being embedded in your linguistic brain, as it was the first foreign language you learned?
3. Do you view it in terms of your French reaching a good level, then your Spanish, by the necessity of learning it in the accelerated fashion, getting to the same level quicker?
4. Overall, in terms of the two languages progressing, one getting ahead of the other, and so on, would you find that having two languages – not competing, but progressing side by side – there have been more elements of help than of hindrance?
5. Do you think it's something to do with compartmentalisation – keeping separate the two (or three) parts of our linguistic brain?
6. In an earlier discussion, the group mentioned feeling certain about Spanish structures now. How do you think that knowledge, that certainty, came about? Was it you, your linguistic ear, deciding for yourself, or was it drummed into you in a disciplined way within the grammar class?
7. How did you cope with the combination of past tenses when you shifted into Spanish? Was it helpful to have French already embedded?
8. So what happened when your Spanish tutor introduced the subjunctive? Were you thinking, 'I know what comes next', given that the two languages have the subjunctive?
9. Did you find that you were well equipped to explore both the similarities and the differences in the subjunctive? Do you find yourself spinning both plates and cross-referring?
10. Do you think that if, hypothetically, you now started Portuguese or Catalan tomorrow, would you be confident that, as a knower of existing Romance Languages, you'd be drawing on this prior knowledge and dragging concepts across instinctively?
11. If I showed you a passage of Portuguese, I'm sure you'd be making your own little comparisons and analysing the verb system and the use of adjectives and their endings. Is that the kind of thing you found yourself doing when you started Spanish, armed with French?
12. The ab initio Spanish course is full-on absorption. Would it be fair to say you were making your own little theories as you went through it?
13. Some members of the group mentioned in an earlier discussion that, from a standing start, their Spanish has overtaken their French. Is this the case for you? Would you say that your Spanish is perhaps feeding into and helping your French?
14. If you had your time over again, would you choose the same combination and the same order?

Appendix 9

Transcription: Interview

Here I present various fragments of the transcription of the one-to-one interview I conducted in Phase 1 of the project, selected for their relevance to the development of the project and the move towards a theory. The fragments provide illustrations of the initial coding system used to highlight the positive and negative aspects – indicated by [+] and [-] respectively – commented upon by the participant in their experience of learning L2 French and L3 Spanish.

Abbreviations relating to participants:

- R = Researcher
- IP = Interview Participant

Key to coding tag system:

Primary Coding Tag	Secondary Coding Tag	Linguistics Concept Represented
GEN		General linguistic structure
N		Noun
	NG	Gender of nouns
A		Adjective
	AF	Formation of adjectives
	AS	Superlative adjectives
P		Preposition
	PPM	Prepositions of place and movement
	PI	Prepositions used before an infinitive
	Pppp	Prepositions: French <i>pour</i> versus Spanish <i>por/para</i>
V		Verb
	VT	Issue of verb tenses
	VAPP	Verbs: agreement of past participle
	Vese	Verbs 'to be': French <i>être</i> v. Spanish <i>ser/estar</i>
	Vth	Verbs of 'thinking'
	VFI	Verbs using the idea of 'when' to express a future idea
	VC	Verbs in conditional sentences
	VS	Verbs in the subjunctive mood

Fragment I1

		Line
R	What do you find are the easiest and the hardest bits about learning Spanish, in tandem with French? Are there any structures or concepts that really stand out?	

IP	I'm not sure. The only time I really cross-reference is when I'm not sure about vocab – now, anyway. At first there was a lot of it – I didn't have a clue what I was doing – but now I just think in Spanish. [GEN+]	5
R	That's good. People are inclined to accept that they're an English speaker and the best thing is to try and think in Spanish, rather than swerving through the lay-by that is French.	
IP	Yeah. Because of French I was always taught not to think in English – which is hard at first, because you think 'how can I not think in English? I am English!' But I think once your language gets better you tend to think in that language [GEN+]. So I already had that foundation, whereas I think in first year a lot of people were using Google Translate to write their essays: they'd write it in English then stick it into Google Translate and then wonder why it was wrong.	10 15

Fragment I2

		Line
R	Do you think of your French as being embedded in your linguistic brain, as it was the first foreign language you learned?	
IP	Maybe. I feel like it's just a big jumble of French words in my brain, whereas Spanish is very structured in my brain – just because of the way I've been taught it. It's so well taught here. [GEN+]	5
R	So do you view it in terms of your French reaching a good level, then your Spanish, by the necessity of learning it in the accelerated fashion, getting to the same level quicker?	
IP	I think it was scary at first, and I was thrown in at the deep end, but everyone was in the same boat, and you just had to get on with it, otherwise you'd fail. You had to do the portfolio in first year, which was quite easy – but then you just have to practise, and do the prep work that you're told to do, which I think in first year is easier, because you're a bit scared of your lecturers and you're going to be in trouble if you don't do it. But in final year you're a bit more blasé about it. You can wing it.	10 15
R	And overall, in terms of the two languages progressing, one getting ahead of the other, and so on, would you find that having two languages – not competing, but progressing side by side – there have been more elements of help than of hindrance?	
IP	I think having French has definitely helped with my Spanish [GEN+], especially in helping to establish the first few bits of vocab and stuff, and grammar rules and things, because once you know a foreign language you get the rules [GEN+]. I remember in first and second year I'd write essays and get the tutor saying 'do you do another language, like French?' and I'd say 'yes, why?' and her point was that I seemed to understand the rules, the logic of Spanish, how it works. So it definitely helped with that. [GEN+]	20 25
R	You could take that question two ways: good, because it was clear you'd grasped the Romance Languages rules, or bad, because you might have been making mistakes triggered by your French.	
IP	I took it as a compliment.	30

R	Do you think it's something to do with compartmentalisation – keeping separate the two (or three) parts of our linguistic brain?	
IP	I found myself code-mixing a lot on my year abroad. Whenever I was in Spain and I tried to speak French, it just turned into Spanish, and that was really weird, but hilarious. I went to Spain first, so there was no French hindrance – it wasn't interfering at all because I hadn't been speaking it – but every time I tried to speak French there, it just turned into Spanish. Then when I went to France, I accidentally spoke Spanish – I accidentally said 'no sé' instead of 'je ne sais pas' [GEN-]	35
R	But I'm sensing more of a positive than a negative... if you had your time over again, would you choose the same combination and the same order?	40
IP	Yeah, definitely [GEN+]. I mean I'd love to learn more languages, but right now I think two is enough for my little brain.	
R	And do you think that if, hypothetically, you now started Portuguese or Catalan or something tomorrow, would you be confident that, as a knower of existing Romance Languages, you'd be drawing on this prior knowledge and dragging stuff across, grasping concepts instinctively?	45
IP	Definitely. Catalan is almost a mixture of French and Spanish, isn't it? And I've only done a little bit of Italian on Duolingo. And when I see written Italian, I think I can actually understand that. [GEN+] I made some Italian friends on my year abroad and I have them on Facebook, so when they write a status I can look at it and think 'what does that say?' then I click the 'translate'. And I made friends with a Brazilian guy, too – Portuguese is such a strange language! On my year abroad I lived in a school, and we used to sneak around the classrooms after hours and used the resources, and they did a lot of Portuguese in that school so there were loads of posters and things. It was weird – I think you could probably pick it up, and maybe I will one day, but I remember when I first started Spanish, and the –o and the –a were just so different. [GEN+] [NG+]	50 55
R	Do you find that you've made your own theories?	
IP	Yeah [GEN+]. I think my Spanish is now better than my French – that's how I perceive it. I'm a lot more confident with Spanish – I've been doing French for so long that I feel I probably should be better at it than I am – but I think the reasoning is the foundations that I had – it was just so messy; I wish I could have wiped the slate clean and started again, but...	60
R	Some members of the group mentioned in an earlier discussion that, from a standing start, their Spanish has overtaken their French. Is this the case for you? Would you say that your Spanish is perhaps feeding into and helping your French?	65
IP	Yeah. I think possibly because it's so intense – you have to learn it very quickly. You learn so much in such a short space of time, and I don't know how I've done it. When I was on my year abroad I felt quite emotional – I was so shocked at myself that I was able to converse so easily with Spanish people; and also so proud of myself. It was also really funny – I came to university with no Spanish at all, and now I can speak it at a better level than my French. I never thought that would happen. But I'm glad – I prefer Spanish to French.	70 75

Fragment I3

		Line
R	In an earlier discussion, the group mentioned feeling certain about Spanish structures now. How do you think that knowledge, that certainty, came about? Was it you, your linguistic ear, deciding for yourself, or was it drummed into you in a disciplined way within the grammar class?	
IP	I think it's a mixture of things. Probably in first year I would have been inclined to make a mistake in Spanish, because obviously it'd been drummed into us in French, so naturally I'd just make the link and think 'oh' [GEN-]. In first year it was 'anything goes' – it was 'here's all the grammar' and you were thrown in the deep end. But I think in second year you were thinking to yourself: 'no, you're doing that wrong – this is what's right.' [GEN+] And then on the year abroad obviously with practice my Spanish improved so much – that was more of a confidence thing, because I'd only done it for two years in my whole life, and had never really had any experience of using it, other than obviously in class here – but that was never like a one-on-one conversation, and I don't think I would have been able to do that anyway. I struggled in conversation classes, and I found it really frustrating, because in second year I could express myself really well in French...	5 10 15

Fragment I4

		Line
R	How did you cope with the combination of past tenses when you shifted into Spanish? Was it helpful to have French already embedded?	
IP	I've always struggled with tenses, because there's just so many of them, and they can be complicated. I think because we weren't taught grammar properly at school, it was just like a big mess in my brain of all these different tenses. I remember trying to learn them all – I mean, even now when you say 'passé composé' I don't instinctively say 'oh, you mean this'. [VT-]	5
R	So that's more instinctive?	
IP	Yeah. I use it, but I don't know what it's called. So when I learned Spanish and a new tense was introduced and they'd write it on the board and say 'oh, if you know French, this is...' but that was no good to me, because I didn't actually know, conceptually, what it was. I used the tenses, but without knowing what they were called. [VT-]	10
R	But for communication in France or Spain, you'll just do it.	
IP	Exactly [VT+]. Nobody in real life is ever going to ask me what the present subjunctive of a certain verb is...	15

R	The ab initio Spanish course is full-on absorption. Would it be fair to say you were making your own little theories as you went through it?	
---	--	--

IP	Yes, I think so. I remember not being really sure what was masculine and what was feminine in those Spanish classes, but the –a just seemed feminine somehow. It made sense from the French. [NG+]	20
R	If I showed you a passage of Portuguese, I'm sure you'd be making your own little comparisons and analysing the verb system and the use of adjectives and their endings. Is that the kind of thing you found yourself doing when you started Spanish, armed with French?	25
IP	Yeah, definitely. French and Spanish are quite similar, aren't they, but then there are times when some aspect will be very misleading – I can't think of an example now – but generally, yeah, it can be a help to have done French first. [GEN+]	29

Fragment 15

		Line
R	So what happened when your Spanish tutor introduced the subjunctive? Were you thinking, 'I know what comes next', given that the two languages have the subjunctive?	
IP	Maybe. I remember in the first year, when they first mentioned the subjunctive, a lot of people said 'what's that?' We don't really hear about it in English much – I mean, it's there, but... And especially now, we don't really do English grammar at school, or at least I didn't, which is scary. But a lot of people didn't know what the subjunctive was, as Spanish was their first foreign language. I think the concept of the subjunctive was quite hard for them to grasp. It is quite complex – I remember when I first learned it in French I was confused. [VS-]	5 10
R	Can you remember how they did that at school?	
IP	It was quite messy, actually, the way they approached it – they just threw it at us, saying 'you can use it in this way and that way; these words trigger it'. It felt very random, throughout the course – saying 'oh, by the way, this word triggers the subjunctive, too'. There was never a specific lesson devoted to it – there probably should have been. I remember in first year here we did focus on it specifically. [VS-]	15
R	And was it presented as a new set of endings in Spanish, or...?	
IP	Yeah, I think they just introduced it one day, and it was quite interesting to see other people's reactions. We had a little giggle, all the French speakers, because we knew what to expect. [VS+]	20
R	Did you find that you were well equipped to explore both the similarities and the differences in the subjunctive? Do you find yourself spinning both plates and cross-referring?	25
IP	It's interesting. I think that Spanish has actually helped me to progress in French [GEN+], because in the ab initio Spanish we went into a lot of depth with grammar, and because at school we weren't taught properly, and we hadn't really scratched the surface with grammar, so when I got to uni and we had actual grammar classes, it was very helpful. It was very hard, but in the	30

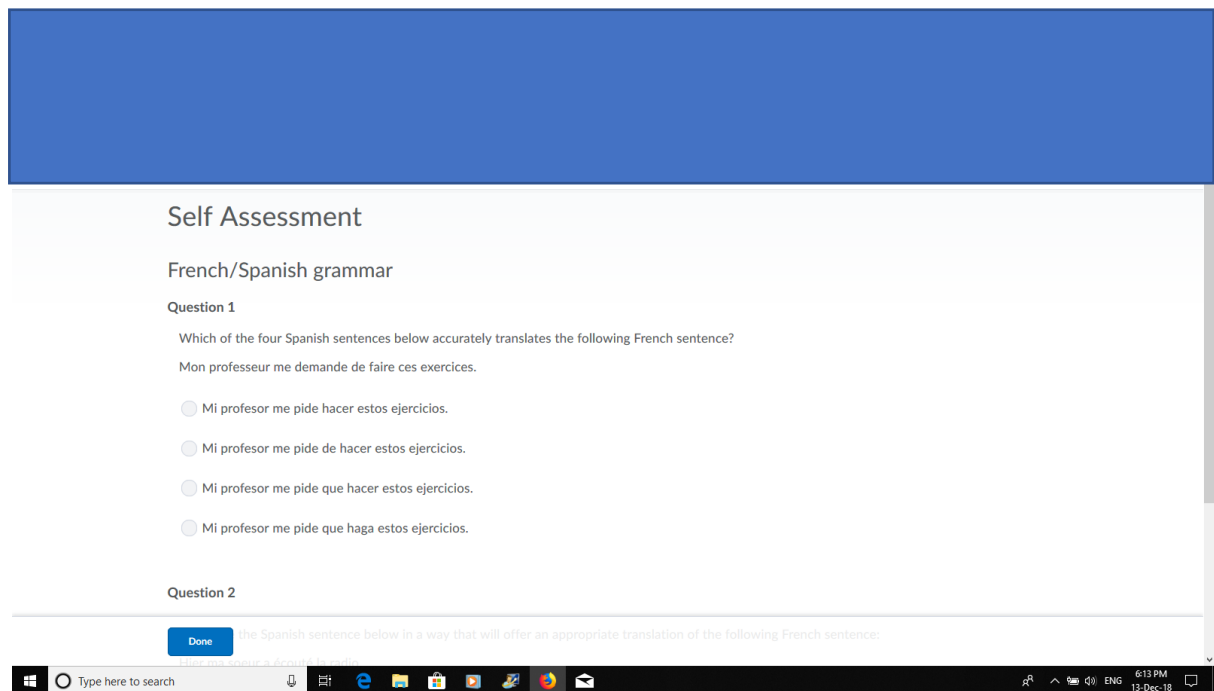
	Spanish classes they just covered everything and it all sank into my brain. I don't know how.	
--	---	--

Fragment I6

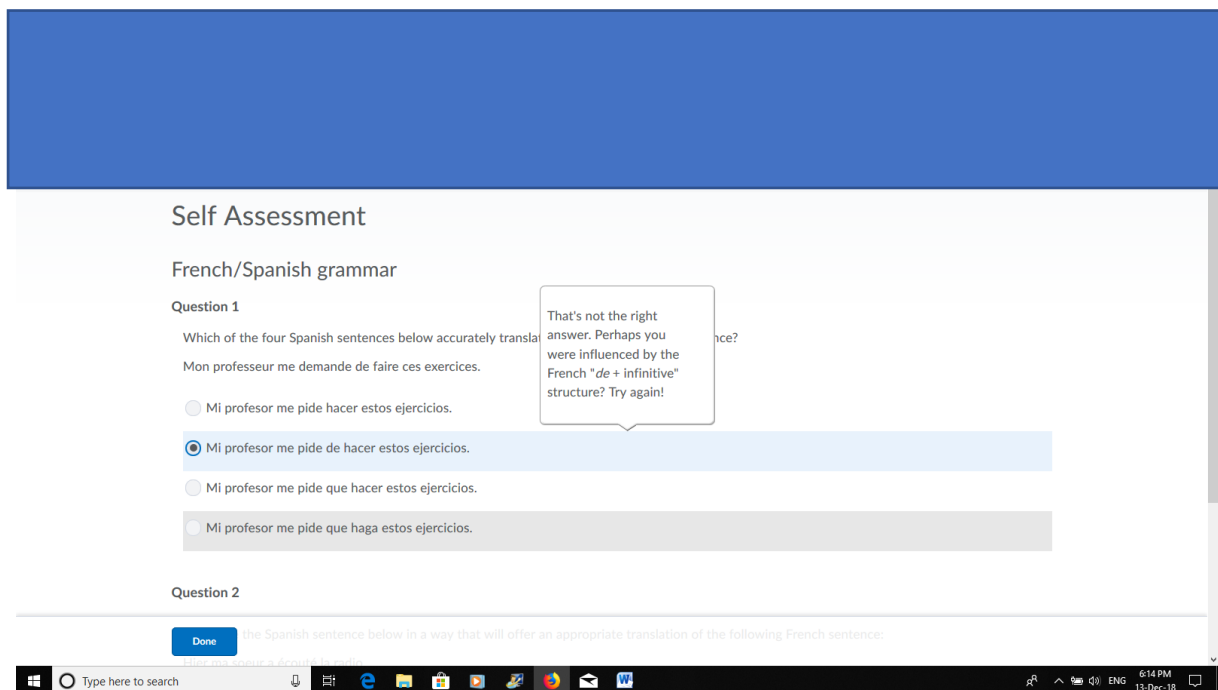
		Line
R	And that would have been the first time gender made an appearance in language...	
IP	That was hard to grasp, because we don't have that in English, do we? It's just 'the'. [NG-]	
R	Did you find your mind could compartmentalise? Did you learn 'le livre' as a given, or did you do some kind of formal storing, of 'book is masculine'?	5
IP	I think I just started to remember genders because you were used to them and they sounded right – 'le livre'. I suppose it got more formal later on, but at the start I just wrote 'le' or 'la' or whatever I felt like. So yeah, that was hard to grasp – I mean, even now I don't know all of the genders – you just know what sounds right. [NG+]	10

Appendix 10

Screenshots of various stages of the piloting of exercises



Q1: A multiple-choice question



Q1: Instant feedback in the event of an incorrect answer in a multiple-choice question

Self Assessment

French/Spanish grammar

Question 1

Which of the four Spanish sentences below accurately translates the following French sentence?
 Mon professeur me demande de faire ces exercices.

- Mi profesor me pide hacer estos ejercicios.
- Mi profesor me pide de hacer estos ejercicios.
- Mi profesor me pide que hacer estos ejercicios.
- Mi profesor me pide que haga estos ejercicios.

Correct - well done!
 You've differentiated between the French "demander à quelqu'un de faire quelque chose", using *de* + infinitive, and the Spanish "pedir a alguien que haga algo", using *que* + subjunctive

Question 2

Complete the Spanish sentence below in a way that will offer an appropriate translation of the following French sentence:
 Hier ma soeur a écouté la radio.
 Ayer mi hermana ___ la radio

[Check my answer](#)

[Done](#)

Q1: Instant feedback in the event of a correct answer being given in a multiple-choice question

French/Spanish grammar

Question 1

Which of the four Spanish sentences below accurately translates the following French sentence?
 Mon professeur me demande de faire ces exercices.

- Mi profesor me pide hacer estos ejercicios.
- Mi profesor me pide de hacer estos ejercicios.
- Mi profesor me pide que hacer estos ejercicios.
- Mi profesor me pide que haga estos ejercicios.

Question 2

Complete the Spanish sentence below in a way that will offer an appropriate translation of the following French sentence:
 Hier ma soeur a écouté la radio.
 Ayer mi hermana ___ la radio

[Check my answer](#)

[Done](#)

Q2: An example of a gap-fill question

Mi profesor me pide hacer estos ejercicios.
 Mi profesor me pide de hacer estos ejercicios.
 Mi profesor me pide que hacer estos ejercicios.
 Mi profesor me pide que haga estos ejercicios.

Question 2

Complete the Spanish sentence below in a way that will offer an appropriate translation of the following French sentence:

Hier ma soeur a écouté la radio

Ayer mi hermana ___ la radio

ha escuchado

▼ Hide Check my answer

'escuchó' is correct, for a single, completed action performed yesterday.

'ha escuchado' is not correct when describing a single, completed action performed yesterday - it would have been correct for an action completed earlier today (e.g. 'ha escuchado la radio esta mañana')

Done

Q2: Instant feedback to a gap-fill question, giving reasons for wrong and right answers

Self Assessment

Gender of French and Spanish Nouns

Question 1

Indicate whether you think the genders assigned to the following pair of French and Spanish nouns are correct:

le méthode / el método

True
 False

Question 2

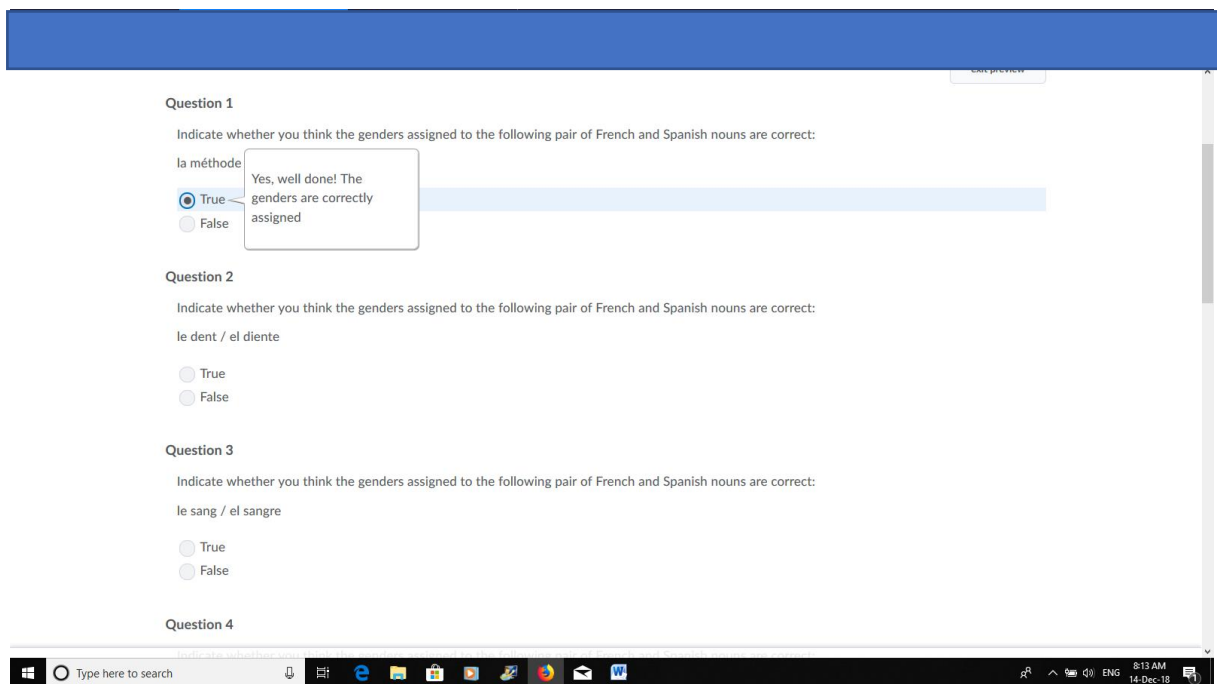
Indicate whether you think the genders assigned to the following pair of French and Spanish nouns are correct:

le dent / el diente

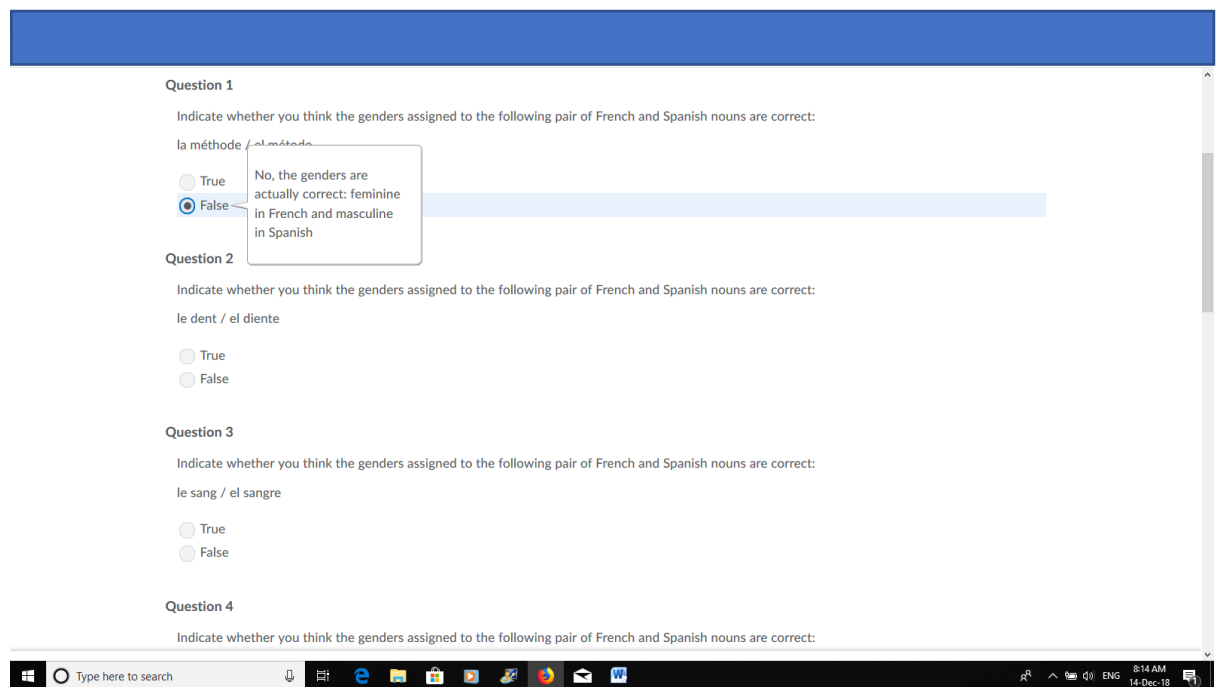
True
 False

Done

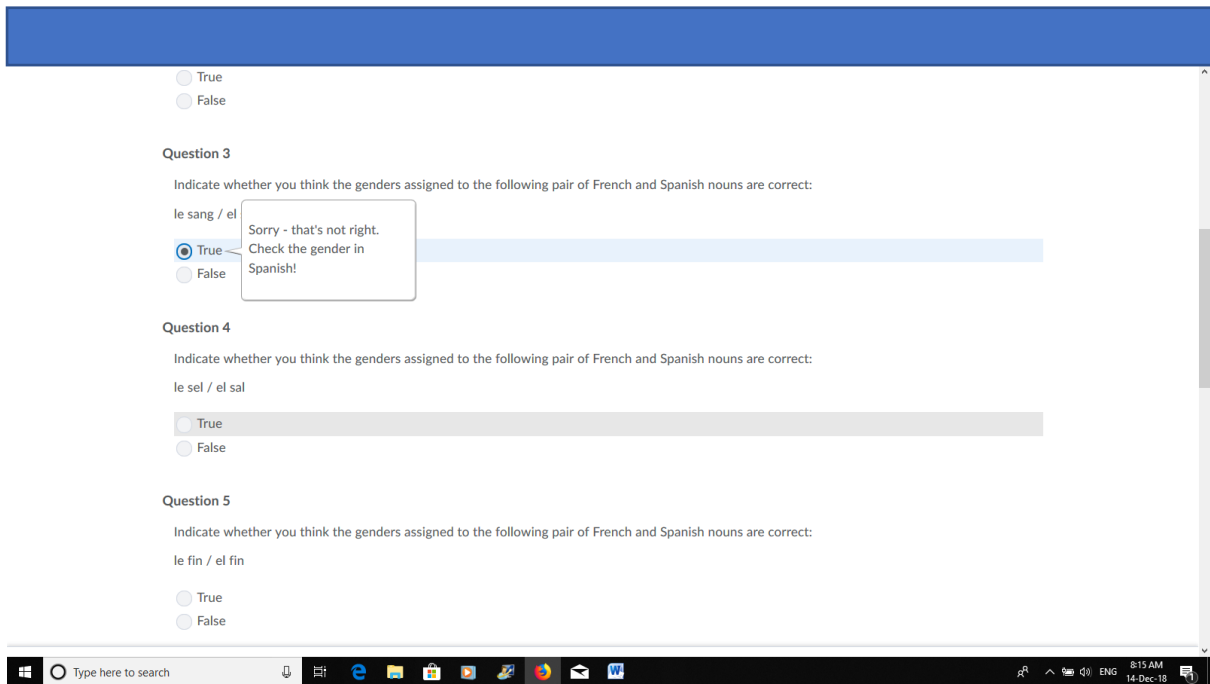
Q1: An example of a true/false question



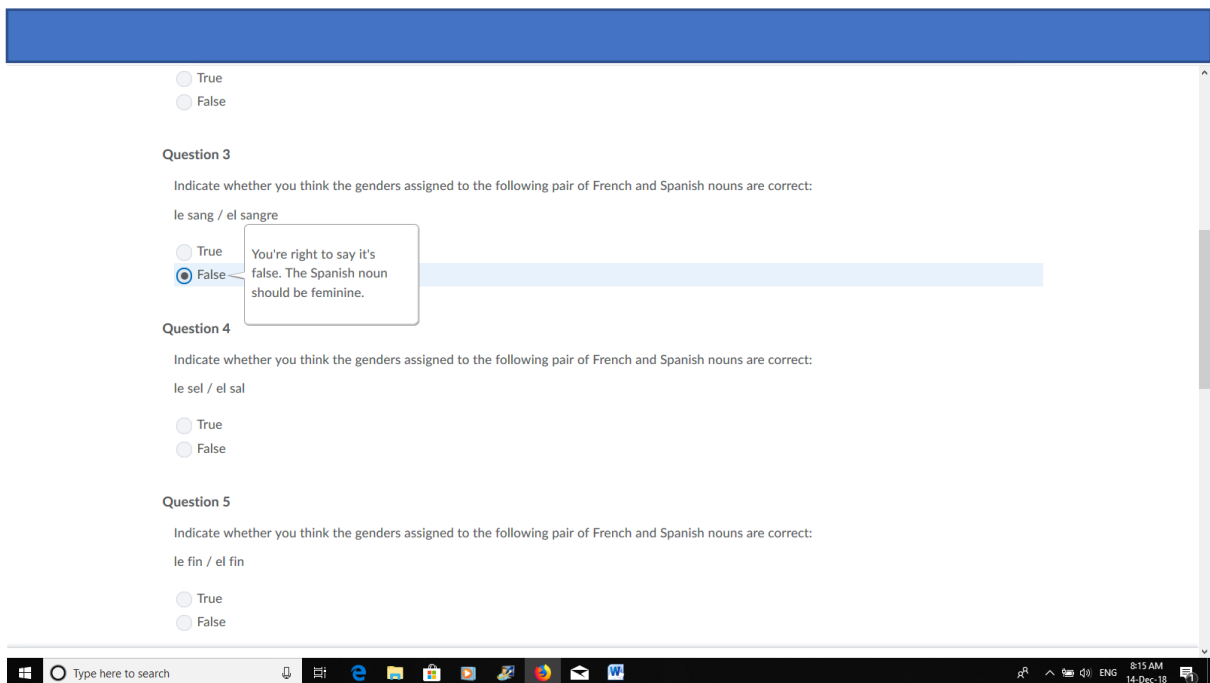
Q1: Instant feedback in the event of a correct answer being given to a true/false question



Q1: Instant feedback to an incorrect answer to a true/false question



Q3: An example of feedback, with a hint, in response to an incorrect answer to a true/false question



Q3: Instant feedback, with a 'reason why', in the event of a correct answer being given to a true/false question

Appendix 11

Transcription from Focus Group 2 (FG2) meeting: Staff members

Key:

R = researcher

P = Participants:

- P1: Spanish native; good knowledge of French
- P2: French native; fluent in Italian and good knowledge of Spanish
- P3: Italian native; fluent in Spanish and French

GREEN highlighting – any reference to an item of grammar;

PURPLE highlighting – any reference to comparative French/Spanish grammar;

YELLOW highlighting – any reference reacting to the discussion.

RED SCRIPT - a means of separating the selected items of grammar from the examples that emerged to illustrate them. I did this by changing the script to red for these items and labelling them to denote “identification of a category of grammar” (e.g. [ID 1]) and “examples to illustrate this category” (e.g. [1 EG 1, 1 EG 2]).

		LINE
R	Thank you. Right, here’s a list of the areas the students flagged up as being difficult, or that had been... that had produced areas of confusion for them, when they’re thinking about expressing something in Spanish and being possibly influenced by the knowledge they already had of French. Can you look at these for a couple of minutes, please?	5
P2	These are classics .	
R	OK, can you tell me which concepts are jumping out at you straight away?	
P2	The thing with verbs and prepositions is always difficult. My students are always using these structures incorrectly.	10
R	Can you maybe see times when they might be affected by another language?	
P2	I’m lucky that my French classes are quite small and I tend to know which students are studying which languages. So when I’ve got someone who also does Spanish or Italian you can usually tell when you see their written work.	15
R	In what way?	
P2	Well, it’s little things like... quite a few of these things on the list. The verbs with a preposition is the first one I’ve seen here, but I would say it’s very important .	20
R	What do the others think?	
P1	Yeah, I agree – my students of Spanish can sometimes, for example, they try to use an infinitive instead of the subjunctive and you can see that it’s an influence from French . It’s quite common , I would say.	

P3	When I was learning French and Spanish, there were some areas which were easy in different ways because of my Italian background, but it's also difficult because Spanish contradicts French in so many ways. I think it's a good idea to focus on verbs and how they work with prepositions, or with the subjunctive, to make one of your examples for your pilot.	25
R	OK, thanks. Could we maybe, between us, think of a classic example where French uses a preposition and the infinitive, but Spanish structures it differently. I wondered about...	30
P2	Asking a person to do something? [1 ID]	
R	OK, yes. I wondered about 'telling', but 'asking' should be fine. We could think about something straightforward like X asking Y to do something.	35
P2	You could look at an academic example, like <i>Mon professeur me demande de faire ces exercices</i> . [1 EG 1]	
R	That's great, thanks. 'My teacher asks me to do these exercises'. I can see that that's going to be massively different with the verb structure in Spanish. Could you...	40
P1	<i>Mi profesor me pide que haga estos ejercicios</i> . Yes, it's a good example to demonstrate the contrast. [1 EG 2]	
P3	That's exactly what I was thinking about when I mentioned the differences when I was learning. Italian works like French in this case, so my difficulty was with the Spanish. Yes, I think that's good.	45
R	Great, thanks – that's great. I had an idea about basing the trial on a limited number of areas of language. How many do you think would be enough?	
P3	There are so many things on the list.	
P1	I can imagine making a lot of examples here.	50
P2	I think three would be a good number if it's an initial pilot. If it works OK, are you going to expand it?	
R	That's the plan, yeah. Over time.	
P1	Thinking about my students' work, I can see a lot of possibilities here.	
R	OK, is there a second area you think might be good to focus on?	55
P1	Maybe the gender of nouns? [2 ID]	
P2	That's what I was going to say. There are some examples you hear every year.	
R	OK, great. Let me scribble these down...	
P2	OK, <i>la fin</i> is a good one. [2 EG 1]	60
R	Great. Any more?	
P1	When I was learning French and we did parts of the body, I remember that <i>los dientes</i> , <i>la nariz</i> and <i>la sangre</i> were not the same gender in French. [2 EG 2, 3, 4]	
R	OK. Shall we try and get maybe ten?	65
P3	<i>La sal</i> ? [2 EG 5]	
R	Salt. Good one.	
P2	Then there are words like <i>préface</i> and <i>méthode</i> that they always use in academic essays. [2 EG 6, 7]	
R	That's seven.	70

P2	<i>La limite?</i> [2 EG 8]	
R	OK, feminine in French and masculine in Spanish. Good.	
P3	There's 'honey' – it's <i>miel</i> in both languages but I think the gender is...	
P1	Yes. It's feminine in Spanish and...	
P2	Yeah, <i>le miel</i> in French. [2 EG 9]	75
R	Seven, eight, nine. One more?	
P2	<i>Leche</i> is Spanish is feminine, isn't it?	
P1	Yes.	
R	OK, <i>le lait</i> and <i>la leche</i> . [2 EG 10] Perfect. Thanks.	
P3	That was fun.	80
R	Shall we try a third category? What do you think?	
P1	For me, I always find that my students have difficulties with the past tenses, for example <i>el pretérito perfecto y el pretérito indefinido</i> . It's different in French so they get confused. [3 ID]	
R	OK, so the difference between 'I have written' and 'I wrote'.	85
P2	Yeah, that's true. French doesn't use the past historic much, so the sort of actions where you would use the preterite in Spanish often need to be in the perfect in French. Like 'yesterday...'	
R	Things happening yesterday would be a great example. Can we produce a sentence?	90
P2	Just something normal like watching TV or listening to the radio. 'I listened to the radio'?	
P1	<i>Ayer mi hermana escuchó la radio</i> . [3 EG 1]	
R	Thanks. 'Yesterday my sister listened to the radio'. And in French?	
P2	<i>Hier ma soeur a écouté la radio</i> . [3 EG 2]	95
R	Great. That shows the difference pretty clearly.	
P3	We have three examples. Do you want to do more?	
R	What do the rest of you think?	
P1	Well, you could try with these categories in the pilot, then ask if you need more help later.	100

Appendix 12

Transcription from Focus Group 3a (FG3a) meeting: Students, pre-pilot

Key:

R = Researcher

P = Participants (numbered 1, 2 and 3)

GREEN highlighting – any reference to students of the same combination of languages / working together / collaboration;

PURPLE highlighting – proactive indications of favouring specific features / styles of learning;

PALE BLUE highlighting – flagging up of disadvantages with particular features;

RED highlighting – mentions of scenarios in which the resource could be beneficial;

OLIVE highlighting – specific mention of type of activity considered desirable;

YELLOW highlighting – indications of positivity not covered by other categories.

RED SCRIPT – indications of positive [POS] and negative [NEG] responses to questions.

		LINE
Q1	In principle, do you think it could be useful for a small group of students with the same subject combination and language-learning background to work collaboratively to share experiences and provide mutual support?	
P2	I could definitely see the benefit in having a place where students studying the same combination of languages can work together and learn. I think that especially with Accelerated Spanish, having other students in my lectures on the same course as me has been beneficial to me because we think similarly in regards to Spanish. [POS]	5
P1	I think it would be a good way to learn and strengthen knowledge. You can do this kind of thing in your own time. It would give us the chance to discuss grammar and things without the pressure of being in a classroom and being put on the spot. I think it would really benefit students. [POS]	10
P3	Definitely. That type of platform to communicate with other students in the same boat would be ideal. I chat to [P1] sometimes when there's an awkward bit of Spanish grammar or whatever, but I'd never thought about a kind of working group where we've all got stuff in common. [POS]	15
Q2	Would a bespoke e-learning resource be of interest/use to you as a means of consolidating your grammatical knowledge of French and Spanish?	20
P3	I think that kind of thing would be invaluable when it comes to... when you're doing revision for your exams. [POS]	
P1	When I revise for exams or when I want to practise grammar I always look online for exercises on that topic. Most of the time it's difficult to find relevant ones which then give you feedback.	25

P3	Me too. There are so many places that it's hard to find exactly what you want.	
P1	I'd find it useful if we had exercises that were put online and created by the lecturer so that they are 100% relevant and I don't have to search through thousands of websites to find a good one. [POS]	30
P2	Yeah, having a resource to support students with our combination would be incredibly helpful. I like the idea that I'd be revising for both of my languages and learning comparatively between them. [POS]	
Q3a	In such a resource, would you benefit from doing exercises in a timed environment, against the clock?	35
P1	For me, personally, I think exercises to practise grammar are good to do in your own good time so you can think about how you are answering and more thought goes into your answers. I'm not sure I'd like being hassled by time or that kind of pressure. [NEG]	
P2	When I do things like that against the clock, I'm always worried about time and usually end up skim-reading and putting in a quick answer rather than giving it proper thought. [NEG]	40
P3	I think that being able to answer at your own pace is absolutely essential as you're less inclined to just simply click on anything and move on, like you would if you've got that aspect of time pressure. [NEG]	45
Q3b	In such a resource, would you benefit from being able to repeat exercises, either after getting an answer wrong or out of a desire to revisit questions at a later date?	
P2	Yeah, I'd say it's good to be allowed to repeat or fiddle around to get to grips with what the right answer is and why it's right. [POS]	50
P1	I think that would be useful. I've done exercises online where I've clicked on something without thinking it through, or I maybe want to play about with something for a few attempts, and sometimes the format doesn't let you do that [POS]	
P3	I'm big on repeating stuff when I'm revising. It helps to let everything sink in. So I'd prefer something that allows me as many goes as possible, as long as you get... there's good feedback. [POS]	55
Q3c	In such a resource, would you benefit from receiving feedback, either after each answer or at the end of a section?	
P1	Feedback is always good, and for me, it's like, the more often the better. It's best if you get an explanation as to where you went wrong or if you're right, it tells you why you're right. Yeah, that's how I see it. [POS]	60
P3	I think instant feedback is essential, especially if it lets you know where and why you went wrong if that's the case. [POS]	
P2	For me in online exercises, I like to get instant feedback, then if I've got an answer wrong it gives me a hint to make me think about the answer. Without a hint it's harder to get... to correct your answers, and hints also	65

	make you think, so I find I can learn much more than just seeing afterwards that they were wrong. [POS]	
--	---	--

Appendix 13

Transcription from Focus Group 3b (FG3b) meeting: Students, post-pilot

Key:

R = Researcher

P = Participants (numbered 1, 2 and 3)

YELLOW highlighting – any reference to the group of students having the same combination of languages / collaborating / sense of mini-community;

PURPLE highlighting – evidence of individual thought and reflection on learning styles.

RED SCRIPT – indications of positive [POS] and negative [NEG] responses to questions.

BLUE SCRIPT – indications of the favourite exercise the participants had undertaken. The responses are tagged [VT] for the translation exercise involving verb tenses, and [NG] for the item on the gender of nouns

		LINE
Q1	Did you feel that the questions were appropriately targeted at someone with your language combination?	
P1	Yes. I think I've got a similar level in both languages so it was useful to try these types of exercises. It's good for final year students so we can confidently say we have the same level in French and Spanish [POS]	5
P2	Yes, I think for me it made me think about a direct comparison between French and Spanish grammar rather than comparing them individually to English, which we often end up doing in lectures. [POS]	
P3	I'd agree. I think that combining the two languages together in a single exercise was very beneficial as you can directly compare your knowledge of both languages, and test your ability to work with both foreign languages at once, without solely relying on your English to help you. Yeah, I found it good. [POS]	10
Q2	Did you find any exercise in particular more useful than the others?	
P1	I found the translation aspect [VT] of it useful because, for me, the obvious answer is not always the case when it comes to grammar. [POS]	15
P2	I thought the gender comparison [NG] activity was very useful because I normally assume that the genders are the same across both languages, but it was interesting to realise how many words I know of but didn't realise are different genders. [POS]	20
P3	Yeah, the gender [NG] part of it was interesting, but I personally found the translation between languages [VT] the most useful. I think that highlighted the grammatical differences of each language, and forced me to think in terms of each language respectively, rather than relying on one to help the other, which is often the case. It got me thinking about how I	25

	transfer: like, if you struggle to formulate a sentence in Spanish, more often than not you would go to French to help you out with your structure, which is obviously not always possible. [POS]	
Q3	Did you play around with the answers before submitting your definitive response?	30
P1	Not really. I just took my time and concentrated on trying to get the right answer.	
P2	There were a few I got wrong the first time and if I was still unsure after the hint it gave me then I was able to click through the other responses to understand why each of them was wrong and why the right one was correct. That was useful for me. [POS]	35
P3	I did a little bit of trial and error with the genders, but like [P1] I mostly just thought about the right answer.	
Q4	Did you find the feedback useful?	
P1	It was great. I get frustrated when feedback is very generic, but here it was well targeted and you could tell it had been thought out for students in our position [POS]	40
P2	Yeah, it worked well for me. I got examples of the 'here's why you're wrong' and 'here's why you're right', and it all made sense to me. [POS]	
P3	Yeah, it was fine. I agree that it seemed to have kind of predicted the things we might have got wrong because of the language combination we do, so that was very helpful [POS]	45
Q5	Looking ahead, do you think a future, expanded version of this should include data from which you can gauge your engagement, speed, degree of accuracy etc.?	50
P1	I find it useful to get marked out of 10 or however many questions there are so when I repeat the exercise I can see how I've improved by looking at the grade. Maybe that's one for the future, yeah. [POS]	
P2	I think overall I didn't feel a lack of marks or results but if there's going to be more exercises then having some sort of statistic at the end or at the end of each section could be useful to see overall and recognise where your weaknesses are. This was short so it was easy enough to remember what parts I made errors on, but if there were more questions I would've liked a summary of some kind. [POS]	55
P3	Getting something like that at the end of the test would be invaluable. The time taken, and attempts made would be useful, as then you'd get to see which areas you need to work on further. I think that would help me improve my skills to get a better score next time. [POS]	60
Q6	Overall, do you think an e-learning resource of this type would 'work' for you?	65

P1	Absolutely. I've never come across anything like it, and I'm always looking out for grammatical exercises online. I think the fact that it's got us in mind, with our combination of languages, is brilliant. [POS]	
P2	Same for me. I was chatting to [P1 and P3] earlier and we said that we've never really thought about why we might be making French-style mistakes in Spanish, so it's got us thinking. [POS]	70
P3	Exactly. I think it probably helps in two ways. You've got the targeted exercises, but you also remember that there's a few of us in the same boat. The fact that we were chatting about French and Spanish comparisons this morning, having not done so for the last three years, was kind of unusual but we found it very helpful. [POS]	75

Appendix 14

A grid showing the relationship between themes and codes, with relevant quotations from FG3a and FG3b transcripts (see Appendices 12 and 13)

Theme	Code	Quotation	Transcript / Line
Pedagogical aspects relating to the development of the resource	The development of a bespoke resource to support learning	P2: 'having a resource to support students with our combination would be incredibly helpful'	Appendix 12, Lines 31-2
		P1: 'you could tell it [the resource] had been thought out for students in our position'	Appendix 13, Lines 41-2
		P1: 'I think the fact that it's got us in mind, with our combination of languages, is brilliant'	Appendix 13, Lines 67-8
		P1: 'I've never come across anything like it, and I'm always looking out for grammatical exercises online'	Appendix 13, Lines 66-7
	Motives for seeking such a resource	P1: 'when I want to practise grammar I always look online'	Appendix 12, Lines 23-4
		P3: 'revision for your exams'	Appendix 12, Line 22
		P1: 'difficult to find relevant ones' [and having to] 'search through thousands of websites to find a good one'	Appendix 12, Lines 24-5 and 29-30
	Time management within learning processes	P1: 'good to do in your own time'	Appendix 12, Lines 36-7
		P1: 'I'm not sure I'd like being hassled by time or that kind of pressure'	Appendix 12, Lines 38-9
		P3: 'being able to answer at your own pace is absolutely essential'	Appendix 12, Line 43
P3: '[an indication of] time taken [...] would be useful'		Appendix 13, Line 61	

	Repeatability of exercises	P2: 'it's good to be able to fiddle around to get to grips with what the right answer is and why it's right'	Appendix 12, Lines 49-50
		P3: 'I'm big on repeating stuff when I'm revising [...] I'd prefer something that allows me as many goes as possible'	Appendix 12, Lines 55-6
		P3: '[an indication of] attempts made would be useful as then you'd get to see which areas you need to work on further. I think that would help me improve my skills to get a better score next time'	Appendix 13, Lines 61-3
	Receiving a score for each exercise	P1: 'I find it useful to get marked out of 10 or however many questions there are, so when I repeat the exercise I can see how I've improved by looking at the grade'	Appendix 13, Lines 51-3
		P2: 'I didn't feel a lack of marks or results but if there's going to be more exercises then having some sort of statistic at the end or at the end of each section could be useful to see overall and recognise where your weaknesses are'	Appendix 13, Lines 54-7
	Points of language covered	P1: 'I found the translation useful because, for me, the obvious answer is not always the case when it comes to grammar'	Appendix 13 Lines 15-6
		P2: 'I thought the gender comparison activity was very useful because I normally assume that the genders are the	Appendix 13, Lines 17-20

		same across both languages, but it was interesting to realise how many words I know of but didn't realise are different genders'	
	Feedback	P3: 'I think instant feedback is essential'	Appendix 12, Line 63
		P1: 'it's best if you get an explanation as to where you went wrong or if you're right, it tells you why you're right'	Appendix 12, Line 61-2
		P3: 'if I've got an answer wrong it gives me a hint to make me think about the answer [...] hints also make you think, so I find I can learn much more than just seeing afterwards that they were wrong'	Appendix 12, Lines 65-9
Metalinguistic awareness	Drawing on knowledge and learning of both French and Spanish and deploying learning strategies in a comparative manner	P2: 'it made me think about a direct comparison between French and Spanish grammar'	Appendix 13, Lines 6-7
		P3: '[the pilot] highlighted the grammatical differences of each language, and forced me to think in terms of each language respectively'	Appendix 13, Lines 22-4
		P3: 'I agree that it seemed to have kind of predicted the things we might have got wrong because of the language combination we do'	Appendix 13, Lines 45-7
		P3: 'combining the two languages together in a single exercise was very beneficial as you can directly compare your knowledge of both languages and test your	Appendix 13, Lines 9-12

		ability to work with both foreign languages at once'	
		P2: 'we've never really thought about why we might be making French-style mistakes in Spanish, so it's got us thinking'	Appendix 13, Lines 69-71
The development of a learning community	How participants view themselves	P3: 'a working group where we've all got stuff in common'	Appendix 12, Line 17
	Enthusiasm for working together	P2: 'think similarly in regards to Spanish'	Appendix 12, Line 9
		P3: 'in the same boat'	Appendix 12 Line 15
		P3: 'communicate [as a community]'	Appendix 12, Line 14
		P2: 'I could definitely see the benefit in having a place where students studying the same combination of languages can work together and learn'	Appendix 12, Lines 5-7
		P3: 'the fact that we were chatting about French and Spanish comparisons this morning, having not done so for the last three years, was kind of unusual but we found it very helpful'	Appendix 13, Lines 74-6

Appendix 15

List of characteristics indicating the existence of a Community of Practice (CoP). Adapted from Wenger (1998: 125-6).

1. Sustained mutual relationships – harmonious or conflictual
2. Shared ways of engaging in doing things together
3. The rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation
4. Absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process
5. Very quick setup of a problem to be discussed
6. Substantial overlap in participants' descriptions of who belongs
7. Knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to an enterprise
8. Mutually defining identities
9. The ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products
10. Specific tools, representations, and other artefacts
11. Local lore, shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter
12. Jargon and shortcuts to communication as well as the ease of producing new ones
13. Certain styles recognized as displaying membership
14. A shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world