IN SEARCH OF A THIRD PLACE

A TELECOLLABORATIVE MODEL FOR LANGUACULTURE LEARNING

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SUPERVISOR: DR. MARGARET GIBBON

VOLUME ONE OF TWO

DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Doctor of Philosophy is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Signed......... *A.M. gaures Hayward*

ID No.........97970522...................................

Date............15/06/2004...................................

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SUMMARY

This thesis presents a five-year, global classroom project, in which French and American students study the same texts (literature, film remakes, works of sociology and anthropology), while corresponding using ICTs. Their reflections provide the basis for the development of conceptual and perceptual toolkits, containing consciousness-raising activities on individual and culturally-biased semantic and perceptual differences and similarities. Students compare home culture images and the corresponding images from the other culture(s), in an attempt to arrive at a "third place" (Kramsch 1993), as an intercultural speaker (Byram1995; 1997).

Feedback and transcripts from participants are used to assess the effectiveness of this pedagogy of languaculture in broadening discourse options and educational opportunities, and of the role of telecollaboration in student motivation and engagement. The analytical framework draws on insights of Bakhtin, Vygotsky and Harré and Gillet, focussing on the learner as agent, and language as fundamentally dialogic in nature.

Telecollaboration provides access to multiple discursive perspectives and negotiation of meaning, whereby students, especially the more motivated, ask real questions and receive real answers. The global classroom leads to a change in the locus of control, increasing motivation and encouraging students to appropriate their own learning. Significant individual, group and cross-cultural differences emerge in the interpretation and degree of appropriation of the materials and opportunities for intercultural communication.

This thesis provides research-informed, pedagogical guidelines for developing similar intercultural telecollaborative courses and makes a creative contribution, both to the dialogic teaching of language as culture and to the integration of new technologies into the curriculum.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis describes and analyses a five-year, global classroom project, where students from Institutions of Higher Education in France and the United States study the same texts from children's literature, American remakes of French films and works of sociology and anthropology and at the same time, correspond through e-mail, an Internet Home Page, and whole–class videoconferencing. Their reflection provides the basis for the development of a conceptual toolkit, along with a perceptual toolkit, containing consciousness-raising activities on individual and culturally biased semantic and perceptual differences and similarities. Students are encouraged to look critically at the images created by their home culture and confront them with the corresponding images from the other culture(s), in an attempt to arrive at a "third place" as defined by Claire Kramsch (1993), as an intercultural speaker (Byram 1995, 1997).

The degree of effectiveness of this pedagogy of *languaculture* (Agar 1994) in providing a significant broadening of discourse options and educational opportunities, and the role of telecollaboration in student motivation and engagement, is assessed through student questionnaires, informal interviews with students and the two partner teachers, teaching diaries, transcripts of the e-mails and videoconferences and analysis of student essays. Contemporary insights on the learner as an agent with intentionality, history and access to sociocultural resources, from which to construct subject positions, and a view of language as fundamentally dialogic in nature are appropriated as a framework for the analysis (Bakhtin1981; Vygotsky 1986; Harré and Gillet 1994).

The thesis is divided into five chapters and is accompanied by a montage of video recordings, on cassette and on CD ROM, of six whole class videoconferences which took place between 1997 and 1999. In chapter one, we give an overview of the main methods and approaches used in language teaching over the last fifty years, with particular attention to the

communicative approach, its practical application in the classroom and its disadvantages. Research on the traditional classroom and on negotiation of meaning is discussed and critiqued from a sociocultural perspective. Three aspects of sociocultural theory of particular interest in the context of this study: language learning as an inherently social process, learning as situated participation and learning as a mediated process are examined. A brief outline of our own approach, which adopts a sociocultural perspective, is given.

We then look at various intercultural models for describing and analysing culture and discuss early models of culture teaching and their limitations. The notion of *languaculture* (Agar 1994), which we have adopted throughout the thesis, is introduced. The conceptualisation of language and culture for the classroom is explored, highlighting the main issues which have come to the fore in recent years and recent relevant models are described. We focus particularly on the view of the "intercultural speaker" as an alternative to the ideal native speaker-hearer norm.

The notion of a "third place" or space in the first-hand accounts of bilinguals and adult border crossers and Kramsch's definition of the language learner's "third place" are then examined. The "third place" is adopted as a central theme for the thesis and Bakhtin's notion of appropriation is drawn on to inform our argument (Bakhtin 1981). Finally, the potential of a virtual "third place" to change attitudes to knowledge is described, along with an account of the different metaphors for the use of computers and other technologies in language teaching and a review of current practice and research.

Chapter two begins with a discussion of the view of language as both symbolizing, embodying and expressing culture (Byram and Esarte-Sarries, 1991; Agar 1994; Kramsch 1998a). It is crucial for our students to understand such a view, in order to gain "a critical understanding of language and culture" (Kelly, Elliott and Fant, 2001: 173). We describe primary category acquisition and discuss the extent to which this can be

modified within the context of the language classroom, considering Kramsch's argument that acquiring a new *languaculture* reconfigures the learner's universe. We also explore Citron's *ethno-lingually relative perspective* (Citron 1995), which provides an appropriate response to these issues. Following our review of the contemporary conceptualisation of culture and language teaching for the classroom and our discussion of the notion of the "third place", our pedagogical model is described in detail. This model integrates the basic tenets of the communicative approach with a view of language with culture at its core and a search for a "third place" through telecollaboration between peer groups.

The focus of chapter three is the methodology and research design chosen for this study of *languaculture* learning through *telecollaboration*. The design combines an observational, qualitative approach as a reflective practitioner (Schön 1991) with a theoretical framework informed by sociocultural theory. The background to the thesis, the methodology used for classroom practice and my pedagogical aims and choice of materials are also outlined. Chapter four begins with a detailed description of the Grandes Ecoles system and of the particular school involved in the study, drawing on both theoretical accounts and student and teacher voices. This is followed by a shorter description of the two American universities in the study, highlighting the differences between the two systems. A general idea of some of the students' personal prior texts, derived from student feedback, precedes the presentation and analysis of a pedagogy of *languaculture* in practice. Chapter five sums up the observations made in the study, reflects on how the practical experience challenges and illuminates the theoretical framework and the toolkit approach and makes recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 1: TOWARDS A "THIRD PLACE"

Languages of heteroglossia, like mirrors that face each other, each of which in its own way reflects a little piece, a tiny corner of the world, force us to guess at and grasp behind their inner-reflecting aspects for a world that is broader, more multi-levelled and multi-horizoned than would be available to one language, one mirror.
(Bakhtin, 1981: 225-226)

1.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with an outline of the main methods and approaches used in language teaching since the 1950s, focusing particularly on the now standard communicative approach, its theoretical influences and its limitations. The differences between the theory and its practical application in the classroom, which is still dominated by grammar instruction or rigidly teacher-centred, are discussed.

Research on traditional classroom methodology is then described, followed by a critique of an *input/output* definition of negotiation of meaning from a sociocultural perspective. The following relevant aspects of sociocultural theory are discussed: language learning as an inherently social process and the Vygotskian concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), learning as situated participation, requiring scaffolded assistance from more capable peers, and learning as a mediated process. This analysis will allow us to explicate our pedagogical approach, which integrates a broad definition of negotiation of meaning, achieved both through collaboration between peers or more capable partners and access to semiotic resources (Kinginger 2001b).

This appraisal of pedagogical theory and practice is followed by a review of some intercultural models for describing and analysing culture and their relevance for our pedagogy. We then consider Fantini's arguments for an approach which integrates an interculturalist and linguistic stance. The notion of *languaculture* (Agar 1994), which we have adopted throughout this thesis is introduced and we look at various models for

describing and teaching culture. The intercultural dimension of language teaching is still not widely integrated into practice and a review of the literature reveals a relatively limited number of empirical or descriptive studies dealing with the teaching of culture in the foreign language classroom. We explore a number of new models which have partially addressed this issue and identify new directions and current trends which posit the language learner as a potential intercultural speaker and mediator (Kramsch 1993; Byram 1997; Kelly et al. 2001).

Particular attention is paid to the notion of a "third place", at the interstices of two or more *languacultures*, (Kramsch 1993) which we have adopted as a central theme for this thesis. "Third places" or spaces in the first-hand accounts of bilinguals and adult border crossers are described, followed by a discussion of Kramsch's definition of the language learner's "third place", which draws on Bakhtin's notion of appropriation (Bakhtin 1981).

Finally, the notion of a virtual third place is introduced, along with a brief description of the different applications and metaphors for the use of computers and other technologies in language teaching. We discuss the potential for *sociomedia* to reorganise attitudes to knowledge and to create stepping-stones on the way to a "third place". A review of the relevant literature shows a particular lack of research in the recent area of *network-based learning* (Warschauer and Kern, 2000).

1.2 The prevalence of grammar-based teaching and the challenge of the communicative approach

In this section, I briefly outline the main methods and approaches used in language teaching since the 1950s, paying particular attention to the influential communicative approach. A brief background outline of the linguistic theories which have influenced these approaches and methods is followed by a discussion of the differences between the theoretical bases of the communicative approach and its practical application in the

classroom. By adopting a pedagogy of *languaculture* (Agar 1994), we address the limitations of this now standard approach.

1.2.1 The grammar-translation method

The grammar-translation method is an early example of a prescriptive method, which has largely been discredited today in Europe and the USA, although it is still widely used in Asia (Aili 1998; Jin and Cortiazzi 1994). Based on methods used in the teaching of Classical Greek and Latin, it was devised and developed for use in secondary schools and, according to Howatt ([1984] 1994), could be called the grammar school method, as it reflected the aspirations of the 19th century grammar school.

A central element of this method was the replacement of the text by sentences which provided examples of new grammar points, presented in an organized sequence, and it is this feature, rather than the use of translation as such, that has been the most criticised. The method was considered practical, but in the sense of providing practice through exercises of translation from one language to the other, rather than through oral practice. Teachers relied on pupils' previous experience of the classics for knowledge of grammatical categories, which were not always relevant to the language being taught.

An overemphasis on a high level of accuracy, and a neglect of oral skills, were accentuated by the establishment of a system of university-controlled public examinations (Oxford and Cambridge Local Examinations 1858). These boards determined syllabi and methodological principles. The need to establish academic respectability, rather than 'travel courier' learning, and the fear of not being taken seriously, led teachers of modern languages to ape the methods of the classics. The material studied was drawn from selected literary texts, which had a cultural significance in a literary and philosophical context, but referred to a restricted level of society and provided restricted vocabulary. The study of intellectual artefacts was also based on an assumption of universality (Byram and Esarte-Sarries 1991).

The main principles of the method are as follows:

- instruction was given in the students' native language with little use of the target language
- grammar was taught deductively from a text book
- the principal skills practised were reading and writing
- there was early reading of difficult classical texts
- a typical exercise was to translate sentences from the target language into the mother tongue.
- learning was facilitated through attention to the similarities between L1 and L2

(Tuck 1998:1)

This method was the dominant model for language teaching until the 1950s, although many schools continued to favour it long after this.

1.2.2 The Age of Methods

The "Age of Methods" (1950s-1980s) coincided with the development of Applied Linguistics and its influence on language teaching. During this period, a number of detailed prescriptions for language teaching were proposed. These developments can be divided into three perspectives: structural, cognitive/constructivist and sociocognitive, with differing linguistic and pedagogic rationales (Warschauer and Kern 2000).

The work of American structural linguists like Bloomfield (1933) and Fries (1945) from the 1920s to the 1950s and the influence of behavioural psychologists such as Watson (1919) and Skinner (1957), led to the development of various structural methods. In the USA, the most popular of these was the Audiolingual method, which was first used in a large–scale project to train 15,000 GIs in twenty-seven different languages, acknowledging the relevance of foreign language learning to defence.

Savignon ([1983] 1997: 22-26) gives a first hand account of French teaching during these summer schools, using what came to be known as the "New Key" method. This method

saw language learning as habit-formation, with learners repeating drills and learning

dialogues to condition them to produce correct responses and with vocabulary kept to a

minimum. The focus was on spoken rather than written language:

> The practice which the student contributes must be *oral practice*. No matter if the final result
> desired is only to *read* the foreign language, the mastery of the fundamentals of the language –
> the structure and the sound system with a limited vocabulary- must be through speech. The
> speech *is* the language. The written record is but a secondary representation of the language.

(Fries, 1945:6)

Even so, the audiolingual method shared two basic principles with the grammar-

translation method. Sequences of linguistic categories were selected and presented in a

carefully graded order, based on contrastive analyses of the structural differences between L1

and L2. The teacher was seen as a modeller of correct language and drill leader, while

students mimicked drills and learnt responses by heart, often, it is claimed, without

understanding what they were saying (Krashen and Terrell, 1983:15). The basic tenets of this

method are summarized by Savignon (ibid: 25-26) as follows:

> 1) Language learning is habit formation.
>
> 2) Language performance consists of four basic skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.
>
> 3) L2 learning, like L1 learning, should begin with listening and speaking, regardless of the end
> goal of the learner.
>
> 4) A contrastive analysis of the phonological and structural differences between L1 and L2
> provides the most effective basis for materials development and sequence.
>
> 5) The basic unit of practice should always be complete structure. Production should proceed
> from repetition to substitution and continue until responses are automatic.
>
> 6) Spontaneous expression should be delayed until the more advanced levels of instruction.
> Production errors in structural or phonological features mean that patterns have not received
> sufficient prior drilling.
>
> 7) The teacher is the center of all classroom activity and is responsible for maintaining attention
> and a lively pace.

The method was not a success in France or in Great Britain, where the situational

method, influenced by the Firthian school of linguistics, was preferred. This approach gave

less priority to the training of speech-habits than the Audiolingual method, but still used drills, repetition and stilted language. One successful teaching series called "Access to English" was still very much in use in English teaching in France in the early 1980s. Although the series provides a storyline in the shape of a budding love affair between Arthur and Mary, language practice consists of tedious drills, for example:

- Is Arthur there?

- Yes, I'm talking to him.

- Is Mary there?

Yes, I'm talking to her.

Here's a good book for Arthur.

Well, send him it.

Here's a nice postcard for Mrs Harrison.

Well, send her it.

(Starting Out, Cole and Lord, 1974: 41)

The second main development in language teaching began with Chomsky's transformational-generative grammar (Chomsky 1957, 1965). Chomsky rejected Skinner's behaviourist notions of language learning (Skinner 1957) on the grounds that, as speakers can produce and understand an infinite number of well-formed utterances, this cannot be explained by conditioned responses to stimuli but by innate cognitive structures through which learners construct the language: This knowledge was labelled *competence* in contrast to *performance,* which was "the actual use of the language" and this distinction could be compared to the distinction between *langue* and *parole* made by de Saussure ([1916] 1972).

The notion of a deep structure of the language as opposed to a surface structure (as in the famous example *John is easy to please* and *John is eager to please* which have surface similarity but quite different deep structures) challenged the validity of surface structure

drills. The attitude to accuracy also changed, with errors now being seen positively as part of the learner's developing *interlanguage* (Selinker 1972). An early emphasis on grammar rules gave way to the importance of providing *comprehensible input* (Krashen's *Monitor Theory*, 1981, 1982). This gave the learner an opportunity to construct the grammar from natural data. Students were encouraged to develop appropriate cognitive strategies through problem solving or hypothesis testing activities, yet with no emphasis on authentic social interaction.

A growing dissatisfaction with the lack of opportunity for self-expression afforded by all such methods (Carroll [1961] 1972; Upshur 1968; Spolsky 1978; Savignon ibid) along with the influence of linguists Hymes (1964, 1971,1972, 1974) and Halliday (1970, 1978), led to the introduction of the new communicative approach.

1.2.3 The communicative approach

This approach was at first influenced by notional-functional proposals for the description of languages, based on Jespersens' (1924) definition of "notions". Language was no longer seen as a set of structure-habits, nor a collection of phrasebook sentences, but as a vehicle for the expression and comprehension of meaning. Jespersen's intuition that there was a level of semantic generalization common to all languages which expressed the same "notions", if in different ways, provided the basis for the Council of Europe Project to establish a "threshold level" in 1971. This analysis took learners' communicative needs, both in terms of language and of learning, as the starting point for syllabus design and production of teaching materials (Richterich 1972, Wilkins, 1974). However, although a functional dimension was incorporated into most courses, very often the typical structural patterns remained. Little attention was given to methodology which often remained traditional rather than communicative.

1.2.4 Communicative competence

The work which began with the guidelines for the "threshold" level was extended during the 70s and 80s to include the notion of *communicative competence*, a term coined by Hymes in response to Chomsky's mentalistic definition of *linguistic competence*. Hymes reminded educators that learners needed not only knowledge of linguistic rules but also rules of social appropriateness:

There are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless.

(Hymes, 1971:10)

Halliday (1970:143), building on work by Malinowski (1923, 1935) and Firth ([1930, 1937], 1964) developed a sophisticated instrument for relating linguistic forms to language functions through a network of systems. This instrument, called Systemic Linguistics, posits three levels of language use:

ideational - the use of language to express content

interpersonal - the use of language to maintain social relations

textual - the use of language to create discourse, or construct texts which are relevant to the situation.

His work drew attention to the fact that language teaching had only really dealt with the ideational and this became a major preoccupation from the 1980s. Sociolinguistic and discourse competence were to be taught as well as linguistic competence (Canale and Swain 1980; Canale 1983). The emphasis on communicative processes led to a view of learning in terms of the social structure of learners' discourse, as well as their individual cognitive processes. Teaching became more learner-centred, as teachers became facilitators, rather than providers of comprehensible input (Larsen-Freeman 1986), although this was by no means the case in all "communicative" classrooms.

Savignon (ibid: 28-29) sums up the guiding tenets of the communicative approach as follows:

1) Language use is creative. Learners use whatever knowledge they have of a language system to express their meaning in an infinite variety of ways.

2) Language use consists of many abilities in a broad communicative framework. The nature of the particular abilities needed is dependent on the roles of the participants, the situation, and the goal of the interaction.

3) L2 learning, like L1 learning, begins with the needs and interests of the learner.

4) An analysis of learner needs and interests provides the most effective basis for materials development.

5) The basic unit of practice should always be a text or chunk of *discourse*. Production should begin with the conveyance of meaning. Formal accuracy in the beginning stages should be neither required nor expected.

6) The teacher assumes a variety of roles to permit learner participation in a wide range of communicative activities.

1.2.5 The shortcomings of the communicative approach

With its emphasis on the spoken language and the view that real time communicative fluency should be valued as much as classroom time grammatical accuracy (Brumfit and Johnson, 1979; Brumfit 1984), this approach made great progress by ensuring language was more relevant to students, and their opinions and experiences were valued (Kramsch 1993). Moreover, an important paradigm shift was achieved, with a move from seeing grammar as simply the study of the linguistic system to seeing it as "the potential within which we act our cultural being (Wallace 1995), a point taken up by Carr (1999).

Savignon suggests a classroom model of communicative competence based on Canale and Swain's framework (ibid 1983) where four components of communicative competence were identified, summarized below:

1) *grammatical competence*: linguistic competence in the Chomskyan sense: the ability to recognize the lexical, morphological, syntactic and phonological features of a language and to use these features to form words and sentences.

2) *sociolinguistic competence*: an understanding of the social context in which language is used –knowing what to say, when to say it and when to remain silent.

3) *discourse competence* or *textual competence*: the ability to make connections between texts, and to interpret them in order to form a coherent whole.The capacity to create coherent, relevant texts, to make inferences and to understand global meaning.

4) *strategic competence:* compensatory strategies used to make up for imperfect knowledge of rules, fatigue, inattention, distraction. According to Horwitz and Horwitz (1977), this also includes the acknowledgement that a particular interpersonal context needs to be seen from the other person's perspective, as well as one's own.

(Savignon, ibid: 40-50).

Paulston and Bruder (1976: 56-57) sum up this communicative competence as including: "not only the linguistic form of a language but also a knowledge of when, how, and with whom it is appropriate to use these forms". This model is a step in the right direction in helping students to understand the culturally constructed nature of communication. However, many so-called communicative activities can be performed in the classroom without using appropriate L2 social norms. For Paulston, these activities are devoid of social meaning, in the sense that they are not an accurate reflection of L2 culture[1].

Kramsch (ibid: 79-82), when analysing an example of classroom interaction, also urges teachers to take advantage of the full variety of contextual possibilities, by drawing attention to the cultural meanings encoded in the foreign discourse, thereby avoiding superficial linguistic exchange.

However, although cultural authenticity is a valid aim, there are several problematic issues. What cultural norms are we aiming to emulate? Many advocates of the communicative approach did appear to have in mind an ideal native speaker-hearer, where the implied social identity for students is to become as native-like as possible. This aim has

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[1] Clearly, as Savignon adds, there are various levels of social meaning at work within the context of the classroom community, where ways of acting in a role play or participating in a game can suggest compliance with or rejection of the system, a wish to please or displease the teacher, achievement of a good grade, peer group approval or disapproval, to name but a few.

been rejected by many educators and will be discussed in Section 1.5.6. Clearly, national cultural norms are inflected by class and gender, amongst other variables, but a development of this point is beyond the scope of this thesis (Holoborow, 1999).

Other, more recent, models of communicative competence also include a component of *pragmatic knowledge,* combining illocutionary and sociolinguistic knowledge (Bachman 1990) or *socio-cultural competence* (Celce-Murcia, Zoltan and Thurrell, 1995), with the latter model also arguing for knowledge of cultural factors such as beliefs, values and norms.

While an attention to the conventional, predictable forms of some communicative interaction is indeed useful (Hall 2002), this very commitment to sociocultural appropriacy can lead to viewing appropriate communicative behaviour as a set of neatly defined skills or behaviours to be acquired, preparing the student for a "seamless transition to native-like competence" Carr (ibid: 107). What Pennycook describes as "the universalising discourses of applied linguistics" (1997:44) have tended to disregard the specific nature of cultural experience and to underestimate the importance of context. In reality as Carr, following Fairclough (1992), explains, communicative repertoires are often ill-defined, plural and variable and the sociolinguistic order can be hybrid, messy and contradictory.

A focus on the pragmatic features and discourse patterns of the target language and culture must be combined with training in critical awareness, or learners will tend to transpose L1 features to L2 practices (Kramsch ibid: 84). There is clearly a need for pragmatic competence to be taught in an appropriate cultural context, particularly for advanced students, since native speakers tend to be less tolerant of their pragmatic errors and there is a risk of them becoming "fluent fools" (Bennett 1997; Fitzgerald 2002). Furthermore, the educational potential of language study goes far beyond the acquisition of purely pragmatic skills (McCarthy and Carter, 1994; van Lier 1996; Schäffner and Wenden, 1995).

Building on Kramsch's notion that the cultural act of language learning involves two

cultures, that of the learner and of the target language and that the student needs to develop a

position which mediates between the two, Crozet and Liddicoat[2] identify what they consider

to be the two main shortcomings of CLT:

> Communicative Language Teaching, in its endeavour to teach learners to communicate in a
> foreign language, overlooked both the links between language and culture and the necessity to
> understand communication between non-native speakers (the language learners) and native
> speakers as *intercultural communication rather than communication in the target language.*

(Crozet and Liddicoat, 1999: 113, emphasis added)

Kramsch (1993) notes that when more structurally oriented methods were used, the

classroom was the locus of talk about language and its structures. Although this may have

remained at a surface level, the grammar-translation method compared two or more

language systems. The communicative approach focuses almost entirely on doing things

with words, yet sociocultural appropriateness is too varied to be taught only by doing. As

Breen puts it:

> Perhaps one of the main authentic activities within a language classroom is communication
> about how best to learn to communicate. Perhaps the most authentic language learning tasks are
> those which require the learner to undertake communication and metacommunication.

(Breen, 1985: 65)

In "Teaching Myself" (1994) Dufeu, an advocate of the use of linguistic

psychodramaturgy, argues that the communicative approach also embraces a view of

language as knowledge to be transferred or transmitted to the learner, the kind of metaphor

we criticize in Section 1.3.3.5. For Dufeu, this transmission is carried out via the textbook,

with the teacher as mediator of the process. Referring to this pedagogy as: "a pedagogy of

having", he claims that learners in this situation experience a two-fold alienation. Firstly, they

are learning a language which is not their own mother tongue and secondly, what they do say

in that language is not their own words, but words and structures they have just acquired from

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[2]We discuss this "third place " in detail in Section 1.6.

the text. Dufeu voices several criticisms of the communicative approach, some of which are summarized below:

> 1) Although excellent techniques are suggested, there is a lack of a sense of methodological unity and of a coherent, consistent learning progression. They are only used in a sustained way by a minority of creative teachers.
>
> 2) Often communicative activities are used as back-up or light relief to more traditional methods.
>
> 3) Some teachers do not consider the appropriateness of a particular activity to the group or the best time to use the activity.
>
> 4) Many activities are linear and do not give learners enough opportunity to express themselves in varied ways or to extend their repertoire. Creativity is confused with lack of discipline or unprincipled eclecticism.

Although these criticisms may not be true for all classrooms, we will try in our pedagogy of *languaculture* to address these issues, as well as those we have mentioned above, and to develop what Dufeu calls a "Pedagogy of being" where students have valid opportunities for self-expression, both direct and symbolic, within a coherent, appropriate framework.

1.3 From the traditional classroom to socially-constructed understanding

In spite of the relative success of the communicative approach, as we discussed previously, a great deal of language teaching practice seems to have changed little over the past half century, and is still dominated by grammar instruction or rigidly teacher-centred. In this section, we will first discuss research on traditional classroom methodology, secondly we will look at research on negotiation of meaning, in the context of Krashen's (1981, 1982) *input hypothesis* and Swain's *comprehensible output* (1985). Finally, we will consider critiques of this research from a sociocultural perspective and situate our own approach.

1.3.1 IRE or IRF sequences

Much SLA classroom research has led to the conclusion that Initiation, Reply, Evaluation (IRE) or Initiation, Response, Follow-up (IRF) [3] sequences, where students are restricted to a responding role, dominate (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975; Lörscher 1986; Ellis 1994; Wertsch 1998). Furthermore, teachers do not use the target language as much as theoretical accounts would imply (Leeman-Guthrie 1984; Savignon 1997; Hall 2002). In a review of studies carried out on classroom interaction, Ellis (1992, 1993,1994) observes that the discourse in the average classroom is rigidly controlled by the teacher, who determines who speaks, how long they speak, and when they start and stop:

> It is the teacher who has the right to participate in all the exchanges, to include and exclude other participants etc. When teachers elect to act as 'informants' or 'knowers' (Corder 1977), they are likely to make full use of their rights, and as a consequence the learners are placed in a dependent position. As a result there is a preponderance of teacher acts over student acts (typically in a 2:1 ratio), because teachers open and close each exchange.

(Ellis, 1994: 581)

As McCarthy puts it:

> It [the classroom] is a peculiar place, a place where teachers ask questions to which they already know the answers, where pupils (at least younger pupils) have very limited rights as speakers, and where evaluation by the teacher of what the pupils say is a vital mechanism in the discourse structure.

(McCarthy, 1991:19)

In many studies, teachers' use of questions has been found to dominate. For example, Johnston (1990) noted a total of 522 questions asked by a language teacher during a three-hour lesson. Many of these were the kind of *display questions* that test the learner by eliciting ready known information, as in McCarthy's example. These interactions represent what Bakhtin (1981: 342-344) calls single-voiced or authoritative discourse. A critical pedagogy of *languaculture* aims to go beyond IRE or IRF sequences towards double-voiced discourse or

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[3] McCarthy (1991:18) gives the following example: "A: What time is it? B: Five past six. A: Good! Clever girl!"

discursive collaboration (Donato 1994; Antón and DiCamilla 1998) using authentic questions and reciprocal teaching (Palincsar and Brown, 1984):

> Dialogically, authentic teacher questions signal to students the teacher's interest in what they think and know, not just whether they can report what someone else thinks or has said. Authentic questions invite students to contribute something new to the discussion that can change and modify it in some way.

> (Nystrand, 1997: 38)

> When participating in reciprocal teaching, students are required to speak from a perspective that calls on them to ask appropriate questions and to recognize and assess appropriate responses, a perspective that differs markedly from that required in speech genres organized around test questions and I-R-E sequences.

> (Wertsch, 1998:128)

1.3.2 Negotiation of meaning

A great deal of research has been carried out, in the context of Krashen's (1981, 1982) *input hypothesis* (IH) and Swain's *comprehensible output* (1985), on the opportunities for negotiation of meaning provided by classroom activities (Hatch 1978; Long 1981; Pica et al 1986; Doughty and Pica 1986; Pica 1987). This approach integrates Krashen's construct of i (input) + 1, where the learner is presented with language *input* just beyond his or her present level of competence and focuses on the progress language learners can make when *comprehensible input* is presented in the language classroom.

One study of an adult ESL class by Pica (1987) led her to conclude that even learner-centred communicative activities such as decision-making discussions, did not necessarily bring about modified social interaction or negotiation of meaning. According to Pica, this research shows considerable agreement that:

> the learning environment must include opportunities to engage in meaningful social interaction with users of the second language if they are to discover the linguistic and sociolinguistic rules necessary for second-language comprehension and production.

> (Pica, 1987: 12)

A pedagogy of *languaculture* through telecollaboration provides such opportunities. Nevertheless, we will adopt a definition of negotiation of meaning which is far broader than

that of repair strategies or "clarification or confirmation of each other's input" (Pica ibid: 4).

This definition will be clarified in Section 1.3.3.5.

1.3.3 The learner as socioculturally situated agent

> Knowing, whatever its level, is not the act by which a subject transformed into an object docilely and passively accepts the contents others give or impose on him or her. Knowledge, on the contrary, necessitates the curious presence of subjects confronted with the world. It requires their transforming action on reality. It demands a constant searching. It implies invention and reinvention. It claims from each person a critical reflection on the very act of knowing. It must be a reflection which recognizes the knowing process and in this recognition becomes aware of the raison d'être behind the knowing and the conditioning to which that process is subject.
> (Freire, [1967] 1976: 98-99)

1.3.3.1 Introduction

In this section, we will give a brief outline of the view of language education we have

adopted throughout the project, in order to put a pedagogy of telecollaboration into

practice. Our view of language learners will concur with that of Kinginger, who states:

> Language learning, like game-playing, involves people who undertake activities because they have reasons to do them, motives shaped by their prior histories of participation in their culture(s). Within sociocultural approaches, language learners are not viewed as independent language processing devices with a set of pre-defined individual differences that alternatively support or constrain the processor. Rather, they are "unified, self-interpreting cultural agents" (Dunn and Lantolf 1998) whose creativity, intentions and identities are engaged in the activities they carry out. In other words, as opposed to studying the human being as an autonomous object, SCT attempts to come to terms with human subjectivity and agency, what motivates people's actions and why.

> (Kinginger, 2001b: 421)

The main differences between this approach and that of a traditional one are summed

up as follows by Hall (2002):

	Traditional	**Sociocultural**
Language	structural systems, knowledge of which precedes use	tools for social action, systems of which result from use
Mind	universal innate device from which linguistic knowledge of individual languages is derived	joint creation of biological and cultural processes, originating in material worlds of individual, with the use of mediational means

Learning	internal activation of language acquisition device	process of being acculturated or socialized into intellectual and practical activities of a particular social group
Goal of Teaching	to optimize assimilation of new knowledge structures into existing structures of mind	to increase access to and skill in using communicative means of variety of sociocultural activities
Focus of Research	to uncover universal properties of innate language capacity and role of internal processes in the assimilation of new language systems	to examine consequences of participation in particular communicative activities in terms of individual language development

Comparison of Assumptions between Traditional and Sociocultural Perspectives on Language Learning (Hall, 2002: 97)

Three aspects of sociocultural theory are of particular interest in the context of this study: language learning as an inherently social process and the Vygotskian concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD); learning as situated participation, requiring guided assistance by more capable peers; and learning as a mediated process.

1.3.3.2 Learning as a social process and the Zone of Proximal Development

Sociocultural Theory is based on the work of the Soviet psychologist Vygotsky (1962, 1978, 1981a, 1981b), and further developed by several scholars, among them Engeström (1987, 1999) Leont'ev (1981a, 1981b) Luria (1976, 1979) and Zinchenko (1985). It was brought to the West and made available to language educators by the work of such scholars as John-Steiner 1985; Wertsch 1981a, 1981b,1985a, 1985b, 1991,1998; Cole and Wertsch 1994 and Lantolf 1994, 1996,1999, 2000a, 2000b. This perspective situates the individual's cognitive developments as originating in the external, historical and social forms of human activity. In other words, all cognitive development is firstly interpsychological and derives from social interaction. Vygotskian theory differs from Piagetian theory in seeing social activity not as the mere environment for learning but as the actual source from which that learning develops. Children develop higher mental functioning by appropriating the

mediational artefacts and tools, including language, of their culture, aided by adults or by more capable peers.

Vygotsky draws a distinction between the actual and potential level of development, in terms of whether or not the action can be performed without help. For Vygotsky and his colleagues, unlike for Piaget (1923), egocentric speech, when babies or young children appear to be talking to themselves, plays a central role in the development of mental activity. Piaget says that egocentric speech has no specific function, other than as a transition stage from individual to social speech, which occurs as the child becomes less egocentric and more socially orientated. For Vygotsky, however, it is intrapersonal and cognitive:

> Our experimental results indicate that the function of egocentric speech is similar to that of inner speech: It does not merely accompany the child's activity; it serves mental orientation, conscious understanding; it helps in overcoming difficulties; it is speech for oneself, intimately and usefully connected with the child's thinking. Its fate is very different from that described by Piaget. Egocentric speech develops along a rising, not a declining curve; it goes through an evolution, not an involution. In the end, it becomes inner speech.

> (Vygotsky [1962] 1972:193)

In Vygotsky's view, the transition from egocentric speech is not necessarily complete and social speech is not achieved at a specific stage in *ontogenesis* (the development of the individual). Egocentric speech does not disappear, but goes underground as inner speech and can emerge when an adult has to perform a difficult or complex task, which is beyond what Vygotsky terms the Zone of Proximal Development or ZPD:

> It is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving with adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.

> (Vygotsky, 1978: 86)

The three stages of ontogenetic development identified by Vygotsky are:

1. Object-related – the child is not able to carry out independent action.
2. Other-regulated or intermental activity – the child can carry out regulatory functions through dialogic speech.
3. Self-regulated –or intramental activity, which establishes social contact and social interaction.

As we learn to perform a task, we move from not being able to control our participation to the ZPD where we can participate with the help of others and finally to being able to control our own activity. Children initially appropriate the words of others through such dialogues, in a process which develops from outside-in, like Bakhtin's ventriloquation, where an individual takes on the voices of others and makes them his or her own. Vygotskian theory thus allocates a central role to teachers, or more capable peers and, as Lantolf and Pavlenko (1995) explain:

> situates the locus of learning in the dialogic interactions that arise between socially constituted individuals engaged in activities which are co-constructed with other individuals rather than in the heads of solipsistic beings. Learning hinges not so much on richness of input, but crucially on the choices made by individuals as responsible agents with dispositions to think and act in certain ways rooted in their discursive histories.
>
> (Lantolf and Pavlenko, 1995:116)

This view mirrors that of Freire:

> Knowing is the task of subjects, not objects. It is as a subject and only as such that a man or woman can really know. In the learning process, the only person who really *learns*, is s/he who appropriates what is learned, who apprehends and thereby reinvents that learning, s/he who is able to apply the appropriated learning to concrete existential situations. On the other, hand, the person who is filled by another with "contents" whose meaning s/he is not aware of, which contradict his or her way of being in the world, cannot learn because s/he is not challenged. Thus, in a situation of knowing, teacher and student must take on the role of conscious subjects, mediated by the knowable object that they seek to know.
>
> (Freire, [1967]1976: 99)

Leont'ev (1981:47) sees learning as a sociocultural activity, where classroom activity is equivalent to other activities such as work and family life in the "real" world. This activity cannot be removed from social organisation and relationships. The form it takes is determined both by the social setting and social interaction. Both learners as agents and the classroom or virtual classroom as setting are important for our analysis.

> The ZPD, a "dialectic unity of learning-and-development" (Dunn and Lantolf 1998), is the framework, par excellence, which brings all the pieces of the learning setting together— the

teacher, the learner, their social and cultural history, their goals and motives, as well as the resources available to them, including those that are dialogically constructed together.

(Aljaafreh and Lantolf 1994: 468)

1.3.3.3 Situated learning

Anthropologists and cultural psychologists, such as Lave and Wenger (1991) or Hutchins (1995) see knowledge as being socially distributed rather than as exclusively residing in an individual's mental operations. This approach recognises that the individual is not always the end point of the acquisition process but knowledge is also in the tools used and in the person's environment and the institutions which regulate individuals. People do not all have access to the same information or use the same techniques for achieving goals. To be a competent or expert member of a certain group requires more than models to follow, which is why the apprenticeship model is so popular. The novice watches experts and then gradually learns the task.

This concept of "situated learning" sees learning as a function of the activity, context and culture in which it is situated. Lave and Wenger (1991) provide an analysis of situated learning in five different settings: Yucatec midwives, tailors, navy quartermasters, meat cutters and alcoholics. In all cases, there was a gradual acquisition of knowledge and skills as novices learned from experts in the context of everyday activities. The main principles adopted by Lave and Wenger are that knowledge needs to be presented in an authentic context and learning requires social interaction and collaboration. Learning is not the reception of factual knowledge but essentially a situated activity, where newcomers gradually participate in communities of practice with the assistance of old-timers. This mediated relationship between new comers and old-timers is conceptualised as "legitimate peripheral participation", or L.P.P. This is a reciprocal relationship, where newcomers negotiate their position within a community by engaging in and understanding existing practice, but also by modifying that practice in order to establish their own identity and to gain full participation in

the community. The classroom can be seen as a community of practice where students

acquire or do not acquire access to the wider community of schooled adults:

> In this view, problems of schooling are not, at their most fundamental level, pedagogical. Above all, they have to do with the ways in which the community of adults reproduces itself, with the places newcomers can or cannot find in such communities, and with relations that can or cannot be established between these newcomers and the cultural and political life of the community.

(Lave and Wenger, 1991: 51)

As Kinginger explains:

> Access includes both socially sanctioned opportunities to observe the skilled use of cognitive tools, known as "legitimate peripheral participation" (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and active participation within situations where one's own use of the tools is assisted by other people who are more competent in the relevant domain. To provide such access and assistance is to create a Zone of Proximal Development; it is the business of teaching (Tharp and Gallimore, 1989). Teaching involves both transferring and transforming cultural tools.

(Kinginger, 2001b: 423)

1.3.3.4 Mediation

The use of mediation or artefacts, which can transform and shape higher mental

functioning in fundamental ways (Luria 1979; Wertsch 1985a 1985b) is a central notion in

sociocultural theory:

> By being included in the process of behavior, the psychological tool (sign) alters the entire flow and structure of mental functions. It does this by determining the structure of a new instrumental act, just as a technical tool alters the process of a natural adaptation by determining the form of labor operations.

(Vygotsky, 1981b: 137)

This definition builds on the Marxist notion of "instrument of labour" which Marx

described as:

> a thing, or complex of things, which the labourer interposes between himself and the object of his labour, and which serves as the conductor of his activity.

(Marx, 1906:199)

Tools and artefacts are always between humans and the physical world, mediational

objects, which are used to control the environment. An example of this is the use of an

umbrella to protect us from the rain, from the consequences of a natural phenomenon. The model does not only apply to material tools but also to ideational structures and symbolic tools, such as theories and emotions, through which humans mediate their relationship with the world. Language is also seen as a mediating system and, by extension, culture is viewed as a mediating activity between people and the world. Language as semiotic mediation[4] is at the centre of Vygotsky's theories of learning and has been integrated into Kramsch's approach to the teaching of language and culture (Section 2.5.5).

Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001) explain that mental processes derive from the appropriation of artefacts such as signs, words, metaphors and narratives. These artefacts are not merely copied but transformed by the individual as they are internalised. The way people act or think will be shaped according to which tools or artefacts they have appropriated. When such artefacts have been internalised, they can no longer be separated from the user. This is particularly true of language which affects the whole person:

> For example, we can think of a native or expert user of a language as forming a functional system in which the language ceases to be a tool separable from the person but is so tightly intertwined with who the person is that to interfere in some way with their language is to interfere with the person.

(Lantolf and Pavlenko, 2001: 145)

Tools or signs can be used to assist performance, for instance humans actively remember by the use of such signs as a knot in a handkerchief or, on a wider scale, by erecting monuments which reflect how humans can personally influence their environment (Vygotsky,1978). The tools which have been appropriated will provide both affordances and constraints (Gibson 1977).

> When trying to develop new cultural tools, the focus naturally tends to be on how they will overcome some perceived problem or restriction inherent in existing forms of mediated action.

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[4] As Duranti points out, the theory of language as a mediating system and speaking as a mediating activity is close to the theory of language presented by speech act theorists like Searle (1969) and Grice (1975) and philosophers like Austin (1961) and Wittgenstein (1958, [1933] 1974).

However, one of the points that follows inescapably from the view of mediated action I am proposing is that even if a new cultural tool frees us from some earlier limitation of perspective, it introduces new ones.

(Wertsch, 1998: 39)

Our analysis therefore takes into account the nature of the mediational tools used by the students, along with the context in which they are used. As Breen suggests, learners' engagement will be significantly shaped by the context in which learning occurs.

> [..] learners selectively work through the discourse of the classroom not only as discursive practitioners within the immediate lesson but also on the basis of:
>
> 1) their definition of the teaching-learning situation
>
> 2) their history of experience with other realms of discourse beyond that of the particular classroom.
>
> 3) the social practices of the classroom at a given time or, in other words, their understanding of and contributions to the emerging culture of the classroom group.
>
> (Breen, 1996:96)

1.3.3.5 Collective scaffolding

Many researchers and educators have recently criticized the use of the input-output metaphor described in Section 1.3.2 (Bruner 1990; Donato 1994; Dufeu 1994; Wertsch 1998; Kinginger 2001a, 2001b; Van Lier 1996), although reactions against a transmission model of teaching are not new (Montaigne [1580] 1972; Freire [1967] 1976). These critics stress the fact that studies such as Pica's are based on a message model of communication, or the conduit metaphor, where linguistic tokens are sent and received. This metaphor masks the fundamentally important mechanism of L2 development and reduces the social setting to an opportunity for "input crunching"(Donato 1994). Rather than seeing learning as a concrete, socially constructed process, the development of interlanguage grammar is seen as abstract, individual and solitary.

Kinginger (2001b:422) remarks that this approach sees the classroom as an "experimental laboratory" where teachers provide input and orchestrate students' acquiring mechanisms. The social context is only seen as incidental, as a support mechanism for processes that take place in the autonomous mind as it processes incoming input. She sums up the contrast between the two approaches as follows:

> Thus, the IH focuses on a universal, internal mind-as-processor that functions from the inside out. There is an element of mechanistic determinism to the approach. Approaches based on SCT, by contrast, consider human cognition to be socially determined and generated, context-specific, goal-oriented in nature, and developed from the outside.[5]

(Kinginger, ibid: 422)

Donato (1988,1994) carried out a study of a group of three American learners of French at an American university, building on Wood, Bruner and Ross's (1976) definition of scaffolded help in learning. This has six characteristics:

1) Recruitment: enlisting the learner's interest in the task.

2) Reduction in degrees of freedom: simplifying the task.

3) Direction maintenance: keeping the learner motivated in pursuit of the goal.

4) Marking critical features: highlighting relevant features and pointing out discrepancies between what has been produced and the ideal solution

5) Frustration control: reducing stress and frustration during problem solving.

6) Demonstration: modeling an idealized form of the act to be performed by completing the act or by explicating the learner's partial solution.

(Wood, Bruner and Ross, 1976: 98)

Over a period of an hour, Donato observed 32 cases of scaffolded help, where the three learners were able to construct a collective scaffold for each other's performance. This

scaffolding allowed them to jointly arrive at a solution which none of the participants could

achieve alone. Donato's observations led him to the conclusion that:

> [..] in the process of peer scaffolding, learners can expand their own L2 knowledge and extend the linguistic development of their peers. The implication for this finding is that the obdurate nature of some language tasks inhibit learners from engaging in dialogically constituted guided support, or collective scaffolding. By recasting the role of learners during social interaction, the current theoretical position supporting group work in second language classrooms will be expanded beyond simple opportunities to exchange linguistic artifact to that of the collective acquisition of the second language.

> (Donato, ibid: 52-53)

As we have seen, Donato integrates sociocultural theory and the Vygotskian

notion of the ZPD into his view of learning as a "collective acquisition of the second

language". However, in spite of the interest of Donato's analysis and of his claims that the

fact that the learners focus specifically on low-level grammar correction is incidental, these

and other such examples (Antón 1999; Adair-Hauck and Donato 1994), remain closely linked

to the IRF/IRE model. Kinginger (2002) remarks that such interactions only thinly disguise

the controlling role played by the teacher. Students have integrated and reproduced traditional

classroom models, without appropriating those models for their own agenda:

> Here it would seem that the ZPD serves to construct knowledge about how to participate in canonical classroom discourse and about how to employ subject pronouns in French. [...]. Interpretations where students participate in reaching the instructor's pedagogical goal are identified as 'scaffolding' and therefore as good. In this case [an example of IRE/F taken from Antón 1999] students comply with their instructor in producing sentences that are maximally correct. One may reasonably surmise that they are doing essentially the same kind of activities that have always been done in classrooms where speaking activity takes place as a pretext for grammar practice, only now we are calling it the ZPD.

> (Kinginger, 2002: 254-255)

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[5] Several researchers (Dunn and Lantolf 1998; Thorne 2000; Kinginger 2001b) have pointed out that the teaching profession and SLA research have shown a tendency to confuse Krashen's $i + 1$ with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development. Indeed, for Dunn and Lantolf, they are: "Incommensurable Constructs" and "Incommensurable Theories".

Kinginger (ibid) argues for a prospective interpretation, with a view of learning as representing a potential capacity for performance rather than something fully integrated and established. This is achieved both through collaboration between learners and peers or more capable partners and access to semiotic ressources.

In this thesis, we will adopt a broader definition of negotiation of meaning, covering interaction during:

> purposeful social interaction in which participants attempt to achieve a shared definition of the situation or problem before them.

(Kinginger, 2001b: 422)

While the main focus of our study is on cultural awareness, rather than language acquisition, we will also look for ways to facilitate collective scaffolding, in a broadly defined dialectical sense, both in the home group and the "virtual group." Indeed, the primary aim of encouraging "social interaction with second language users" will be to provide an opportunity for our students to help each other to make sense of what Kramsch calls a "third place" between two or more *languacultures* in a context of shared understanding. The final part of this chapter will provide details of what that "third place " might be, but we will look first at various models for describing and teaching culture.

1.4 Intercultural teaching or culture in language teaching

1.4.1 Introduction

In spite of the many theoretical models for the description and analysis of cultures (1.4.2), a review of the literature until the early 1990s reveals very few empirical or descriptive studies dealing with the teaching of culture in the foreign language classroom (Boutin, 1993). When culture is taught, it is often seen as acquisition of facts or a quantifiable fifth skill (Kramsch 1993). During the last decade, this deficit has been partly addressed by new models, although the intercultural dimension of language teaching is still not widely

integrated into practice. In this section, we first look briefly at some intercultural models for describing and analysing culture and discuss their relevance for our pedagogy. We then consider Fantini's arguments for an approach which integrates an interculturalist and linguistic stance. We introduce the notion of *languaculture*, which we have adopted throughout this thesis, and discuss early models of culture teaching and their limitations.

1.4.2 Intercultural teaching

Much of the vast body of literature on the subject of cross-cultural or intercultural training is not directly concerned with language. Since the American anthropologist, Edward Hall published *The Silent Language* in 1959, a large number of theoretical models for describing culture have been devised. Many of these models, for instance the universal value orientation models, seek to apply universal dimensions across cultures, with the aim of improving cross- cultural understanding, and are often used in a business context (Hofstede 1980; Trompenaars 1993; Triandis 1984). While these models may provide useful tools for interpreting behaviour in the right context, they tend not only to concentrate on universal categories but also to present particular cultures as homogenous and static. One extreme example of this is Lewis's *When Cultures Collide*, a highly successful guide for cross-cultural business, which talks of "deviants", or "people who are different in moral or social standards from what is considered normal" (Lewis 1996:322) and states, for example that:

> Germans believe that the truth, even if unpalatable, will achieve a successful outcome. The English give priority to not rocking the boat. But to the Chinese, there is no absolute truth. In Italy it is negotiable.

(Lewis 1996: 8)

Some of the models, such as those of Hall (1959; 1969; 1983) and Trompenaars (1993), also deal in depth with specific cultures and this aspect can be useful for understanding certain cultural differences between the two groups of students. American and

French societies are placed differently in all Hall's variables, for instance the *high and low context* variable, where France is seen as *high context* and America as *low context*. This is defined as follows:

> A high context (HC) communication or message is the one in which most of the information is already in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message. A low context (LC) communication is just the opposite, i.e., the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code.

(Hall, 1976: cited in Hall and Hall 1990: 6)

Similarly, for Hall (1959; 1969; 1983), Americans are seen to be *monochronic*, concentrating on one task at once, seeing time as measurable, generally keeping strictly to appointments and timing and allocating a subordinate role to relationships in comparison to schedules, while the French are *polychronic,* doing several activities simultaneously, seeing time as a question of mutual accommodation, considering appointments as approximate and subject to giving time to significant others and allocating a subordinate role to schedules in comparison to relationships.

Trompenaars identifies seven different variables, including that of *ascription,* where individuals derive their status from what they are: birth, age, gender or wealth and from how others relate to their position in the community, in society or in an organization, or *achievement,* where individuals derive their status from what they do now and what they have accomplished. American and French societies also seem to be at opposite poles of such variables, with French society tending towards *ascribed* status, whereas American society would tend towards *achievement* status. A consideration of such variables can be of interest, for example in the context of a discussion of the respective education systems (Chapter 3). We have also found the dilemmas presented by Trompenaars (1993) a very useful focus for discussion, particularly with the French students (Section 3.3.3).

We have integrated certain aspects of Gudykunst and Kim's exploration of communication with strangers (Gudykunst and Kim 1984) although we disagree with the

input/output model they use for communication (1.3.3.5). However, a systematic application of such culture-general models is neither directly relevant to our pedagogical approach nor to our analysis.

1.4.3 *Linguaculture* and *languaculture*

Fantini (1997) comments on the separation between the work of many interculturalists and language educators, and calls for a goal of intercultural competence, which draws insights from both areas. According to Fantini, apart from rare exceptions:

> interculturalists often overlook (or leave to language teachers) the task of developing language competence, just as language teachers overlook (or leave to interculturalists) intercultural abilities, despite wide knowledge that language and culture are dimensions of each other, interrelated and inseparable.

(Fantini, 1997: 4)

He further notes that too few interculturalists have training in linguistics and some have no proficiency in a second language:

> For all of the research and concepts *about* other cultures and world views, the monolingual ESOL teacher or interculturalist engages mostly in intellectualised endeavors when concepts are not also accompanied by *direct* experiences of other cultures and languages.

(Fantini, 1997: 4-5)

Fantini also stresses the need to go beyond the notion of communicative competence, which is interpreted as simply a focus on linguistic forms by language teachers and an attention to the communicative rules of interaction by interculturalists. We will return to this argument in detail in Section 1.5. According to Fantini, Hall's statement "culture *is* communication"(Hall 1959: 93) could also be "communication is culture". He stresses the inseparable nature of culture and language and suggests the superordinate term of *linguaculture*, which he has used in his work to "connote and ensure their inseparability". He cites Agar, 1994, who has suggested the similar term of *languaculture* which I have adopted throughout this thesis.

Everyone uses the word *language* and everybody these days talks about *culture* [...].Languaculture is a reminder, I hope, of the *necessary* connection between its two parts.

(Agar, 1994:60)

1.4.4 Early models of culture teaching

Kramsch (1993) notes that, until recently, the teaching of culture has been influenced by two main perspectives. The first of these involves the transmission of factual, cultural information, which consists of *statistical information*, that is, institutional structures and other aspects of the target civilisation, *highbrow information*, immersion in literature and the arts, and *lowbrow information*, which focuses on the customs, habits, and folklore of everyday life (Kramsch, 1993: 24). As we saw at the beginning of the chapter, the grammar-translation method relies on *highbrow information* or what Byram and Esarte-Sarries (1991) have called *language for reading*, whereas the communicative method focuses more on *lowbrow information* or *language for touring*.

The other perspective draws on cross-cultural psychology or anthropology, the approaches we mentioned in Section 1.4.2. This approach integrates an interpretative framework in order to enable students to establish connections between their own and the target culture. While providing a certain amount of cultural knowledge, learners are positioned as passive recipients of that knowledge. For example, Brooks (1960) proposed a method covering sixty-four topics regarding culture interspersed with several pages of questions. He called these 'hors d' oeuvres' and included such aspects of culture as greetings, expletives, personal possessions, cosmetics, tobacco and smoking, verbal taboos, cafes, bars, and restaurants, contrasts in town and country life, patterns of politeness, keeping warm and cool, medicine and doctors.

Although this now seems a bit too much like a list of prescriptive recipes for behaviour, Brooks' approach did help to lead to a shift of focus from the study of "High culture" or "Culture with a Capital *C*"—art, music, literature, politics, which was favoured by the

grammar-translation method, to an anthropological approach to the study of culture, or "culture with a small *c*"—the behavioural patterns and lifestyles of everyday life.

However, such models for teaching culture (Hall 1959; Nostrand 1974; Brooks, 1975; Seelye, 1981, 1994) tended to view culture as a collection of accumulated facts and surface level behaviours that were easily classified and observable (Lange et al 1998).

> This perspective focused on surface level behaviour, but did not look at the underlying value orientations, nor did it recognize the variability of behaviour within the target cultural community, the participative role of the individual in the creation of culture, or the interaction of language and culture in the making of meaning.
>
> (Lange et al, 1998: 50)

More recent models see culture as a dynamic, constantly changing process, with great variation between the behaviour of different individual members of a culture. They go beyond surface behaviours to the values and thought patterns that are hidden beneath the tip of what Weaver calls the cultural iceberg (Weaver, 1993: 157). Language and culture are seen as inseparable, and *languaculture* learning as an interpersonal process, which implies agency and choice. We will discuss these recent trends and situate our own approach in more detail in Chapter 2.

1.5. The conceptualisation of language and culture for the classroom

1.5.1 Introduction

As we have seen, the grammar-translation method concentrated mainly on 'big C Culture' (*language for reading* or *highbrow information*). On the other hand, the communicative approach, in spite of its many advantages, tended to see language simply as a code separated from the culture, or, if the study of sociocultural norms were included, as a set of skills which could be applied to behaviour when confronted with the foreign culture (*language for touring* or *lowbrow information*).

The problems inherent in this approach were identified early on by some educators:

if we teach language without teaching at the same time the culture in which it operates, we are teaching meaningless symbols or symbols to which the student attaches the wrong meaning.

(Politzer, 1959: 100-101)

However, when attention was paid to culture, teaching was often limited to:

[..] the transmission of information about the people of the target country, and about their general attitudes and worldviews. The perspective adopted has been largely that of an objective native culture (C1) or target culture (C2). It has usually ignored the fact that a large part of what we call culture is a social construct, the product of self and other perceptions.

(Kramsch, 1993:205)

In the last two decades, educators have sought to find new ways to help learners to go beyond the acquisition of a linguistic system in a cultural vacuum. Learners are encouraged to act upon the environment, rather than simply learning to name it with grammatically and lexically correct sentences (Kramsch 1993).

Kramsch identifies four trends which have emerged from this recent "rethinking of the role of language as social practice", which can be summed up as follows:

1) *Establishing a sphere of interculturality.* The link between linguistic forms and culture is established, not given. Understanding a foreign culture involves putting it in relation with one's own. An intercultural approach is not a transfer of information between cultures, but involves reflection on both target and native culture.

2) *Teaching culture as an interpersonal process.* The teaching of a process of understanding otherness/foreignness, rather than the presentation or prescription of cultural facts. The "rupture points" (Zarate 1986) in the logic of students' explanations should be examined to highlight the cross-cultural aspects of communication.

3) *Teaching culture as difference.* Culture should not be seen simply as national traits. What it means to be French or German is more and more difficult to answer in a multicultural society. Other factors such as age, gender, regional origin, ethnic background and social class should also be considered.

4) *Crossing disciplinary boundaries.* The teaching of culture is linked to anthropology, ethnography, sociology and semiology. Language teachers are encouraged to broaden their knowledge base to integrate these insights.

(Kramsch, ibid: 205-206)

In this section, we will discuss various models where some or all of these four approaches have been adopted, highlighting the main issues which have come to the fore in recent years.

1.5.2 *Making the familiar strange*

> …but, Miss, we're not foreigners, we're English!"
> 3rd form pupil, 'Harnish' Secondary School, Great Britain (1979)
> European Studies lesson in preparation for day-trip to France

> We cannot teach an understanding of the foreign as long as the familiar has not
> become foreign to us in many respects.
> (Hunfeld, 1990:16 cited in Kramsch ibid 234, her translation)

Zarate, in her research in the field of French as a foreign language teaching (FLE), has played a prominent role in the movement to emphasize the importance of working from the mother culture in order to understand the foreign culture (Zarate 1982, 1983, 1986, 1988, 1990).

Zarate suggests a move from the traditional French view of *civilisation,* which, although it recognised the importance of cultural background, was based on authority and transmission of knowledge (Zarate 1988). She stresses the fact that learners are not a *tabula rasa,* but have been socialised by their first language and culture, a phenomenon which we will explore in detail in Chapter 2:

> Un individu n'aborde pas l'apprentissage d'une langue étrangère vierge de tout savoir culturel. Il dispose d'outils conceptuels dont il n'aurait pas lieu, *a priori,* de remettre en cause l'efficacité, puisque ceux-ci ont jusqu'alors fonctionné sans défaillance majeure dans son système culturel d'origine.

(Zarate, 1986: 24)

As Bourdieu (1980) has shown, this socialisation leads us to take our own view of the world for granted.

> Tout le travail de socialisation d'un individu dans sa communauté le conduit donc à ignorer que "ce qui va de soi" est, en fait, une construction arbitraire du monde, un ensemble cohérent mais non universel.
>
> (Zarate, 1986: 24)

Whereas this taken-for-granted reality suggests that values are universal, for Zarate, this is precisely how we see can see that cultural systems are relative:

> Ce qui, dans les faits, a été élaboré, médiatisé par un apprentissage, est perçu comme l'expression d'une évidence indiscutable. **Or, là, où se situe l'évidence, se situe le fait culturel dans sa relativité**.
>
> (Zarate, 1986:24, emphasis in original)

These socialisation processes can prove an impediment to the learning of *languaculture*. The second culture is seen through the prism of the first culture. It is thus impossible to view the other objectively, but at best, as an image or representation. Making use of the skills and knowledge acquired with and through the first culture can lead to the misinterpretation of the second culture:

> L'évidence naïve qui transforme un fait contingent en valeur absolue constitue le premier obstacle à une connaissance maîtrisée de la culture étrangère. Paradoxalement, les connaissances acquises empiriquement dans la culture maternelle interfèrent directement dans la saisie de la culture étrangère. L'initiation à la culture étrangère doit entraîner les élèves à la perception de ces phénomènes qui conditionnent la vision orientée d'une culture, connaissances empiriques et partiales qui sont, en fait, également méconnaissance.
>
> (Zarate, ibid: 27)

However, as we will see in Section 1.6.1.5, the outsiders' view can also help to see things that members of a culture cannot see themselves:

> Dans le jeu des pratiques sociales de la culture seconde, l'étranger peut entrer par choix, voire même par jeu. Il court-circuite le travail d'insertion sociale, passage obligé de tout membre d'une communauté; il n'est pas systématiquement soumis à cette vision du monde fabriquée et

institutionnalisée [...] L'étranger, nouveau venu au pays, peut ainsi "voir" des pratiques invisibles aux natifs.

(Zarate, ibid: 32)

For Bakhtin, dialogue between two heterogeneous cultures is necessary in order to negotiate deeper meaning:

> It is only in the eyes of another culture that foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly [....]. A meaning only reveals its depths once it has encountered and come into contact with another foreign meaning.

(Bakhtin, 1986: 7)

Fantini (1997:8), in a discussion of the cultural and intercultural dimensions of language, also stresses the fact that we take language for granted, thinking that it is a neutral medium, whereas in fact it has a direct influence on every aspect of our lives. He compares language to a two-edged sword, which communicates but also excommunicates. As we will see in Chapter 2, our first culture can convey thoughts and experiences but can also constrain them and can be an impediment to learning:

> 'If you want to know about the water, don't ask a goldfish' is a frequent quote heard among interculturalists. Those who have never experienced another culture or labored to communicate through a second language are, like the goldfish, often unaware of the milieu in which they have always existed.

(Fantini, ibid: 13)

1.5.3 Un savoir interprétatif

> Guess what, Rosie thinks that it's a fairy who leaves the money for our teeth....but everyone knows it's la petite souris!
> (Thomas, aged 5)

Zarate suggests that language educators should help their students to develop a *savoir interprétatif,* where the mother culture is objectified:

> Ce qui est caché, implicite, est essentiel pour une démarche d'objectivation de l'apprentissage culturel et que celle-ci ne pourra se constituer que dans une entreprise d'explication et de mise en lumière.

(Zarate, 1986: 16)

Rather than being consumers of cultural artefacts, students should learn to identify their own social schemata, so they can then come to a better understanding both of themselves and of the target culture. This analysis must go beyond a simple presentation of authentic texts, where students will rely on their native cultural schemata to interpret the message encoded in the foreign text:

> Le document culturel n'est pas une information en soi, il n'est significatif que pour ceux qui savent construire et utiliser un système de références se situant dans la même cohérence culturelle que ceux qui l'ont conçu. Cette "disponibilité culturelle" n'est pas donnée, elle doit être l'objet d'une formation spécifique.
>
> (Zarate, 1982: 29)

However, teaching and acquiring these skills are not easy; teachers have lost touch with the strategies they used to acquire their own cultural capital and learners often resist the view that cultural schemata are relative.

> Zarate's model can be summed up as follows:
>
> 1) Skill-based rather than content-based
>
> 2) Study of proxemics and gestures and "noeuds conflictuels" rather than current view of "civilisation"
>
> 3) Reflection both on target and native culture. Encourage awareness of cultural relativity, ethnocentricity and "implicites culturels".
>
> (Zarate, ibid: 32)

1.5.4 *Quatre savoirs*

More recently, Byram and Zarate (1994) have proposed a model of 4 savoirs, as guidelines for the skills and competences aimed at in the teaching of language and culture. These are defined as follows:

> •**Attitudes and values/Savoir-être**
>
> An affective capacity to relinquish ethnocentric attitudes towards and perceptions of otherness, and a cognitive ability to etablish and maintain a relationship between native culture and foreign cultures.
>
> •**Ability to learn/Savoir apprendre**

An ability to produce and operate an interpretative system with which to gain insight into hitherto unknown cultural meanings, beliefs and practices, either in a familiar or a new language and culture.

•Skills/knowing how/Savoir faire

A capacity to integrate savoirs and savoir-être in specific situations of bicultural contact, i.e. between (the) culture(s) of the learner and of the target language.

•Knowledge/knowing what/Savoirs

A system of cultural references which structures the implicit and explicit knowledge acquired in the course of linguistic and cultural learning, which takes into account the specific needs of the learner in his/her interaction with speakers of the foreign language.

(Byram and Zarate, 1994)

These *savoirs* have been adopted by the Common European Framework of Reference (2001). Although all four *savoirs* are appropriate, the focus on *savoir- être* has increased over the last decade and is an essential element of a pedagogical model integrating intercultural competence into the language class. As Kelly (2001) puts it:

> In particular, the dimension of *savoir-être* will be of crucial importance, involving the promotion of attitudes which will be most conducive to intercultural communication: openness to the Other, self-confidence, a more inclusive concept of personal identity, a willingness to see things in relative perspective, and even more than a respect for difference – a capacity to enjoy difference and diversity.
>
> (Kelly, 2001:130)

1.5.5 Tertiary socialisation

Byram 1989; Byram, Morgan et al 1994 and Byram and Fleming 1998, building on Doyé, 1992, also argue that the confrontation with another culture through foreign interlocutors can lead to a re-ordering of perceptions at a level of "tertiary" socialisation (Byram 1989), which is structurally different from primary and secondary socialisation:

> Just when pupils are in the middle of primary and secondary socialisation, they are introduced to a new way of doing things, a new conception of reality, a new set of values, which are just as 'natural', at least to those who have been socialised into them. This meeting with otherness which challenges and 'denaturalises the learners' own culture might be called 'tertiary socialisation'.
>
> (Byram and Fleming, 1998:6)

According to Byram, Morgan et al. 1994, this "tertiary socialisation" can modify existing social schemata and begins as follows:

> It is if and when they recognise that the foreign language embodies a different set of beliefs, values and shared meanings, that they begin the shift of perspective which leads to reciprocity and reflection on both others and self.

(Byram, Morgan et al, 1994: 23)

This shift in perspective can transform cultural competence into intercultural competence, although it is still not clear to what extent existing social schemata can really be changed on a cognitive level, as we discuss in Chapter 2:

> The integration of language and culture learning using the foreign language would be a contribution to the continuing socialisation of pupils. This is not a process which is intended to imitate and replicate the socialisation of native-speaker peers but rather to develop pupils' existing competence in their own culture by changing it into an intercultural competence, i.e. with the capacity for analysis and acceptance of others.

(Byram and Esarte-Sarries, 1991:13)

1. 5.6 From native speaker to intercultural speaker

The view of intercultural competence as an aim for *languaculture* teaching represents a paradigm shift from the previous goal of native-speaker competence, which was difficult, if not impossible to attain. Kramsch (1998b) notes that the notions of the identity of the native speaker and of the unquestioned authority of native speaker appropriateness have been critically examined in the last decade. This is particularly relevant in the context of large-scale migration, cross-national and cross-cultural encounters and the recognition of linguistic and pragmatic differences among speakers of the same language (Kachru 1985; Widdowson 1994; Kramsch and Sullivan 1996). For Kramsch:

> it would make more sense to view speakers acquiring over their lifetime a whole range of rules of interpretation that they use knowingly and judiciously according to the various social contexts in which they live and with which they make sense of the world around them. That, one could argue, is the characteristic of the 'competent language user': not the ability to speak and write according to the rules of the academy and the social etiquette of one group but the adaptability to select those forms of accuracy and those forms of appropriateness that are called for in a given social context of use.

(Kramsch, 1998b: 27)

It is not clear whether native or non-native speakers always use rules of interpretation "knowingly", as we saw in Section 1.2.5. Nevertheless, our pedagogy of *languaculture* also aims for what Kramsch, building on Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) describes as:

> the competence of the 'intercultural' speaker, operating at the border between several languages or language varieties, manoeuvring his/her way through the troubled waters of cross-cultural misunderstandings. This then, not the untroubled, mythical native speakers should be our aim.
>
> (Kramsch, 1998b: 27)

Rather than basing our teaching on a kind of continuum, whose end point is the native speaker, Kramsch (1993:9) suggests that we view language study as "initiation into a kind of social practice that is at the boundary of two or more cultures". This practice originates both from the L1 speech environment and the L2 native speaker social environment and is a third culture in its own right.

This view is also expressed in the recommendations made by the Scientific Committee on Intercultural Communication of the Thematic Network Project in the Area of Languages (Kelly, Elliott and Fant, 2001: 177). Here it is suggested that the notion of students as cultural and linguistic mediators should replace the traditional ideal of attaining native like competence.

Byram (1995, 1997) defines the interculturally competent person as someone who has both linguistic competence and awareness of the relationship between language and the context in which it is used. This model also includes knowledge of social practices and products in both one's own and one's interlocutor's culture, along with the ability to interpret a document from the other's culture in relation to one's own culture. The intercultural speaker should learn to manage interaction across cultural boundaries and to anticipate possible misunderstandings caused by difference in values, meanings and beliefs. He or she should be able to engage with otherness at an affective, as well as a cognitive, level and to develop what

Byram calls:

> attitudes of curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own.

(Byram, 1997: 50)

This intercultural competence, as Byram and Fleming (1998:9) stress, is an emergent process, which can be developed at any age and is never really complete. The most important element is the development of both students' and teachers' awareness of the nature of intercultural interaction, and of skills to help them relate to cultural differences, rather than extensive factual knowledge about a particular culture, although a certain amount of knowledge is clearly necessary. These interactional skills are not easily acquired, as Scollon and Scollon remind us:

> We believe that the most successful professional communicator is not the one who believes he or she is an expert in crossing the boundaries of discourse systems but, rather, the person who strives to learn as much as possible about discourse systems while recognizing that except within his or her own discourse systems he or she is always likely to remain a novice. We believe that effective communication requires study of cultural and discourse differences on the one hand but also requires a recognition of one's own limitations.

(Scollon and Scollon, 1995:15)

1. 5.7 Multicompetence

The notion of communicative competence, based on Hymes' model for native speakers and adopted by language educators using the communicative approach, thus requires some modification if it is to reflect the competence developed by learners of other languages. As we have seen, for many educators the goal of language learners is not to become native speakers, but as Hall (2002) puts it:

> […] to add alternative ways of making sense to their already established repertoires of sense-making knowledge and abilities. This is so that learners can broaden their communicative experiences, their worldviews, and their understandings of the active, creative roles they as individuals play in constructing these worlds.

(Hall, 2002: 43)

The concept of multicompetence was suggested by Cook (1992, 1995), who concludes that language learners do not simply add skills and knowledge acquired in the second or third language to those they already possess in their first language, but that they develop different competencies which distinguish them from monolingual native speakers.

In her discussion of Cole's multicompetence model, Hall (2002) includes a list of the knowledge, skills and abilities that a group of foreign language teachers felt they possessed as speakers of more than one language:

> 1) Enhanced strategic competence including, for example, ability to use circumlocution, guess meaning from context, and detect and respond to communicative breakdowns.
>
> 2) Broadened sociocultural understanding.
>
> 3) Increased empathy and receptivity to culturally different others.
>
> 4) Enhanced metalinguistic awareness of first and second language skills.
>
> 5) Extended social identities.
>
> 6) More communicative resources on which to draw.
>
> 7) More flexible and creative with language.
>
> 8) Enhanced analytic abilities.
>
> (Hall, 2001:55)

Although they do not include any of the negative aspects we have already discussed, this optimistic note should guide us in our pedagogy of *languaculture*, where our aims are to help our students to become "successful multicompetent speakers, not failed native speakers" (Cook, 1999:204).

1.5.8 Empathy

> Most people say they wear berets and go around – most of them do wear berets, but people think they go round in striped tee-shirts selling onions. But they don't really do that and they wear normal clothes. But they always wear a beret, always do, you can always tell a Frenchman.
> (British primary school pupil after a visit to France, quoted in Byram and Esarte-Sarries, 1991: 37)

One of the main aims of contemporary language teaching, that of promoting empathy, further understanding and tolerance between people of different origins and cultural backgrounds has also become more of a central concern with the recent preoccupation with the development of an "intercultural competence". For instance, Fantini (1997) concludes that language educators who take up the challenge of helping both themselves and their students develop the awareness, attitudes, skills and knowledge which are necessary for intercultural competence can become:

> better participants on a local and global level, able to understand and empathize with others in new ways.

(Fantini, 1997:13)

Straub (1999) stresses the need to raise students' awareness of their own culture, to provide them with some kind of *meta*language in order to talk about culture with a certain degree of intellectual objectivity in order:

> to foster...understanding of the target culture from an insider's perspective—an empathetic view that permits the student to accurately interpret foreign cultural behaviors.

(Straub, ibid :5)

This point is also made by Byram and Esarte-Sarries:

> It is in the learning of another language that the learner can be most effectively weaned away from an ethnocentric view of other peoples and cultures. A break with his own language produces a more clearly perceived alternative perspective.

(Byram and Esarte-Sarries, 1991: 13)

As we saw in Section 1.2.5, however, many educators agree that mere exposure to the target culture is not sufficient to change attitudes and lead to intercultural understanding. The idea that language/culture study will automatically create empathy and understanding of other people is prevalent, but this is often not the case with classroom study or indeed with study abroad programmes. For example, the St Lambert French immersion experiment in Canada in

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1973 showed that a group of children, immersed in French from grades 1 to 5, became functionally bilingual and finally performed better than the control group, in terms of cognitive flexibility, but retained the same negative attitudes to French speakers as the control group (Tucker and Anglejan 1973). Similar results were found in Nocon's 1991 study of 500 Spanish beginners at San Diego University. Nocon also found that students appeared to separate language study as a subject, from speakers of the language. This tendency for students to objectify speakers of both their own and the target language was also reported by Hall and Ramirez (1993).

Although a lot of the research does point to the fact that study abroad promotes language learning in certain ways, the research findings are much less clear on the impact of study abroad on culture learning. Barnlund (1988) found that after this period students had greater self-confidence, an increase in global awareness, enhanced cultural self-awareness and positive attitudes toward other culture groups However, other research suggests that one negative experience abroad can also dominate the person's perspective about the new culture and reinforce negative generalisations (Byram et al, 1991). Coleman's analysis of the findings from the European Language Proficiency Survey, which tested the attitudes of 25, 000 British University students before and after a long stay abroad, also showed that mere exposure to the foreign culture does not necessarily reduce negative stereotypes (Coleman, 1998).

This evidence points to a clear need for more careful preparation in the classroom. What models can be adopted to best encourage the various skills and competencies need to encourage such empathy and decentring?

1. 5.9 The cultural studies model

As we have seen, Byram and his colleagues (Byram 1988; Byram 1989; Byram and Esarte-Sarries, 1991; Byram, Morgan et al, 1994; Byram 1997) argue for a model of language

and culture learning, which draws on insights acquired from sociological, anthropological

and psychological theories. This model is based on a combination of language and cultural

learning and language and cultural awareness, which are mutually supportive. The current

view of language study as an acquisition of linguistic skills is integrated into a focus, both on

the sociolinguistic dimension of language and on its relationship to cultural meanings. This

view integrates both *language for touring* and *language for reading* but also encourages

language for cultural understanding. Byram and Fleming describe the main aspects of the

framework as follows:

> - an integration of linguistic and cultural learning to facilitate communication and interaction;
>
> - a comparison of others and self to stimulate reflection on and (critical) questioning of the mainstream culture into which learners are socialised;
>
> a shift in perspective involving psychological processes of socialisation;
>
> the potential of language teaching to prepare learners to meet and communicate in other cultures and societies than the specific one usually associated with the language they are learning.
>
> (Byram and Fleming, 1998:7)

1. 5.10 Preparing for the unpredictable

For Byram and Esarte-Sarries (1991) the *language for touring* model, which dominates

many contemporary classrooms, is based, at least for younger learners, on an intuitive

selection of language based on contextualisation in everyday life. In the textbook, this is

usually embodied by a fictional, idealised family:

> On the one hand, the text book aims to prepare pupils for a tourist-consumer visit to France and on this basis is largely successful. The result is what we have called 'the royal visit' image, in which everyone smiles, greets, and is attendant to the visitor's needs. The less attractive or more mundane features of life do not appear. On the other hand, judged by criteria of balance and realism, the textbook image is superficial and biased, and hardly provides an adequate basis for developing subtle perception and positive attitudes.
>
> (Byram and Esarte-Sarries, 1991: 47-48)

Morgan and Cain also make a similar observation:

The dialogues presented in text books do not present unequal dialogues where there is coercion, misunderstanding or different social discourses interacting, but rather a trouble-free and neutral context where expected statement motivates expected response.

(Morgan and Cain, 2000:11)

Byram and his colleagues build many of their arguments from evidence collected from *The Durham project* (1985-1988) a large-scale research project, which investigated the effect of language teaching on young people's perceptions and knowledge of and attitudes towards other cultures. One of the conclusions reached was that there is a need to prepare students for the unpredictable, rather than for the predictable. With the current approach:

learners are trained in the use of appropriate linguistic behaviour, given advice on appropriate non-verbal behaviour and warned about alien cultural objects and behaviours which may unsettle them in their deviance from the learners' expectations. In short they are helped to act appropriately and protected affectively against direct experience.

(Byram and Esarte-Sarries, 1991: 7)

However, what is required is an ability to adapt to new situations:

Instead of this [language for touring] it will be necessary to provide learners with the capacity to adapt to new situations. Learners will need a grasp of the relationship between language and the values and meanings it embodies, an understanding of the implicit connotations and collocations of vocabulary, and an understanding of the inter-relationship between the self and the society in which one lives. On this basis they will be able to adapt effectively to new situations and use their cognitive powers to develop appropriate behaviours, both linguistic and non-verbal.

(Byram and Esarte-Sarries, 1991:7)

Certain aspects of this relationship between the values and meanings embodied by language, which form a significant part of our pedagogical toolkit, will be explored in detail in Chapter 2.

1.5.11 The color purple

Robinson [6] (1988: 11) posits a symbolic view of culture as a dynamic "system of symbols and meanings" whereby "past experience influences meaning, which in turn affects future experience, which in turn affects subsequent meaning, and so on." For Robinson, the dynamic nature of culture as process has been neglected in foreign language teaching, which has concentrated on culture as product. In order to address this problem, Robinson-Stuart and Nocon (1996) have proposed the *color purple* model. This model stems from a recognition that we cannot see through another's eyes, but only through our own eyes. Different cultures have different lenses, which we cannot escape; the blue lens of one culture overlaps with the red lens of the other culture to form purple, which represents an understanding of the other perspective in order to arrive at shared meaning.

The *color purple* represents:

> a productive, cognitive, perceptual, and affective space that is born of cross-cultural contact.
>
> (Robinson-Stuart and Nocon, 1996: 435)

While accepting the validity of Kramsch's "third place" (Section 1.6), Robinson-Stuart and Nocon (1996) argue that the emphasis should be placed on direct contact with the other culture. For these educators, culture learning as a scholarly skill, without direct experience of the culture, is merely "cognitive boundary crossing" (Robinson-Stuart and Nocon, 1996: 434):

> We argue that culture is not only located in cultural products and forms, but in the active lives of those who share those forms. Target language speakers and language learners participate in an on-going process of culture use, which helps them to make meaning and to contribute in turn, to lived, developing culture. Learning about the lived culture of actual target language speakers as well as about one's own culture requires tools that assist language learners in negotiating meaning and understanding the communicative and cultural contexts in which linguistic codes are used.
>
> (Robinson-Stuart and Nocon, 1996: 432)

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[6] Robinson (1988) is also published under the name Robinson-Stuart (1996).

1. 5.12 The language learner as ethnographer

Robinson-Stuart and Nocon (ibid) suggest that this integration of home and foreign

culture symbolized by the "color purple", can be achieved by encouraging students to

construct meaning through immediate, interpersonal action as ethnographers.

> when the goal of language instruction is framed as live communication between cultures and
> cultural representatives, as opposed to the acquisition of knowledge or scholarly skill, the
> process of creating shared meaning in interpersonal interaction must be primary.
>
> (Robinson-Stuart and Nocon, ibid: 434)

Byram and Esarte-Sarries (1991:10) also state that the learner should model him or

herself on the ethnographer, defined as someone whose motivation for learning language and

culture as a whole is to be able to describe and understand the people in question.

This perspective will encourage the learner:

> [...] to learn 'language for cultural understanding' which embraces both 'language for reading'
> and 'language for touring'. The learner's ultimate goal is to achieve a capacity for cognitive
> analysis of a foreign culture, people and its artefacts –whether intellectual or other – and for
> affective response to experience of another culture which neither hinders his perceptions of self
> and others nor prevents his adaptation to new environments.
>
> (Byram and Esarte-Sarries, ibid: 11)

This *language for cultural understanding* will lead the learner away from monocultural

awareness or ethnocentric attitudes, which are oriented only towards significant phenomena

in his or her own culture, to intercultural awareness which recognises other perspectives and

which, furthermore, can allow a grasp of the characteristics of a foreign culture in a way not

readily available to the native.

Robinson-Stuart and Nocon report on two classroom ethnographic projects in a

University Spanish class, (1991 and 1992), which sought to apply the principles of the "color

purple", as outlined in Section 1.5.11. After class preparation involving perceptual

experiments and exercises to encourage empathy, students conducted two or three interviews with native speakers of Spanish. The results of this project showed a positive change in attitudes towards the local Mexican population and students also felt that they had gained a great deal of self-knowledge. Many of the student responses showed an awareness of differing cultural norms and an attempt to look at things: "from their perspective rather than being blinded my own perspective".

This type of ethnographic study seems to be a fruitful method for promoting meta-awareness of student's "own culture and culturally conditioned perceptions" (Robinson-Stuart and Nocon, ibid: 443). However, the discovery of shared ideas and interests also tended to minimize rather than to explore differences:

> I learned that Mexicans are very much like we are.
>
> he showed me that he was a person and not a Mexican. Ben didn't show me what it was like to be Mexican, he showed me what it was like to be human.
>
> (Robinson-Stuart and Nocon, ibid: 442-443).

The other problem inherent in using this approach is the non-reciprocal nature of the project, where American students were investigating what it is like to be Mexican, but Mexican students were not investigating what it is like to be American. As we will show in Chapter 4, the project we describe involves reciprocal ethnographic investigation, even if the problem of assimiliation has not been totally avoided.

Although clearly classroom learning cannot replace direct experience of the L2C2, the classroom can be seen as a safe environment where students can experiment with the language and feel free to make mistakes (Damen, 1987; Kramsch 1993). As we will see in Chapter 4, this is not always the case for students in the Grandes Ecoles system, who are often afraid of being ridiculed by their peers. The American students in the study also suffered great anxiety at the idea of speaking to a French person for the first time, and in

public. However, building up a relationship with an L2C2 peer group before interacting with the whole group through telecollaboration can help to alleviate this anxiety. A virtual meeting can therefore provide a halfway house between the traditional classroom and the study abroad period, or as preparation for this experience.

1. 5.13 Current directions

Paige and Stringer (1997) define the different aspects of cultural learning as follows:

1) learning about the self as a cultural being,

2) learning about culture and its impact on human communication, behavior, and identity,

3) culture-general learning, i.e., learning about universal, cross-cultural phenomena such as cultural adjustment,

4) culture-specific learning, i.e., learning about a particular culture, including its language, and,

5) learning how to learn, i.e., becoming an effective language and culture learner.

(Paige and Stringer, 1997)

According to Paige et al, these views are congruent with recent trends, which define cultural learning as being anchored in three fundamental processes:

1) The learners' exploration of their own culture.

2) The discovery of the relationship between language and culture.

3) The learning of the heuristics for analysing and comparing cultures.

 (Paige et al, 1998)

Jurasek (1995) emphasizes two further facets:

1) Consciousness-raising in regard to perception and perspective.

2) An ever-increasing ability to recognize at least in a limited way what things might look like from the viewpoint of members of another culture.

 (Jurasek 1995:228)

The main tenets are summed up thus by Crozet and Liddicoat:

1) Culture is not acquired through osmosis. It must be taught explicitly.

2) The bilingual/multilingual speaker is the norm.

3) Conceptual and experiential learning is required to acquire intercultural competence.

4) Roles of teachers and learners are redefined.

5) New approaches to language testing are needed to assess intercultural competence.

(Crozet and Liddicoat, 1999:120)

These directions, along with a concern for a balance between personal and cultural meanings will be integrated into our pedagogy of *languaculture*. The notion of a "third place" as defined by Kramsch (1993) will be adopted as a central theme for this thesis. In this section, we first examine "third places" or spaces in the first-hand accounts of bilinguals and adult border crossers. We will then discuss Kramsch's definition of the language learner's "third place", drawing on Bakhtin's notion of appropriation (Bakhtin 1981) to inform our argument.

1.6 Definitions of "third places"

> Living in France for 12 years has changed my mind, has opened it. Though I set store by my roots and still consider myself Chinese, I am different, not really Chinese, not really French. One day a friend compared me to a banana, he said that, like a banana, I am yellow outside but white inside. I was surprised by this comparison but now I have to admit that he was not entirely wrong. In 2000, a trip to China convinced me that I am different. I am at the intersection of two cultures, which has its advantages and drawbacks.
> Xiaoxia Xu 2002.
> (Extract from autobiographical essay for Web Page, first year ENST Bretagne student)

> Nearly everyone you know is an inbetweenee!
> (Liz Dobson 2003, Australian schoolgirl on a study visit in France)

1.6.1 The third places of bilinguals and border crossers

One of the major themes which emerges from both first-hand accounts and research on immersion and bilinguals is that of border-crossing between languages and cultures. Many

bilinguals, or adults having become bilingual, report feelings of occupying a place or a space between two languages. This space can have both positive and negative implications.

1.6.1.1 Destierro

For Esteban, a Franco-Spanish poet and academic writing in French, this space is a kind of *no-man's land* or *destierro*. Estaban feels that, during the difficult process of language acquisition, the monolingual child nevertheless gains confidence through the stability of signs, which bear witness to the stability of the concrete world. His experience as a bilingual child meant that:

> Dès les premiers moments de mon expérience balbutiante, il m'a fallu chercher *un chemin à travers deux idiomes* qui s'affrontaient dans mon esprit, m'imposant leurs directives divergentes, leurs codes et leurs déchiffrements singuliers.

> (Esteban, 1990: 10-11, emphasis added)

He goes on to explain this notion of *destierro*:

> Encore le terme présuppose-t-il en français comme l'idée d'une patrie d'où l'on serait exclu et qui perdure, hors de portée sans doute, mais toujours vivace [.....] j'arpentais une espèce de non-lieu, de *no man's land* de la présence auquel correspondrait mieux le mot espagnol de *destierro*. Oui, c'était une absence de toute terre, de toute assise substantielle, qu'il me fallait assumer au registre majeur de la conscience et du comportement [......] malmené par des courants adverses, déchiré d'impulsions impérieuses et contradictoires, je n'habitais qu'une incertitude.

> (Esteban, ibid: 20, emphasis in original)

For Alexakis, a Greek writer living in France, this space is like walking into the void in a nightmare:

> Parfois alors que j'avais cru trouver un équilibre entre deux pays et deux langues, j'ai eu la sensation que je marchais dans le vide. Comme dans un cauchemar, je me suis vu en train de traverser un gouffre sur un pont qui, en réalité, n'existait pas.[7]

> (Alexakis, 1989:18)

---

[7] Elsewhere, Alexakis speaks of creating his own territory, but even here, both languages belong to someone else."Le bilinguisme est quelquefois dur à assumer, mais je ne sens pas qu'il m'a appauvri [....] le grec est la langue de ma mère, le français celle de mes enfants. Je ne pense pas qu'il y a lieu de choisir [.....] peut-être ai-je trouvé dans les deux langues un territoire où je me sens moi-même." (Debate at the Institut Français in Athens, November 28, 1985, cited in Jouanny, 2000:162).

1.6.1.2 Strangers to ourselves

> L'aliénation à moi-même pour douloureuse qu'elle soit, me procure cette distance
> exquise où s'amorce aussi bien le plaisir pervers que ma possibilité d'imaginer et
> de penser l'impulsion de ma culture. Identité dédoublée de kaléidoscope
> d'identités: pouvons-nous être à nous-mêmes un roman-fleuve sans être reçus
> comme fous ou comme faux?
> (Kristeva, 1988: 25)

In this search for a space between two languages, Estaban felt like a stranger to himself.

This is also a recurrent theme in the accounts of bilinguals:

> Je demeurais pour moi un étranger par cette dualité des idiomes dont je percevais les
> antagonismes et qui me refusait, en toute contrée durable, espagnole ou française, un
> authentique enracinement. Seule l'expérience assidûment vécue d'une étrangeté, dirai-je d'une
> altérité à sa propre langue, peut rendre compte, au plus profond de l'esprit, de la notion d'exil.
>
> (Estaban, ibid: 19)

The notion of strangers, or foreigners, to ourselves,[8] "Etrangers à nous-mêmes", is the

actual title of Kristeva's exploration of otherness and foreignness. Kristeva, a psychoanalyst

and post-modern literary analyst, was born in Bulgaria in 1941 and moved to France in 1965.

For Kristeva, the foreigner caught between two languages, can find a refuge in silence,

what she terms *le silence des polyglottes*:

> Ainsi, entre deux langues, votre élément est-il le silence. A force de se dire de diverses
> manières tout aussi banales, tout aussi approximatives, ça ne se dit plus. Un savant de
> renommée internationale ironisait sur son fameux polyglottisme en disant qu'il parlait russe en
> quinze langues. J'avais, quant à moi, le sentiment qu'il était mutique et que ce silence étale le
> poussait parfois à chanter ou à rythmer des poèmes psalmodiés pour enfin dire quelque chose.
>
> (Kristeva, 1988: 27-28)

This temptation to remain silent is expressed by Maïlat, a poet with Hungarian and

Romanian parents who has lived in France since 1986:

> J'étais fatalement la Muette et une Autre L'Etrangère / barbouillée de sang / derrière les barbelés
> [.....] je dansais muette, toujours une autre.
>
> (Maïlat, 1999, cited in Jouanny, 2000:56)

---

[8] Both notions are encoded in the French term.

Another example of this feeling of alienation is taken from a study of the personal stories of border crossers, carried out by Pavlenko and Lantolf [9]. Having emigrated to the United States at the age of twenty, Mori returns to Japan twenty years later to find that she no longer has a Japanese voice:

> In Japanese, I don't have a voice for speaking my mind ….Trying to speak Japanese in Japan, I'm still thinking in English. I can't turn off what I really want to say and concentrate on what is appropriate. Flustered, I try to work out a quick translation, but my feelings are untranslatable and my voice is the voice of a foreigner.

(Mori 1997:16-17 cited in Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000: 166)

1.6.1.3 Changing from one language to another – rewriting the self

> I don't really feel as if I'm in France and I'm not really English either. I'm in a kind of limbo, but I've got good friends here and living here has given us a space to do what we wanted to do, to live as we wanted to as musicians.
> (Informal interview with Kevin Wright, blues musician from London, after 20 years in Brest, France, September 2000)

For the adult who changes from one language to another, this *no man's land*, also termed a space or *enclave*, can create a creative space between the self and language. This is eloquently expressed by the novelist, Silvia Baron Supervielle, who was born in Argentina in 1937 and came to Paris in 1960, as follows:

> […] lors de cette tentative d'écrire dans une langue extérieure – qui le restera toujours – je découvris entre elle et moi une sorte d'enclave dénudée où je me suis reconnue et que je choisis à l'instant comme lieu de travail. Ce *no man's land* discordant entre soi et la langue, comparable à la discordance entre soi et la vie, soi et les autres, soi et soi-même, fut pour moi la révélation d'un langage. A mesure que les gouttes s'égrenaient sur les feuilles, je me dépouillais des timbres de l'espagnol qui venaient à ma bouche et qui n'avaient plus de rapport avec la voix de l'enclave.

(Baron Supervielle, 1999: 59, cited in Jouanny, 2000: 96, emphasis in the text)

---

[9] Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000: 162-163) trace two phases in the discursive (re)construction of self. 1) *The phase of loss*, which is divided into five stages: loss of one's linguistic identity, loss of all subjectivities, loss of the frame of reference and the link between the signifier and the signified, loss of the inner voice, first language attrition 2) *the phase of recovery and (re)construction,* which has four stages: appropriation of others' voices, emergence of one's own new voice, often in writing first, translation therapy, reconstruction of one's past.

This separation from the mother tongue, seen as a wordless *zone désertique* can lead to rebirth and the rewriting of the self through the creative act:

Ce que j'écrivais ne ressemblait pas, dans la forme, aux textes en espagnol. D'une part, la méconnaissance de la langue me retenait, et, de l'autre, elle inaugurait devant moi une *zone désertique*, dépourvue de mots, qui m'attirait avec force. Si, en espagnol, mes poèmes s'allongeaient, rythmiques, voire avec des rimes, de la *zone désertique* émergeait un balbutiement, comme des signes, qui diffusait autour de moi le silence d'un espace jamais vu, jamais perçu. Quelque chose me dit: "C'est ici, ici je suis".

(Baron Supervielle, unpublished paper, cited in Jouanny, 2000: 99, emphasis added)

She goes on to say:

A mesure qu'elle me renvoyait mon portrait, la zone désertique devenait pour moi une arme de création. La possibilité m'était donnée de créer tout en même temps: la langue, la forme et son profil sur le blanc, un écrit sans genre préétabli, une musique inespérée. De la même manière, peuplant progressivement les papiers, les balbutiements me recréaient. Je renaissais non de ce côté de l'océan ni de l'autre: je renaissais de mon propre mystère.

(Baron Supervielle, cited in Jouanny, ibid: 99)

According to Pavlenko and Lantolf, (ibid) this discursive reconstruction of self represents one of the four stages of recovery and (re)construction which follow the initial phase of loss experienced by the adult border crosser. Their personal narratives:

represent a space where identities are reconstructed and life stories retold in the security of the double displacement granted by writing in a second language.

(Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000:162)

1.6.1.4 Dual identity

The question of dual identity also emerges as a major theme in several other studies, for example in a study carried out by Kanno (2000). Kanno reports on the experiences of four *kikokusnijo*, Japanese returnees, who return to Japan to study in university, after attending high school in Canada. The study investigates the bicultural identity of these *kikokushijo*, focusing particularly on questions of adjustment, belonging and dissociation. Kanno argues that eliciting student narrative allows multiple student voices to emerge and be legitimised.

The relationship between language, culture, and the self in the discursive performance of the self is explored in Koven's study (1998) of "Luso-descendants" (adult bilingual children of Portuguese immigrants living in France). Through the analysis of narratives of the same experience told in both languages, Koven concludes that the version of the self that emerges from the narrative is influenced by language and its accompanying social and cultural knowledge.

1.6.1.5 Double vision

This dual identity can have the advantage of a double perspective or vision. This is highlighted, for example, in the work of Li, a Chinese woman educated in China, who describes her development as an English-language academic writer in the United States. She focuses particularly on her experience of border crossing between two selves and the influence that having both an insider and outsider status has on her writing. Li concludes that:

> hovering between two worlds is not bad at all; it is a unique position, which endows me with a rare double vision, seeing the duality of reality, the truth and untruth in each culture's claim to universal standards.

(Li, 1996: xiii)

Similarly, Hoffman, (1989) in her highly acclaimed account of her life as a Polish immigrant in Canada, finds her double vision useful, particularly when analysing academic texts:

> But my particular kind of alienness serves me well too, for I soon discover that triangulation is a more useful tool in literary criticism than it is in life. As I read, I triangulate to my private criteria and my private passions, and from the oblique angle of my estrangement, I notice what's often invisible to my fellow students.

(Hoffman, 1989:183)

For the Iraki playwright, Naïm Kattan, who emigrated to Quebec, the word itself has become a home, from which he can observe his own transformation:

> Le mot est mon habitat, à moi, étranger; il m'octroie une personne seconde et je lui oppose un langage déjà metamorphosé qui surgit d'un univers enseveli et qui me transforme en spectateur

du nouveau langage qui me formule et me construit. Le mot est alors double, lumière et réflexion. Je suis le témoin de mes propres mouvements, je les surprends dans leur spontanéité.

(Kattan, 1971, 165-166)

Jouanny (2000) in his discussion of bilingual and non-native speaker writers of French, attributes the eloquence of writers such as Baron Supervielle to the heightened sensitivity born of translating the words:

Cette sensibilité à la caresse révélatrice des syllabes est sans doute particulièrement développée chez un étranger jouant avec une langue qui n'est pas la sienne et ne se découvrant à lui-même dans ce jeu significatif qu'après avoir traduit le langage de l'autre.

(Jouanny, 2000: 97)

According to Baron Supervielle, the act of translation itself creates a third place or country between the two languages:

La traduction littéraire ressemble à l'amour: même quête, même mystère, même offrande. Les deux versions se recherchent, s'échangent, s'accouplent. Le traducteur s'insère délicatement dans le texte afin de ne pas troubler l'ambiance qui s'en dégage [...] Deux langues l'intruisent. Le pays incréé naît à une troisième langue sans nom et à un texte qui n'appartient plus à personne.

(Baron Supervielle, ibid: 81-82, cited in Jouanny, ibid: 98)

Again, this process can be deeply alienating:

The sense of distance, estrangement and a level of alienation is a common experience of translators who find themselves between languages, suspended in the working space of equivalence.

(Cronin 1996: 5)

However, the new identity created by the foreign language can also be liberating:

Ecrire en français, ce fut me libérer. Geste matricide. Quitter l'enfer: cette langue est devenue mon seul territoire. Désormais je ne rêve plus qu'en français.

(Kristeva cited in Jouanny, ibid: 41)

1.6.2. Kramsch's "third place" for language learners

> The interesting part about travelling is meeting people who have been brought up in a different culture. Because you learn what you've got in common, and what you have not. It makes you think about what is universal in mankind. And it also makes you think more critically about the way you have lived so far, about these things you never thought about and which seem so natural. The beauty of it is that you feel as if you had just been born again. You have to learn everything from scratch again, or at least have to think about all that is so deep inside yourself. That may explain why people who travel regularly are said to be young. Your mind suddenly breathes fresh air and picks up details that you could not distinguish any more. It is as if you had been enclosed in a house for years and were allowed to get out again, all your senses feeling thousands of stimuli at once.
> The Magic of Travelling -Jean Espigat, 2002.
> (Extract from essay by a third year ENST Bretagne student, after one year spent on a work experience programme in Melbourne, Australia.)

> Already one and a half months in Australia for me and I have the sensation that time is flying too fast. [...] I have experienced my first rather warm sunny winter. So here you can have picnics, go to the beach, go kayaking,... at any time and (almost) always with the sun shining! Not only was the weather "shocking" at first, but also the way of life, the architecture, the food... It seems as though I have to learn how to live again.
> Cyril Sadr-Kannelou, 2002
> (Extract from news letter written by a third year ENST Bretagne student on a work experience programme in Australia.)

1.6.2.1 Betwixt and between

Kramsch (1993) points out that the stories of this increasing number of border crossers create a "common stock of narratives" which can help the story-tellers to make sense of the joy and pain involved in such experiences. Others also can be helped to see that there are various frames of reference, which can be used to describe events and different stories to tell.

For Kramsch, the testimonies of "culturally displaced persons" who have emigrated to another country:

> give voice to feelings of being forever 'betwixt and between', no longer at home in their original culture, nor really belonging to the host culture.
>
> (Kramsch, ibid: 234)

However, from these shared stories, a kind of third culture, which goes beyond a dichotomous boundary between the first and second culture, can begin to emerge. This "third

place" is not restricted to the crossing of geographical borders, but can also represent

differences within one's first culture:

> But these feelings of being on the fence, so to speak, are only a particularly dramatic manifestation of social ruptures that have always existed within seemingly homogenous families and other social and ethnic groups, as soon as an individual crosses the lines of race, social class, gender expectations, or sexual preferences. 'Growing into one's own' is by essence recognizing the faultlines in the social fabric, admitting for example that even though we are of the same nationality and social class, 'my' country may not be 'your' country and your understanding of the social class might not be the same as mine.

> (Kramsch, ibid: 234)

This "third place" is reminiscent of Bhabba's liminality model (Bhabba 1994) where

cultural identities are negotiated across differences of race, class, gender and tradition in an

interstitial "third space".

1.6.2.2 Border crossing for language learners

The border crossing experienced by "culturally displaced persons" can also be felt,

albeit in a less dramatic way, by language learners, as we will see in Section 1.6.2.4.

Kramsch, like many other contemporary educators, views the teaching of cultural context as

the core of language teaching. However, she stresses that this does not involve a search for

bridges between the learner's first language and culture and the target language and culture

but for an understanding of the boundaries:

> This approach involves dialogue. Through dialogue and the search for each other's understanding, each person tries to see the world through the other's eyes without losing sight of him or herself. The goal is not a balance of opposites, or a moderate pluralism of opinions but a paradoxical, irreducible confrontation that may change one in the process.

> (Kramsch 1993:231)

Kramsch emphasizes the fact that this "third place" cannot be defined by the teacher,

but that each individual learner will need to find their own "third place", where learners are

positioned "at the intersection of multiple social roles and individual choices" (Kramsch, 1993: 257). This vantage point enables them to:

> view the two irreducible perspectives in a dialogic relationship that respects their contradictory nature and hopes for a personal resolution through dialogue.
>
> (Kramsch, ibid: 230)

If we look at the "third place" from a social semiotic perspective, this search for a personal resolution between the two perspectives represents:

> the struggle of the language learner to find and carve out his or her own place in a speech community dominated by the myth of the native cultural speaker.
>
> (Kramsch, ibid: 236)

Kramsch, quoting de Certeau, suggests that this struggle can be compared to the *bricolage* or making do (Lévi-Strauss 1962; Bastide 1970; de Certeau 1984; Fiske 1989) of North African immigrants who create a space for themselves within the French system, which is imposed on them.

> Making do (or bricolage) means constructing our space within and against their place, of speaking our meanings with their language.
>
> (de Certeau 1984: 18, cited in Kramsch 1993: 237)

In a similar way, in the popular culture of the language classroom, learners constantly search for ways to use the foreign language to express their own meanings. An analysis of multiple social and discursive roles and positioning will inform our discussion of our students' interaction through videoconferences and e-mails in chapter four.

1.6.2.3 Appropriation-making do with words

> The French I speak today is a ragbag of influences: the correct politenesses of the rituals of daily family life; the paraphrasing and archaisms of the novels by Gide and Mauriac I read as an adolescent; the utterances of relatives; the slang words taught me by my young cousins. "Bits of French buzz out of books of poems and stick on me. *Douce mélancolie et harmonie du soir. Mais priez Dieu que tous nous veuille absoudre. Homme libre, toujours tu chériras la mer. De la musique avant toute chose. Poète, prends ton luth. Rappelle-toi, Barbara.*
> (Michèle Roberts, 1994)

Both socialisation in the foreign language, "tertiary socialisation", and self-expression are important facets of language learning. As Kramsch puts it:

> The struggle between the desire of students to appropriate the foreign language for their own purposes, and the responsibility of the teacher for socializing them into a linguistically and socioculturally appropriate behavior lie at the core of the educational enterprise. Both are necessary for pleasurable and effective language learning. The good teacher fosters both compliance and rebellion.

(Kramsch, ibid: 246)

This notion of appropriation, or ventriloquation, is an integral component of Bakhtinian dialogue. In order to engage in dialogue, one must be able to apprehend, internalise, and recreate the utterances of others. For Bakhtin:

> Language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes 'one's own' only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, where he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention.

(Bakhtin 1981: 293)

Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral, impersonal way; conversation does not come straight out of the dictionary but words exist:

> in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions. It is from there that one must take the word and make it one's own.

(Bakhtin ibid: 294)

This is not an easy process in one's own language; some words do not ring true when spoken by some speakers, as Bakhtin says:

> many words stubbornly resist, others remain alien, sound foreign in the mouth of the one who appropriated them and now speaks them.

(Bakhtin, ibid: 294)

This is clearly much more so when it is a foreign language, particularly within the constraints of an institutional educational context, when this act of appropriation is witnessed by the teacher and a group of peers.

The act of ventriloquation is described particularly vividly in the following extract from Hoffmann's *'Lost in Translation'*. Hoffman has been through the stages of loss

identified by Pavlenko and Lantolf (Section 1.6.1.2) and is beginning the phase of

(re)construction of self through the appropriation of other's voices:

> All around me, the Babel of American voices, hardy midwestern voices, sassy New York
> voices, quick youthful voices, voices arching under the pressure of various crosscurrents ....
> Since I lack a voice of my own, the voices of others invade me as if I were a silent
> ventriloquist. They ricochet within me, carrying out conversations, lending me their
> modulations, intonations, rhythms. I do not yet possess them, they possess me. But some of
> them satisfy a need; some of them stick to my ribs ... Eventually, the voices enter me; by
> assuming them, I gradually make them mine.

(Hoffman, ibid:219-220)

For the student in the language class, the act of appropriation will hopefully not be so

dramatic or painful, although language study can lead some students to profound questions

about their identity both as learners and as human beings. Furthermore, as Dufeu suggests in

his Pedagogy of Being:

> To speak another language requires a physical transformation of how we talk, our body rhythm,
> and our way of breathing. It also calls for a different structuring of thought and the world,
> another perception, another understanding of the world of the speaker of the foreign language.
> To enter a foreign language is to enter a foreign world.

(Dufeu, 1994: 35)

Some students may be reluctant, or even afraid to appropriate the words of this foreign

world, as Davis and Rinvolucri (1990) put it in *The Confidence Book*:

> It would seem that a student needs to get over the shock of meeting a new word or phrase. The
> person needs to domesticate it, tame it, make it their own before venturing to use it.

(Davis and Rinvolucri 1990:16)

So they can learn to do this, we need, as Kramsch reminds us, to help our students

make do with words:

> Rather than doing things with words, speaking in a foreign language is making do with a
> limited amount of someone else's words. That, not unlimited speech acts, is the reality of the
> language classroom. Teaching the spoken language is teaching resourcefulness, imagination,
> and effective poaching on all levels of meaning available.

(Kramsch, ibid: 246)

1.6.2.4 Strangers to ourselves or behaving as other people while remaining ourselves?

> Words don't come easy and I make more mistakes when I try to translate these
> languages, perhaps because of the different point of view and culture of these
> countries. So I can't stay the same when I speak these languages. If I try to speak
> Vietnamese without mixing some French words, I can't but I don't make it
> voluntarily and then some vocabularies don't come automatically. Actually, I
> don't think I speak very well any of these languages. Isn't that a little sad for me?
> Rémi, second year ENST Bretagne student, 2001.

> En anglais je me sens plus poétique et plus libre, la logique anglaise semble plus
> proche de la mienne. Le français littéraire me fait peur, il m'a été enseigné comme
> quelque chose d'intouchable et d'inaccessible, je n'y ai jamais rien compris. En
> anglais, je me prends pour John Lennon, je change de peau.
> Emmanuelle, second year ENST Bretagne student, 2001.

As we have seen, border crossing into the "third place" can lead some speakers to feel

that they are strangers or foreigners to themselves. For some, learning a foreign language can

be a deeply disturbing experience:

> A person's general attitude towards the unknown, the strange and the foreign is revealed when
> learning a foreign language. For some, the response may be curiosity, interest in the new, and
> the desire to experiment; others will be anxious about being lost in an unknown world; for
> others the foreign language can represent a form of aggression and become synonymous with
> risk or danger.

(Dufeu, 1994: 35-36)

However, this experience can also be liberating:

> In a new language we can try fresh experiences, behave differently, experience attitudes and
> reactions we never dared to adopt in our first language.[..]The foreign language can also act like
> a mask, allowing us to behave as other people while remaining ourselves. [..] the new language
> can be a doorway opening on to another perception of oneself and one's inner life; this other
> perception can bring me nearer to defining who I am. The 'other' highlights my particular way
> of being and has the function of a mirror.

(Dufeu, ibid: 36)

Kramsch and von Hoene (1994) use a combination of feminist critical theory and

Bakhtinian theory to argue for the development of a critical double-voiced discourse for the

foreign language classroom. This perspective seeks to integrate knowledge about different

cultures, classes and contexts with:

> critical scrutiny of one's own subject position and the many discursive voices that such a
> position entails.

(Kramsch and von Hoene, 1994:381)

The language class is seen as the site for the emergence of difference and double-voiced discourse, where a combination of otherness in others and otherness in oneself is integrated to form the new cross-cultural personality:

> [...] the notion of single-voiced and double-voiced discourse have the advantage of addressing the issue of otherness both as external to the learner, in the form of peers, teacher, and native speakers, and as internal to the new cross-cultural personality the learner develops as she/he grows into another way of naming the world. Single-voiced discourse is a talk style in which the speaker adheres to her or his viewpoint without perceiving the need to acknowledge and revise this stance by exploring the possible conflicting voices within and without. In the foreign language classroom, for example, single-voiced discourse would not encourage American learners to see themselves as they may be perceived from the perspective of another culture or as others in the classroom may see them. When speaking with a single voice, learners stand within their usual way of speaking, even though they speak foreign words; they do not recognize that the interaction with another language and culture may put in question their usual way of expressing the world around them.

(Kramsch and von Hoene, 1994:381)

Kramsch and Hoene (1994:380) suggest that this double-voiced discourse can involve both a recognition of the other in self and the self from the position of the other. This can lead to a dialogical process based on what Kristeva calls the 'subject in process', where the subject is continually changed by the 'stranger within':

> Vivre avec l'autre, avec l'étranger, nous confronte à la possibilité où non d'être un autre. Il ne s'agit pas simplement-humanistement- de notre aptitude à accepter l'autre; mais d'être à sa place, ce qui revient à se penser et se faire autre à soi-même.

(Kristeva, 1988: 25)

Adopting a double-voiced discourse is not always easy, as we have seen. Kramsch (1993) stresses that learners often feel powerless within the constraints of the linguistic rules of the foreign language and its rules of use, as well as the restrictions of the socialisation patterns in their own culture. However, carving out a "third place" can challenge hitherto taken for granted meanings:

> From the clash between the familiar meanings of the native culture and the unexpected meanings of the target culture, meanings that were taken for granted are suddenly questioned, challenged, problematized. Learners have to construct their personal meanings at the boundaries between the native speaker's meanings and their own everyday life.

(Kramsch, 1993: 238)

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Creating their own meanings from the foreign language can be a source of great pleasure for students:

> For example, much of the value of using real-life texts to teach foreign languages may be found in the pleasure it gives learners to poach, so to speak, on someone else's linguistic and cultural territory. This pleasure is akin to that of spies and actors: eavesdropping on someone else's dialogue, understanding a message that was not intended for them, using a language that is not understood by others, passing for native speakers, blending in the mass, pretending to be someone else, all these elemental pleasures make up a great deal of the fun of reading and viewing non-pedagogical materials.

(Kramsch, ibid: 239)

1.6.2.5 Third places through reading and writing

The potential of written language, of both foreign language reading materials, and foreign language writing authored by the learner, for creating a kind of third place for the non-native reader and speaker is explored by Kramsch and Lam (1999). Their analysis draws on Peirce's 1995 study of a class of five women immigrants in Canada, which provided evidence of the complex relationship between social identity, investment, and language learning. The women's reflection on themselves, and on their relationship to the English language developed through their diary writing. According to Kramsch and Lam (1999), this study was a testimony to the value of writing in promoting the women's awareness of their multiple identities. Documenting one's experiences in the foreign language fosters the creation of a textual identity for the language learner, which in turn helps the language learner develop the personal and social identity needed for survival in the foreign country. Kramsch and Lam also cite Hoffman, who begins to reposition herself and her experiences through the act of writing a diary in English:

> I learn English through writing, and, in turn, writing gives me a written self...This language is beginning to invent another me.

(Hoffmann, 1989: 121)

Here the "third place" both constructs a new identity and allows the non-native to express meanings not necessarily available to the native writer:

> We have seen that textuality itself can serve as a catalyst for expressing thoughts and experiences unique to the non-native speaker and to his or her place between native and non-native cultures.

(Kramsch and Lam, ibid: 64)

Kramsch and Lam stress that the third, in-between place is a dynamic one, between the old and new identity, a "constantly maintained sense of difference". They cite Chiellino, who states:

> Difference is the source of creativity which is lost as soon as the boundary between the familiar and the foreign is blurred.

(Chiellino 1995:51, cited in Kramsch and Lam, ibid: 64)

1.6.2.6 Insiders and outsiders

> How simple they have thought! Compared with that man and his family, Liang,
> the new mandarin is like a piece of rice, so tiny!
> Yao Bin, second year ENST Bretagne student, 2001.

> You have the good, you have the very good haircut!
> Karima, second year ENST Bretagne student, 2001.

The kind of triangulation provided by the double vision felt by Li or Hoffmann, which we discussed in the previous section, can be experienced, to a lesser extent, by the classroom foreign language learner. Kramsch (1993) recommends that teachers help learners to develop this third perspective so that they can adopt both an insider's and outsider's view:

> [..] is it not the privilege of the language learner to understand and poach on the target culture without automatically contributing to its construction? The ability of the learner to behave both as an insider and an outsider to the speech community whose language he or she is learning, depends on his or her understanding of the cultural situation.

(Kramsch, 1993: 210)

As Lantolf and Pavlenko put it:

> people are agents in charge of their own learning, and most frequently they decide to learn their second language 'to a certain extent' which allows them to be proficient, even fluent but without the consequences of losing the old and adopting new ways of being in the world.

(Lantolf and Pavlenko, 2000: 162)

1.7 Third places through telecollaboration

> It was only when I arrived here that I realized all the consequences of my field of study. Telecommunications are about all kinds of communications between people. And that is why it is so important nowadays. Everything is going faster, everybody needs enormous quantities of information. The Internet and the mobile telephone are the two revolutionary technologies which are changing the face of our world. This is what makes telecommunications so interesting. You can change the view that people have of the world [..] As for my future goals, I would like to be able to use my diploma to build networks for the clients I will be working for, and turn their wishes into reality. The reason is simple: I like to connect people. The telecommunications field is the best way to do so.
> (Marc, December 1999 group, ENST Bretagne student. Extract from award-winning essay (Nortel Networks Scholarship).

In this section, we introduce the notion of a virtual third place, briefly describe the different uses and metaphors for the use of computers and other technologies in language teaching and finally discuss the potential for *sociomedia* to reorganise attitudes to knowledge and to create stepping-stones on the way to a "third place".

1.7.1 Third places in cybercommunities

One approach to the appropriation of the multiple perspectives of the "third place" can be provided by access to peer groups who represent the L2C2 under study. This can now be achieved through the use of new technologies, such as e-mail, chat rooms, net-meetings and videoconferencing. As Kelm (1996), discussing the role of *telecollaboration* in foreign language teaching puts it:

> On balance, the implementation of electronic networks has the potential to assist language instructors in reaching their goal of bringing individuals together so that they might communicate across linguistic boundaries.

(Kelm, 1996: 19)

The metaphor of "third places" has also been used by cybersociologists to explain the popularity of cybercommunities. Hamman uses an argument based on the sociologist Oldenburg's analysis of the demise, particularly in American society, of "the core settings of informal public life", "third places" such as pubs, churches, the corner shop, the village pump, where people of differing backgrounds can meet in an unplanned way, on neutral

ground. Hamman suggests that many people are looking to cybercommunities to create new third places (Hamman Accessed from the net 1/3/2002). While the mutually constructed virtual classroom is hardly unplanned, the success of this project relies heavily on personal engagement by the students, outside the boundaries of the classroom. Virtual third places providing access to native speaker peers are one way to help students to find their own linguistic and cultural third place.

1.7.2 From "computer-as-tutor" to "computer-as-tool" or "computer-as medium".

As Warschauer and Kern (2000) indicate, the changes in the use of computers in language classrooms can be compared to the developments in language teaching that we traced in Section 1.2. The move from structural to cognitive to sociocognitive orientations is paralleled in the development from mainframe to personal to networked computers. These developments correspond roughly to a tutorial metaphor (computer-as tutor) a construction metaphor (computer-as-pupil) and a toolbox metaphor (computer-as-tool) (Crook 1994).[10]

The aims of the three models are summed up in the table below.

	Structural	*Cognitive*	*Sociocognitive*
What is the principal role of computers?	To provide unlimited drill, practice, tutorial explanation, and corrective feedback	To provide language input and analytic and inferential tasks	To provide alternative contexts for social interaction; to facilitate access to existing discourse communities and the creation of new ones

The role of CALL in structural, cognitive and sociocognitive frameworks

(Warschauer and Kern, 2000:13)

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[10] Clearly, as with other teaching approaches, a diachronic development can be traced, but in contemporary teaching all three metaphors can be in use at different times and can be appropriated in different ways, depending on teacher, student and institutional attitudes to learning (Warschauer 2000: 56-57).

For Meskill and Ranglova (2000) transmission models of teaching and learning see

machines as "delivery systems for instruction" (or computer as tutor) where:

> responsibility for a set of information and the transmission of that information is perceived as
> residing in the medium, with the learner cast in the role of recipient of a body of knowledge on
> which she is drilled and tested. .
>
> (Meskill and Ranglova, 2000:23)

They recommend a technology mediated model which:

> places machines within carefully crafted social contexts for learning where student-constructed
> knowledge is essential. The role of technology is as a tool, resource and catalyst for socially
> constructed knowledge and understanding.
>
> (Meskill and Ranglova, ibid: 23)

Similarly, Cole and Griffin (1987) suggest moving from a metaphor of "computer as

agent", where the one to one relationship between computer and student mirrors the

relationship between student and teacher, to a metaphor of "computer as medium", as a

means to connect with other people and worlds.

1.7.3 Sociomedia

The term *sociomedia* was coined by Edward Barrett in a conference entitled 'The

Social Creation of Knowledge' at MIT in 1991 (Barrett 1992). Barrett makes the point that

multimedia applications are themselves social constructs, which exist for social purposes,

even when an individual sits in front of a computer and seemingly speaks to him or herself:

> *Sociomedia* suggests that computer media exist for "social" purposes as means to objectify,
> exchange and collaborate, invoke, comment upon, modify and remember thoughts and ideas
> (including "information") [..]'*Sociomedia*' implies that these social purposes obtain even when
> an individual sits in front of a computer and in essence talks to herself.
>
> (Barrett, 1992: 1)

Barrett expresses his distrust of Skinnerian reductionism; theories of learning which

equate thinking with the accumulation of bits of information or with purely associational acts

of mind. Instead, he adopts Vygotsky's view of learning as going beyond mere associational

complexes of facts:

> For Vygotsky the higher functions of thought were movements (and notice the fluid metaphor
> he uses to characterize thought - moving, transformative, dynamic, changing, not fixed) "aimed
> at another person, a means of establishing relations", a synthesizing of "objects" and
> "complexes of objects" into something new, a thought embodied in the highly charged and
> fluid medium of language.
>
> (Barrett, ibid: 3)

Barrett (ibid:3) compares thinking to the casting of the net of language,which both

groups many things, is articulated to an audience and receives a response. Thought is not

viewed as static, fixed and private but fluid, subject to revision and social.

He stresses that *sociomedia* should be used to stimulate and support educational

processes, rather than to attempt to "program the computer to program the student" (ibid: 9).

Computer applications are seen as:

> A kind of extended conversation among knowledgeable peers, a conversation that can extend
> infinitely backward (through other recorded texts) and infinitely horizontally through a network
> of individuals currently making up a culture or subculture.
>
> (Barrett, ibid: 9)

Using this definition, we concentrate on the social and meaning-making functions of

new technologies, moving outward from the machine to "the complex interaction of human

relationships" (Barrett, ibid:9).

Warschauer and Kern (ibid: 1) make similar observations in their presentation of what

they call *"Networked –based language teaching"* (NBLT), which they define as:

> language teaching that involves the use of computers connected to one another in either local or
> global networks.

This network-based approach represents "a new and different side to CALL, where

human-human communication is the focus" (Warschauer and Kern ibid: 1). They also

emphasise the mutually constitutive nature of the appropriation of computer networks:

> These new technologies do not only *serve* the new teaching/learning paradigms, they also *shape* the new paradigms. The very existence of networked computers creates possibilities for new forms of communication.

(Warschauer and Kern, ibid: 12)

1.7.4 Changes in epistemic roles leading to changes in attitudes to learning

For Cole and Griffin, (1987) Computer-mediated Communication, or CMC, shows the potential of computers to both reorganise classroom instruction and to extend learning beyond the classroom. This view is widely illustrated by the examples of projects which will be given in Section 1.8 and will be further supported by our analysis in Chapter 4, where we discuss how *sociomedia* can provide students with opportunities to take on "significant and serious epistemic roles" (Nystrand, 1997).

Other researchers (Slatin 1992; Goldman-Segall 1992) continue Barrett's discussion of *sociomedia,* stressing the fact that using technologies such as e-mail and interactive websites, where learners feel they are active participants in a mutually constructed, on-going conversation, adding layers of meaning to each other's readings and stories, can provide an alternative to the still prevalent instructionist approach. For instance, Slatin, describing an e-mail exchange project, points out that the very fact of writing one's ideas for a larger public than those present in the classroom changes attitudes, both to relationships and to knowledge itself:

> The transformation of traditionally ephemeral classroom talk into text by means of interactive written discourse does not simply reorganize knowledge of subject matter then. It changes relationships among people by changing their relationship to knowledge. It makes metaknowledge both possible and necessary. Metaknowledge as I said earlier is [...] knowledge of themselves as participants in an evolving, on-going conversation, participants who can intervene in that conversation and affect both its content and its direction.

(Slatin, 1992: 32)

Goldman-Segall describes the role of the ethnographic multimedia tool, *Learning Constellations*, in helping one young girl to become a social creator of meaning. She suggests that *sociomedia* can be used to produce an environment that fosters:

connectedness, independence, intimacy, co-operation and multiple points of view.

(Goldman-Segall, 1992:257)

Multimedia tools can both promote the making of discoveries and communicate those discoveries, in a recursive process or "thickening" (Geertz 1973):

Users communicate with the travels of other users; they return to the place once visited to find that others have added new levels of understanding to what they had selected as significant .... this process of being able to enter into the significant segments of others and to create meaning for oneself based on the meaning assigned by other users creates a communal construction of meaning.

(Goldman-Segall, ibid: 259)

This view of the role of *sociomedia* can be applied both to the understandings of students and that of the multiple layers of understanding arrived at during the research process, as we will discuss in chapter four (Goldman-Segall, 1995, 1998).

Bearing these factors in mind, our focus in this study will thus centre on *sociomedia* or *network-based language teaching* with a sociocognitive orientation. This computer as tool or medium metaphor will stress the role of computers as mediational tools, shaping our interaction with the world and providing students, to extend Rommetveit's definition of intersubjectivity, with access to a *temporarily shared social world* (Rommetveit, 1974: 29). or a virtual third place. This metaphor will also have implications for the kind of research methods used (Chapter 3).

1.8 Recent developments in the field

1.8.1 Computer-as-medium projects

According to Kern (1996), the "computer- as- medium" metaphor, which we described in Section 1.7.2 is being increasingly adopted by foreign language educators. He cites examples of several successful projects. Some of these studies found a greater balance in participation among students in computer mode than in the classroom, whereas others reported the use of more lexically and syntactically complex language than in face-to face communication. For instance, a telecommunications project between two French classes at Stanford and Harvard, where the students engaged in a cooperative venture to produce a newspaper, Le Pont Français, was reported to have huge benefits for students' attitudes to learning:

> The focus is shifted from 'you did this wrong' to 'you can do this better' with some help from the teacher, from friends, or on your own, or from the crisscrossing sectors of the electronic classroom community, made possible by the instrumentality of the computer.

(Barson, 1991:109)

Similar positive results were reported by Lunde (1990) whose American students in a Japanese composition class corresponded by e-mail with native speakers at the University of Tokyo. He concluded that there was a:

> marked improvement in their character production, reading comprehension and word processing skills in the target language.

(Lunde 1990:76)

Soh and Soon (1991) describe a collaborative study of literary texts between a group of students who:

> learnt to look at and assess their work and the work of others from different perspectives; [..] gained a rich insight into each other's lives and the culture of their respective countries; [...] gained a better understanding of the use of the computer as a communicative as well as learning tool.

(Soh and Soon, 1991: 288)

Cononenlos and Oliva (1993) describe another small-scale but interesting study, where American advanced level students of Italian discussed cultural issues with native speakers via an Internet newsgroup. The project was found to develop enthusiasm, greater confidence and better writing skills.

Finally, Kern reports on a composition course called Borders and Boundaries where American and overseas students corresponded on a Listserv:

> The aim of the course is to present argument and research as techniques for negotiating and mediating the boundary areas between individuals, social groups, cultures and nations.

(Kern, 1996: 110)

1.8.2 Challenges

In a more recent volume, Warschauer and Kern (2000) observe that there have been a number of studies which make quantitative comparisons between the amount of participation in face-to-face and computer assisted communication (Kern 1995; Sullivan and Pratt 1996; Warschauer 1996). However, there are very few published studies that examine in depth the development of discourse and discourse communities in on-line environments. According to Warschauer (ibid), there is a need for investigations of negotiation of meaning in CMC, as well as ethnographic studies which consider the

> complex interaction of social, cultural and individual factors that shape the language learning experience.

(Waschauer, 2000:41)

Crookall, Coleman and Oxford (1992) and Chapelle, Jamieson and Park (1996) also call for more extensive, comprehensive and context-based studies.

Warschauer and Kern (ibid: 14) remark that many reported studies have used narrow slices of data, where students' use of particular discourse features is discussed, using a production oriented structuralist approach. Others have been informal, anecdotal reports by

teachers of what happens in their classrooms. They point out the need for the body of NBLT research to be expanded to take into account the areas of context, interaction and multimedia networking.

1.8.3 New directions

One study of particular interest included in Warschauer and Kern's volume adopts a sociocollaborative approach. Meskill and Ranglova (2000) carried out a longitudinal study of telecollaboration between students studying on an EFL course in Sofia, Bulgaria, and TESOL graduate students in Albany, New York, USA, who shared their interpretations of the same text through e-mail. The telecollaborative group showed significant gains, compared to the control group, in formal tests of reading and writing skills. Their oral skills were also reported to have improved. The researchers concluded that the students using telecommunications were not only connected to the language and culture being studied, but collaborated with others to contruct new understandings. For Meskill and Ranglova, these new understandings had far-reaching consequences which challenged traditional book-based or lecture-based language lessons and encouraged the production of language in its cultural context (Meskill and Ranglova, 2000: 35-36).

The project also radically changed student and teacher attitudes to learning. Students experienced increased motivation and learning became collaborative, rather than the teacher-centred model generally favoured in Bulgaria:

> Outcomes of the revised curriculum consistently point to the viability of technologies as tools to support language learning goals and the sociocollaborative processes that promote them. More instructive, however, may be the role that technologies came to play in catalyzing philosophical change on the part of students and their teachers (.....) To a great extent, the technologies utilized played a key role in bringing about new ways of using and thinking about language, especially in terms of student autonomy, student-student collaboration and teacher participation.
>
> (Meskill and Ranglova, ibid: 35)

This thesis provides evidence of similar influences on student motivation and changes in the locus of control.

Warschauer (ibid) describes a 2-year ethnographic study of on-line learning in Hawaii, where he found that outcomes differed according to the teaching philosophy of the teacher involved in the project. He recommended that, for the most effective use, electronic learning activities should:

> a) be learner-centered with students having a fair amount of control over their planning and implementation, (b) be based on authentic communication in ways rhetorically appropriate for the medium (c) be tied to making some real difference in the world or the students' place in it, and (d) provide students an opportunity to explore and express their evolving identity.
>
> (Warschauer, ibid: 57)

These criteria are integrated into the project behind this thesis.

Kern (1996:110) describes a project between an elementary second semester French group at Berkeley, who used family histories to correspond via e-mail with a group of French lycée students. The French students had recently won a prize for their book "L'histoire, mon histoire." The French project had been reported on national television, where it was praised for giving a voice to members of immigrant families. The Berkeley students, who were also of diverse backgrounds first read the stories and then answered the following questions:

Who am I?

What does Berkeley represent for me?

What do I expect from this correspondence?

Why did I pick the particular story I told and not another one?

Kern suggests balancing formal essays with e-mail messages, which are shorter and more informal, which is a procedure we also adopted with our students. He reports on one dyad, whose questions and answers are both thoughtful and informative, providing each other with cultural content and linguistic input. Benefits provided by the course include

consciousness raising of the students' own historical identity and cultural learning, where the students are not restricted to textbook descriptions. They also learnt about real families, with their particular social backgrounds, traditions and perspective on the world (Kern, ibid: 118).

Kern expresses the wish to take into consideration the dialogic quality of discourse and "not only the *what* of students' beliefs, attitude, and opinions but also the *why*"(ibid: 117). He concludes that:

> e-mail is an important tool in foreign language education. It allows learners to communicate directly with native speakers for a real purpose and about substantive issues, thus supporting both language and content learning. Moreover, because of its written form, - communication permits focussed retrospective analysis and reflection on the communicative act itself, potentially leading students to greater awareness of how language is used in social discourse.

(Kern, ibid: 118)

Another project of particular relevance to our enterprise is the *Cultura project*, which involves groups of students from MIT and the Institut National des Télécommunications (INT), one of ENST Bretagne's partner schools. This project uses similar stimuli to promote cultural awareness and learning and has comparable aims:

> As can be inferred from the above description, this methodology requires a new pedagogy, one in which culture is not reduced to a series of facts to be learnt about the other country and in which knowledge is not based on just being "taught" what American or French cultures are like. It is rather an interactive process that comes about via the exchange of diverse materials – raw or mediated- by multiple partners: learners, teachers, other students, other teachers, and experts. This multiplicity of voices is meant to lead users, under the skilful guidance of a teacher, to gradually construct and refine their own understanding of the other culture in a continuous and never-ending process. Nothing is ever engraved in stone. Rather, understandings are either confirmed, questioned, or contradicted in the light of new materials being studied and discussed.

(Furstenberg, et al, 2001)

The *Cultura* team have created a database of semantic associations and sentence completion or reactions to situations, also based on insights from texts and films, including 'Cultural Misunderstandings'. For instance, students react (in their mother tongue) to situations such as:

> A good neighbour is someone who/un bon voisin est quelqu'un qui ….

> or : A mother slaps her child in the supermarket/une mère gifle son enfant au supermarché.

Students also share their insights about cultural differences on an Internet forum, something we had tried with our students with mixed success. However, although reports of the project also refer to videoconferences, they are not the main focus of the group interaction and no informal partnerships are set up.

Another interesting virtual classroom project, TECHNE, also involves students from the Institut National des Télécommunications in Evry, France, and a partner group from Dublin City University (Donohoe and Blin 1999; Blin and Donohoe 2000). The project is interdisciplinary, integrating management and engineering projects into the language class. The two groups work on collaborative tasks, using both asynchronous and synchronous communications, via the Topclass Distance Learning software and videoconferencing. Positive outcomes are reported, particularly in terms of student motivation and the creation of a community of learners where teachers work alongside students. The students who participated in this bilingual project also expressed a wish to have more time to communicate on a social level, both in the chatrooms and during the videoconferences, an issue addressed in this thesis.

Although there is an increasing number of such projects, as Warschauer and Kern point out, there is a particular dearth of research on combining a variety of media in network-based learning, which is such a new area that almost no research has yet been published (Warschauer and Kern, ibid: 16).

In this thesis, I report on research on a multimedia project, taking into account both the sociocultural context and the effects of such media on student interaction. By presenting multiple perspectives and voices: my own, those of the eight groups of students and of my two colleagues, and by integrating an analytical framework, based on the work of Vygotsky, Bakhtin and activity theorists, as well as the immanentist perspective of Harré and Gillet

(Chapter 3), I hope to contribute to the body of work which adopts the framework outlined by

Warschauer and Kern:

> To understand the full impact of new forms of interacting in the language classroom, we must look beyond the texts of interaction to the broader contextual dynamics that shape and are shaped by those texts. This entails holistic, qualitative research that goes beyond inventories of linguistic features and attempts to account for the way classroom cultures take shape over time.
>
> (Warschauer and Kern, ibid: 15)

CHAPTER 2: FRAMEWORKING LANGUAGE AND CULTURE FOR THE CLASSROOM: TOWARDS A MODEL FOR TELECOLLABORATIVE TEACHING

2.1 Introduction

Various theoreticians have posited definitions of culture where language plays a significant role (Boas [1911] 1966, 1943; Kroeber [1923] 1963; Sapir [1929] 1949; Whorf [1940] 1956; Eastman, [1941] 1990; Heidegger 1962; Lévi-Strauss, 1962; Gumperz and Hymes 1964; Hegel 1967; Sapir and Crocker 1977; Vygotsky 1978; Bakhtin 1981; Gumperz 1982; Wertsch 1985a, 1985b; Gumperz and Levinson 1996; Duranti 1997). A detailed analysis of the different views of *language in culture* (Duranti 1997) and their origins is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, a pedagogy of *languaculture* requires students to go beyond superficial dictionary meanings to an understanding of both the ways in which culture is encoded within language and symbolized and expressed by language and the implicit connotations and collocations of vocabulary (Byram and Esarte-Sarries, 1991; Agar 1994).

Chapter two begins with a discussion of certain crucial aspects of the view of language which our students will need to understand in order to gain "a critical understanding of language and culture" (Kelly, Elliott and Fant, 2001: 173). We then describe primary category acquisition and discuss to what extent these *structures structurantes* (Bourdieu 1980) can be modified within the context of the language classroom. This is followed by an exploration of two useful responses to these issues, that of Kramsch's view that acquiring a new *languaculture* reconfigures the learner's universe and Citron's *ethno-lingually relative perspective* (Citron 1995). The chapter will finish with a detailed description of the pedagogical model we have adopted, where we seek to integrate the basic tenets of the

communicative approach with a view of language with culture at its core and a search for a

"third place" through telecollaboration.

2.2 Language with culture at its core

In their discussion of the teaching of language and culture, Byram and Esarte-Sarries

(1991) define language as follows:

> Language is the main medium for expressing and embodying other phenomena. It expresses
> and embodies the values, beliefs and meanings which members of a given society, or part of it,
> share by virtue of their socialisation into it and their acceptance of and identification with it.
>
> (Byram and Esarte-Sarries, 1991: 5)

Kramsch (1998a) complements this view by highlighting three aspects of the

relationship between language and culture, which are highly relevant to a pedagogy of

languaculture:

> 1) *"Language expresses cultural reality."* Words refer to common experience and a shared
> stock of knowledge about the world. Facts, ideas and events as well as attitudes, beliefs and
> points of view are communicable because of this shared knowledge and experience of the
> world.
>
> 2) *"Language embodies cultural reality."* Language is both the expression and creation of
> experience. Meaning is given to experience through the choice of the medium of expression
> (face-to-face, telephone, e-mail and so on) and also by the way experience is expressed, both
> verbally and non-verbally, through tone of voice, accent, conversational style, gestures and
> facial expressions.
>
> 3) *"Language symbolizes cultural reality."* Language is a system of signs, which also have a
> cultural value as a symbol of social identity, through which we identify ourselves and others.
>
> (Kramsch,1998a)

In the previous chapter we dealt in detail with the second aspect, which sees language

as an embodiment of cultural reality. In this section, we will concentrate on the other two

definitions, that of language as an expression of cultural reality and of language as a symbolic

representation of cultural reality, drawing both on the work of Kramsch (1993, 1998a) and

other sources.

2.2.1 *Language expresses cultural reality*

Kramsch divides the sociocultural context into two categories, the synchronic view and the diachronic view. The former is defined as follows:

> This is a view of culture that focuses on the ways of thinking, behaving, valuing currently shared by members of the same discourse community.

(Kramsch 1998a: 7)

For Kramsch, a *discourse accent* represents the differing ways members of a discourse group express themselves, both at the level of grammar, lexis and phonology and that of choice of topic, ways of presenting information and so on. She uses the example of differing attitudes to accepting compliments in the USA and France, where Americans have generally been socialised into responding to a compliment with "Thank-you" as if accepting a friendly gift, whereas French social norms could construe the compliment as an intrusion into personal privacy and minimise it by replying "Oh, this old thing?" An exploration of such social norms, based on the work of Scollon and Scollon (1995) and Carroll (1987) forms the core of our conceptual toolkit, as we will see in Section 3.3.3.

Although many of these values may be shared throughout a culture, Kramsch differentiates between a speech community[11], composed of people who use the same linguistic code and a discourse community, which she defines as:

> A social group that has a broadly agreed set of common public goals and purposes in its use of spoken and written language.

(Kramsch, 1998a: 127)

A discourse community could refer to groups such as teenagers, professional groups or politicians. There are also individual differences between members of a given discourse

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[11] Various definitions have been posited for "speech community", from Labov's view of "a group of speakers who share a set of social attitudes to language" (1972) to Corder's: "people who regard themselves as speaking the same language" (1973) or Duranti's: "the product of the communicative activities engaged in by a given group of people" (1997). Duranti's view seems to map on to Kramsch's "discourse community".

community; personal histories and experiences, differences of age, gender and ethnicity. These attitudes and ways of behaving can also change over time.

For Wallace (1961), culture is viewed as an "organization of diversity". People who share the same culture are characterised not by uniformity but: "their capacity for mutual prediction". A successful culture integrates the coexistence of different points of view and representations. These multiple voices are what Bakhtin (1981) calls "socio-ideological languages." For Bakhtin, at any given moment, language is a combination of past and present, different social groups and different ideologies which do not exclude each other but intersect with each other in many different ways:

> Languages of various epochs and periods of socio-ideological life cohabit with one another. Thus at any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the coexistence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form.

(Bakhtin 1981: 291)

These socio-ideological languages are rarely addressed in textbooks and course materials, where single-voiced discourse often dominates. One of our focuses in our pedagogy of *languaculture* will be to broaden the discourse options available to our students, particularly through access to native-speaking peers (see Chapter 4).

For Sherzer (1987), who illustrates his argument with examples from Kuna, the language of the Kuna Indians of Panama, discourse is the pre-eminent expression of the way in which language and culture interrelate. Discourse is at the intersection of culture and language and transmits, creates, recreates and focuses them both. Culture is thus defined as:

> patterned organizations of, perceptions of, and beliefs about the world in "symbolic terms", language both represents "one's symbolic organization of the world" and reflects and expresses "group memberships and relationships".

(Sherzer ibid: 296)

In Sherzer's view, the issue is not whether language determines/reflects thought or thought determines/reflects language but the analysis of discourse which embodies the

essence of culture.

The diachronic view is a view of culture as shared history and traditions, ways of remembering the past, paying attention to the present and anticipating the future. It focuses on the choice of cultural artefacts and material productions which represent the social group, such as the works of Shakespeare, the Eiffel Tower or the Mona Lisa, and on the way such choices perpetuate the culture. The study of such "authentic" materials is common in the communicative classroom. However, as Byram and Esarte-Sarries (ibid: 2-6) argue, L2C2 teaching should neither be reduced to a focus on restricted aspects of the foreign culture through the translation of literary and philosophical texts or *"language for reading"*, nor to a catalogue of appropriate linguistic and non-verbal behaviours to deal with an alien culture, or *"language for touring"*.

2.2.2 Language symbolizes cultural reality

Understanding across languages does not depend on structural equivalences but on common conceptual systems born from the larger context of our experience.

(Kramsch 1998a: 13)

Since de Saussure ([1916] 1972), the arbitrary nature of the connection between a signifier, for instance the English sound */rouz/* and the word *r-o-s-e* and the object in the real world, with thorns and petals, which they signify has been widely accepted. (Kramsch, 1998a ibid: 15). However, prototype theory has stressed the non-arbitrary nature of taxonomies, which are said to universally contain a basic level of abstraction. This level carries the most information, possesses the highest cue validity and is the most differentiated from other categories (Rosch and Mervis 1975; Mervis and Rosch 1981). The content of these categories is not universal, however, as the knowledge of and interest in the attributes change according to culture, subcultures and individuals (Rosch et al. 1976).

Moreover, in a discourse group, signs feel intuitively natural and non-arbitrary, as in Jakobson's anecdote about the Swiss-German peasant woman who could not understand why

French-speakers used *fromage* for cheese when *"Käse ist doch viel natürlicher!,, - Käse* is so much more natural! (Kramsch ibid: 21). Kramsch explains that the linguistic sign appears natural, as it is a motivated sign, motivated by a wish to communicate certain meanings to others and to be listened to and influence others. The implications that this notion of the non-arbitrary nature of signs has for language learners will be discussed in the context of a "third place" for learners which we return to in Section 2.5.5.

2.2.2.1 Culturally specific ways of dividing reality

Using the term "cultural encodings", Kramsch explains how cultures may differ in the denotative, connotative or iconic meanings which are attributed to signs so that different cultures do not necessarily have the same way of dividing up reality. There are many instances of this across different languages. For instance, Kramsch (ibid: 17) gives the example of *tables*, which are encoded by one word in English, but are divided into *stol* for large tables and *stolik* for coffee or occasional tables in Polish, or of *das Bein* in Bavarian German, which means not just *the leg*, as in standard German, but the whole area from the hip to the foot. Bantu languages, such as Swahili, refer to what we label *hand*, *arm*, and *elbow* in English with the one word *mkono*. (Eastman [1941] 1990: 90).

Malinowski ([1929] 1968:434) cites the term *luguta*, which means *brother* when spoken by a female, and *sister* when spoken by a male. The term designates not only brothers and sisters but is extended to refer to all people of the opposite sex of the forbidden class, that is, in the same sub-clan or clan as ego. In its widest sense, the term refers to any tabooed person or thing, thus reflecting social practices in the Northwest Melanesian culture. Studies of the semantic networks of bilinguals show different associations across their two languages, for instance speakers of Spanish and English may associate *house* with *window* and *boy* with *girl*, but *casa* with *madre* and *muchacho* with *hombre* (Kramsch 1998a: 17). These differing ways of dividing up reality form the core of our perceptual toolkit (Chapter 3.3).

2.2.2.2 Differing social realities

Different images or cultural schemata are evoked in the mind when discussing certain social phenomena. For example, although Harrap's Shorter French and English Dictionary (1996) offers *suburbs* or *commuter belt* as a translation for *banlieue*, a more realistic contemporary version would be *inner city* or *run-down housing estates* (Starkey 2000: 44). This was brought home to me when a French student, describing a picture of a group of Japanese teenagers with hair dyed blue, tattoos and punk-style clothes, standing in front of a run-down block of flats, began as follows:

"In this picture we can see some typical young people from the suburbs."

This example is further illustrated by the semantic associations of French and American students in the *Cultura project*, which we described in Chapter 1; the word *banlieue* was consistently associated with words such as *danger, violence, laideur, HLM, insécurité[12]*, whereas the American students' associations included: *green space, manicured lawns, wealth, comfort, boring (Cultura* Spring 1999, accessed from the net 10.10.99).

2.2.2.3 Prior texts

a sign or word may also relate to the other words and instances of text and talk that have accumulated in a community's memory over time.

(Kramsch, 1998a: 19)

Kramsch gives the example of *dusha* in Russian, which relates to a person's inner core and denotes *goodness* and *truth*. The term has associations with literature, for example Dostoevsky, or to other concepts like *pricelessness, human-will, inner speech* which have

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[12] Some French students integrated the diachronic dimension with both the old and new views: *"problèmes, verdure"* and *"tranquille ou violente"*.

been heard or spoken in daily life. The nearest English translation, *soul* has other associations like *disembodied spirit, immortal or self.* There are many examples of this in different languages, for instance the term *hiraeth* in Welsh, which goes far beyond the English word homesickness to suggest a particularly poignant kind of longing for the language, land and people of Wales, or *gemütlich* in German which suggests both comfort, cosiness and physical and mental well-being.

According to Kramsch, problems of translation come from the fact that different cultures, generations or epochs do not share the same way of viewing and interpreting events; even if a rose is a rose is a rose, it is not *une rose* nor *eine Rose*. There can be symbolic, literary, political or personal associations evoked by different linguistic signs. English roses could, for example, have associations with Shakespeare's "That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet, (Romeo and Juliet Act II, Scene 1) which is echoed in the statement above, whereas French ones could recall Ronsard's "Mignonne, allons voir si la rose" (Ode à Cassandre, 1550).

Particular meanings have been adopted diachronically by a speech community and it is difficult for individuals to escape from these. For instance, in a society where roses symbolize love, it would be difficult to make a declaration of love with a bouquet of chrysanthemums, which in many countries, like France and Germany, are associated with death (Kramsch, 1998a: 17). Similarly, it would be difficult for a Chinese bride to wear white, which is worn for funerals, when red, codifying joy, is traditionally used for wedding dresses. On the other hand, a red wedding dress, given the associations with "scarlet women", would no doubt shock some people in Britain or Ireland. These meanings can of course be subverted, in order to make a statement, for example the bright scarlet dress worn by the ill-fated Paula Yates for her wedding to the singer Bob Geldof, which attracted many adverse comments from the press.

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The constraining element of using language is summed up by the following statement from Bakhtin:

> No member of the verbal community will ever discover any words in language which are totally neutral, devoid of another's aspirations and evaluations, or free of another's voice .... A word reaches one context in terms of another context, penetrated by the intentions of another; its own intentionality encounters a word which is already inhabited.

(Bakhtin, 1981: 279)

The existence of differing prior texts is particularly shown during the act of writing, which can serve to create a different event for different people, via differences in the choice of implied reader, of the writer's position vis à vis the story and also what 'prior texts': poems, newspaper articles, letters and so on the writer has reached back to. This process of recreation or reshaping prior texts, which Becker (cited in Kramsch 1993: 106-109) terms *languaging*, varies from individual to individual and language to language and includes not only what is said, but what the author or language chooses to leave unsaid.

The act of writing in the foreign language classroom can help students' awareness of how the written language shapes different meanings and how the author draws on prior experience to create those meanings. As Kramsch explains, whereas communicative exercises in the spoken language tend to stress the universal nature of language as a referential system, the written language stresses the particular. One of our main preoccupations in this project is to help learners to express their own meanings within the constraints of the foreign language.

As well as being constrained by the language they can use, learners will need to understand what has been called the *context of culture* (Malinowski 1923) or *structures of expectation* (Fowler 1986), referring to the shared institutional and ideological background knowledge required for participants in a speech event.

> People approach the world not as naïve, blank-slate receptacles who take in stimuli as they exist in some independent and objective way, but rather as experienced and sophisticated veterans of

perception, who have stored their prior experiences as 'an organized mass' and who see events and objects in the world in relation to each other and in relation to their prior experience. This prior experience....then takes the form of expectations about the world, and in the vast majority of cases, the world, being a systematic place, confirms their expectations.

(Tannen, 1979:144)

Structures of expectation may differ across cultures and access to the meanings in

texts from a given L2C2 may be complicated by the assumption of a shared world, which is

not shared by all readers. For Halliday and Hasan:

> Part of the environment for any text is a set of previous texts that are taken for granted as shared among those taking part.
>
> (Halliday and Hasan, [1985]1989: 10)

Although areas of this assumed shared world may be universal, many references will be

culture-specific:

> Exophoric references will often be to a world shared by sender and receiver of the linguistic message regardless of cultural background, but, equally often, references will be culture-bound and outside the experiences of the language learner.
>
> (McCarthy [1991] 1996: 40)

> Every text is a response to prior texts, prior language, prior issues raised through language. In order to understand a text, one has to understand what the text is responding to or against. This existing prior language, accumulated over the life of a discourse community, has been called *Discourse* with a capital D.
>
> (Kramsch, 1998a: 61)

This *Discourse,* with a capital D, is defined by Gee, echoing Sherzer, as a kind of

identity kit of:

> ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body language and clothes.
>
> (Gee, 1990: 142-143)

The idea of *prior texts* is also present in Kristeva's work on intertextuality

(1980,1986). Her theories build on the work of post-structuralists, such as Lacan and Derrida,

and that of Bakhtin. Kristeva examines the speaking subject and the signifying structures of

social practice. For Kristeva, the written textual space is divided into three dimensions, on

intersecting planes, with three "components of dialogue", the writing subject, the addressee,

or ideal reader and exterior texts. These planes have both a horizontal axe, which is the

property of both the writer and the addressee and a vertical axe, which is oriented towards

both synchronic writings and anterior ones. Every text is informed both by other texts which

the reader has read, and by the reader's own cultural context. This intersection between texts

forms a "mosaic of quotations" where texts absorb and transform each other.

This idea of absorption and transformation will run through many of the tenets of this

thesis, both in the choice of film remakes as a stimulus for the exploration of the students'

own prior texts, the use of e-mail and net-meeting, where meanings can be constantly

overlapped, and indeed in the notion of the appropriation and transformation of language

itself.

2.3 Translatability

Although these conceptual differences between cultures make it problematic,

translation between languages is possible, even if it is imperfect and a certain amount of

circumlocution is necessary. However, as Cronin (1996) puts it, translation does not merely

mechanically reproduce the original but it transforms that original. One of the problems we

hope to address is that students often have what Cronin refers to as an:

> unspoken assumption of ideal equivalence. Translation is a transparent, painless process and
> full equivalence is possible in the other language.

(Cronin, ibid: 5)

There are countless examples of unfortunate literal translations both in students' work

(see Chapter 4) and that of professionals. For instance in a recent dubbed version of the

American film "Will Hunting" the psychiatrist played by Robin Williams referred to his old

roommate as his *camarade de chambre,* the notion of sharing a room or flat at University

being relatively rare in France.[13] One of the aims of this project is to encourage students to move away from the myth of literal meaning, which ignores the fact that each language has its own discourse system, with different collocations, clusters of meaning and taken-for-granted assumptions and background (Rommetveit, 1988).

2.4 Comparative stylistics- examples from French and English

As we have already seen, complete synonymy between languages does not exist. Even when a translation seems to translate a basic notion such as *bread,* this is not at all the same thing as *pain* or *pane, bara* or *Brot,* although each version of bread shares some properties of "breadness".

> Language also refers to objects peculiar to a given culture —most obviously in proper names— and embodies those objects. The use of a phrase such as a 'loaf of bread' evokes a specific cultural object in British usage unless a conscious effort is made to empty it of that reference and introduce a new one.
>
> (Byram and Esarte-Sarries, 1991: 5)

Concepts between languages are also often overlapping but not exactly equivalent, for instance *doux/gentil* in French and *sweet/soft/gentle* in English. Studies in comparative stylistics (Vinay and Darbelnet 1958) show many differences between the two languages. In certain contexts, particularly that of visual or aural perception, French will favour the superordinate or generic term, whereas English will be more specific, for instance in the translation of *grincement* which could be *grating, squeaking* or *screeching* (Vinay and Darbelnet 1958: 60). The opposite can also be true, for example there could be several French translations of the English word *bell: cloche, clochette, sonnette, sonnerie, clarine, grelot.*

According to Vinay and Darbelnet (ibid 59-73), one of the biggest differences

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[13] The term "colocataire" is gradually being introduced as social habits are modified.

between English and French is the level of abstraction expressed in French. English translations tend to be more concrete, often preferring simpler words of Germanic origin to more scientific trems of Latin or Greek origin. They illustrate their argument with examples such as *concours hippique – horse show* or *papille gustative – taste bud.* This preference for the abstract is also shown in an extract from the English grammar book from the highly popular Bescherelle series, which is intended for Secondary School students, and said, in the introduction, to be "rédigée dans un style clair et simple" (Malavieille and Rotgé 1997:2). The construction *If I were you* is explained as follows:

Rupture avec la réalité présente: le prétérit du non-réel.

Le prétérit du non-réel ne sert pas à renvoyer au révolu, mais à l'hypothétique et à l'imaginaire. Les faits sont situés dans le non-réel (donc en rupture avec la réalité présente).

(Malavieille and Rotgé, ibid: 48)

A comparative analysis of student discourse in this telecollaborative project also reveals a higher level of abstraction in the French students' communication style (see Chapter 4).

Stewart and Bennett (1995) suggest that English is more like a digital system, which polarizes elements such as love/hate, compared to the analogue character of language like Chinese, which expresses complementary pairs of moderate emotions. This is also shown in the dichotomy between adjectives such as *far/near, old/young, long/short.* A comparison with a language like Portuguese, which can also present adjectives in pairs: *distante/pero, velho/jovem, comprido/corto* shows that, although there are surface similarities, differences in polarization are revealed in the question forms. For example, *"How far is it to .... ?"* becomes *"Qual é a distancia a?"* For Stewart and Bennett, the Portuguese question simply asks for a location in space, whereas the equivalent question in English conveys separation in space, with stress on the polarity of *far* versus *near.* This comparison can be extended to other Romance languages, like French. In a question like *"How good is the food here?"*-

"Como é a comida aqui?" or indeed *"Comment est la nourriture ici?"* English selects the

positive aspect to show neutrality, whereas the negative *"How bad is the food here?"* is a

precise question about the food. Stewart and Bennett call this "negative precision" and

conclude that:

> The structure of the language naturally accommodates a pattern of managing others by specifying what should not be done, and it allows precise calibration of penalties.

(Stewart and Bennett 1995: 57)

While this would at first seem far-fetched, it is indeed an interesting point, in the light

of the difference in attitudes to authority observed between many French people and

Americans, attitudes which are explored in Section 4.9.16.

2.5 Cultural appropriation - seeing the world through culturally different eyes.

2.5.1 Introduction

> When we open our eyes each morning, it is upon a world we have spent a lifetime *learning* to see. We are not given the world, we make our world through incessant experience, categorization, memory, reconnection.

(Sachs, 1995:108)

If we accept that language socialises us into a particular way of seeing the world, to

what extent can we modify that world view, both in a natural setting and, of more direct

relevance to our study, in the classroom?

As Duranti puts it:

> If language itself represents a particular way of looking at the world, a pair of glasses that we are given at birth and keep on wearing without being conscious of it, how can we see what others, wearing different glasses, see?

(Duranti, 1997: 67)

As we have already discussed, there are many cultural differences in the organisation

of concepts and categories. Much of the research seems to point to the immutable nature of

those categories acquired with one's L1C1 and to be at least in partial agreement with von

Humboldt, even if we no longer speak of cosmic viewpoints: [14]

> Each tongue draws a circle about the people to whom it belongs and it is possible to leave that
> circle only by simultaneously leaving that of another people. Learning a foreign language ought
> hence to be the conquest of a new standpoint in the previously prevailing cosmic attitude of the
> individual. In fact, it is so to a certain extent, inasmuch as every language contains the entire
> fabric of concepts, and the conceptual approach of a certain portion of humanity. But this
> achievement is not complete, because one always carries over to a greater or lesser degree,
> one's own cosmic viewpoint – indeed one's personal linguistic pattern.

von Humboldt: ([1836] 1971: 39-40)

As Slobin (1996) explains, language or languages learnt in childhood do not represent a

neutral, objective coding system but a subjective orientation to the world:

> the ways one learns a language as a child constrain one's sensitivity to what Sapir called 'the
> possible contents of experience as experienced in linguistic terms'.
> (Slobin 1996:89)

2.5.2 Cultural or personal models

Many researchers argue that category acquisition has both individual and cultural

functional relevance. Anglin (1995), compares the category acquisition of botanical

terminology between children of different cultures and languages, basing his arguments on

his own research with children from Cambridge, Massachusetts and that of Stross (1973) and

Dougherty (1978, 1979). He concludes that both cultural and individual factors are important

in children's acquisition of category terms; they both assimilate personally salient distinctions

from their parents and accommodate their learning of lexical systems to those which are

functionally relevant in their culture.

Along similar lines, Vygotsky (1986) distinguishes between *znachenie,* conventional

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[14] Indeed a more recent translation is as follows: "To learn a new language should therefore be to acquire a new
standpoint in the world-view hitherto possessed, and in fact to a certain extent this is so, since every language
contains the whole conceptual fabric and mode of presentation of a portion of mankind. But because we always
carry over, more or less, our own world-view, and even our own language-view, this outcome is not purely and
completely experienced."(von Humboldt [1836] 1988:60)

dictionary *meaning* in social speech, intended for others, which is culturally determined and *sensyl,* personal, private *sense* intended for the self in inner speech. *Sensyl* is dynamic, fluid, complex and unstable, whereas *znachenie* is more stable and precise. Shore (1996:47) provides us with a neo-Vygotskian view of the origin of concepts, which for him, also originate from two sources: personal mental models and cultural models. The former represent our own unique life experiences, whereas the latter are the cognitive resources of a community, which are conventionally constructed and shared. These sociocultural models constrain what we attend to and what we perceive as salient, as Anglin's research illustrates. Shore shows that there is a dialectical interrelation between the two; cultural models appropriated during ontogenesis have a strong influence on personal models, but cultural models in their turn are constantly renegotiated and transformed.

2.5.3 Looking into first language windows

If we agree that there is a dialectic between first culture models and personal ones, what happens when we acquire or attempt to acquire a second or third culture? Ushakova's (1994) research on an artificially-constructed language, based on the Vygotskian notion of inner speech, showed that new words were classified according to the classification of the first language, in this case Russian, and led ʰer to the conclusion that:

> acquisition of the second (and other) language(s) occurs as a "plugging of the new lexicon into the already established linguistic structures, which allows for categorization and linking of structures when necessary, and most importantly, interpretation. This is the fundamental way in which a first language influences the second.

(Ushakova, 1994:151).

and later:

> ....our findings show that the interaction of new speech material and the earlier developed inner speech structures turns out to be very strong. The second language is incorporated into the classification system already available in the first language, relies on the previously developed semantic system, and actively deploys first language phonology. (....) To put it figuratively, second language learning is looking into the windows cut out by the first language.

(Ushakova 1994: 154)

In his discussion of the cognitive aspects of learning a new culture, Lantolf (ibid: 41) cites the example of Grabois' comparative study of concept formation among natural [15] and classroom learners of Spanish. Grabois (1997) analysed the lexical associations of abstract concepts such as *love* or *power*, working with groups of 16 native speakers of English, 16 native speakers of Spanish, 16 natural and very advanced L2 speakers of Spanish (L1 English) and 16 intermediate classroom learners of Spanish (also L1 English). Predictably, the English and Spanish native speakers had very different associations. However, the very advanced natural learners of Spanish, who had intensive immersion experience, appeared to have significantly modified their native conceptual structure. They not only obtained different results from both the L1 English speakers and the classroom learners of Spanish, but there was no significant difference when they were compared to the native Spanish speakers.

On the other hand, the classroom learners of Spanish retained similar results to the monolingual, native speakers of English, suggesting that there were no significant changes in their conceptual organisation. Lantolf comments:

> An important conclusion of this research is that classroom learners, at least at the intermediate level, do not show evidence of reorganization of their native conceptual structure, while learners with an extensive immersion experience do indeed exhibit strong evidence of such reorganization.

(Lantolf, 1999:41)

Lantolf describes earlier studies, such as Kolers' 1963 study of word association among bi-lingual adults and Ervin's 1968 study of the Japanese wives of American servicemen, which showed culture and language-related responses. For instance, Ervin's subjects responded with words like *party* and *holiday* to the stimulus *New Year's Day* but

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[15] Grabois (1997) uses the term "natural" to describe language acquisition which takes place in the foreign country without formal tuition.

with *omochi (rice cake)* and *kimono* to the Japanese equivalent *shougatsu*. A more recent study of 35 Japanese college students, who had lived in the United States for at least two years, by Yoshida (1990) produced quite different results, with the "bilinguals" patterning like the Japanese control group in all but the culture category. In this category, the stimuli *shougatsu/New Year's Day* and *kurisumasu/Christmas* produced mainly similar results to that of Ervin's study. However, the Japanese bilinguals produced the uniquely Western concept of *Santa Claus* as a common response to *Christmas*, whereas this did not appear in the American group's associations. Lantolf explains this by suggesting that learners may learn, at least at a metalevel, concepts which are not present in their native culture and therefore marked with relation to C1.This remains at a conscious, intellectual level, however, and leads Yoshida to conclude that the Japanese bilinguals:

> will never really be able to feel like an American, and that some may never be able to behave in an American way. The most we can expect is that they will be able to understand and acknowledge the differences which exist between Japanese and Americans.

(Yoshida, 1990:25 cited in Lantolf, ibid: 39)

For Lantolf, this result shows that acculturation but not cognitive restructuring has occurred. His conclusion is extremely cautious:

> some of the evidence to be considered in this section seems to show that under certain circumstances (i.e. cultural immersion) adults are capable of appropriating new cultural models and in so doing modifying their conceptual organization.

(Lantolf,1999: 37)

Lantolf calls for more studies of both natural and classroom cultural appropriation and suggests that Sociocultural Theory, which we outlined in Chapter 1, could provide a fruitful means of informing the work. He cautions that, at the moment, we do not know whether, for example, Americans given the opportunity to do so would learn to classify objects according to their substance instead of their shape as in Mayan cultural models, or indeed if Mayans could learn to do the opposite.

2.5.4 Escaping from the prison of language

An attempt to encourage students to appropriate the categorisation of colours used in different African languages is included in our perceptual toolkit as a consciousness-raising exercise (Chapter 3). However, although, as Byram (1988) reminds us, it is important for teachers to understand how categories are acquired, assessing whether cognitive restructuring has taken place is not within the scope of our present study. Besides, to what extent do we wish our students to modify their conceptual organisation? Is it desirable for our French students to feel and behave like Americans and our American students to feel and behave like French people? As we saw in Chapter 1, our aim is to encourage our students to become intercultural speakers, rather than inevitably imperfect native speakers.

Various cognitive anthropologists and ethnographers (Goodenough 1956; Frake 1964; Keesing 1972) have tried to identify "cultural grammars" or models[16], which appear to be predicated on the notion of an idealised cultural being, in the same way that Chomsky's Universal Grammar (1957, 1965) was based on the idea of an idealised native speaker.[17] Although a certain amount of knowledge about the target culture and of the products of that culture are also necessary for a pedagogy of intercultural competence, many educators have advised us to guard against what Kramsch (1991) calls "the four Fs" – "foods, fairs, folklore and statistical facts" and Robinson (1978) "a magic-carpet-ride-to-another-culture."

Moreover, cultural models or grammars, even if they can be identified, cannot be effortlessly acquired in a second or third culture and explicit instruction cannot replace primary and secondary socialisation (Scollon and Scollon 1995). Indeed, as we saw in our discussion of the "third place" (Chapter 1), for many writers, cultural behaviours, even for

proficient speakers of an L2, remain bound by one's first culture (Zarate 1986; Byram 1989; Kramsch 1993; Byram, Morgan et al. 1994; Barro et al. 1998).

For those who subscribe to what has become known as the Sapir Whorf hypothesis, nature is cut up and organised into concepts based on agreement in a given speech community and it is impossible to escape these codified patterns (Whorf [1940] 1956: 213-214). However, although we acknowledge, with Lantolf (1999: 37), that much of the research shows that inner speech tends to resist mutation at a very profound psychological level, we could adopt the following compromise, as suggested by Gee (1993):

> The way a language cuts up the world will influence how we initially think about something, but it does not determine how we finish thinking about it. Under pressure we can think about things outside the categories of our language, because we find other people's ways of doing things senseful. We find them senseful because, at least where language is concerned, they are all chosen from the inventory of ways allowed by the human brain, which is, like the eye, everywhere the same across cultures.

> (Gee, 1993:11)

> This calls to mind Sartre's:

> [..] l'important n'est pas ce qu'on fait de nous, mais ce que nous faisons nous-même de ce qu'on a fait de nous.

> (Sartre, 1952: 55)

Whether learners are plugging into already established linguistic structures or as John-Steiner suggests, "weaving" new meanings into the fabric of verbal thought which already exists in their first language (1985, cited in Lantolf, ibid: 37), which models can we bring into the classroom to encourage them to both analyse their own prior texts and to try to see "what others, wearing different glasses see"?

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[16] Although more recent research in this area studies "natural kinds", intuitive inferences which can be made about the world with no prior theory or model (Atran 1990; Atran and Sperber 1991)

[17] The issue of the "death of the native speaker" was discussed in Chapter 1.

2.5.5 Reconfiguring the universe

Kramsch (2000) suggests a particularly optimistic approach. Drawing on an earlier publication (Kramsch and McConnell-Ginet, 1992), she claims that learning a new language does in fact reconfigure one's whole classification system:

> Learning a new language is not an innocent relabeling of the familiar furniture of the universe.
>
> (Kramsch and McConnell-Ginet, 1992)

She supports her argument with insights both from Peirce's theories of iconicity[18], Bakhtin's dialogism and Vygotsky's goal-oriented semiotics:

> Thus, for Vygotsky, linguistic signs are never arbitrary. They are created, used, borrowed, and interpreted by the individual for the purposeful actions in which he/she is engaged. Language emerges from social and cultural activity, and only later becomes an object of reflection.
>
> (Kramsch, ibid: 133-134)

Within this paradigm, learning another language is a dialogic process of semiotic mediation of practical activity through linguistic signs which is:

> another way of creating and exchanging signs, not primarily of acquiring new grammatical and lexical tools that are then put to use in a social context.
>
> ((Kramsch, ibid: 140)

Although language learners have inherited foreign linguistic signs which they have not created, as we saw with our discussion of Bakhtin's ventriloquation in Chapter 1, Kramscn argues that:

> While it is true that linguistic codes and much of non-linguistic behavior are handed down by the group, individual learners always have the capacity to choose from among the increasing arsenal of signs that they acquire throughout their study those that best fit their communicative needs.
>
> (Kramsch, ibid: 134-135)

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[18] For Peirce (1940), signs represent index, icon and symbol. They index a certain reality, they are icons or metaphors for the reality they refer to and they enact the arbitrary conventions of the code and its socially conventionalised uses (Kramsch, 2000).

Kramsch suggests that teachers help students to become aware of their "motivated semiotic choices" by comparing differing perspectives of the same story. This raises students' consciousness that signs are the result of non-arbitrary selections that can influence others and reflect upon themselves. Although the activities Kramsch suggests take place in the classroom, this consciousness of multiple perspectives are encouraged in our pedagogy of telecollaborative *languaculture* by confronting the varying perspectives of peer groups from two different cultures.

> By choosing to say things one way rather than another, even the first year learner of a foreign language makes a cultural decision, because he/she adapts her language to the perceived needs of the situation. This tailoring of the text to meet the demands of the context, and this shaping of the context through the expectations raised by the text, is precisely what we call 'culture'. *It is an eminently dialogic process of jointly constructed meaning.*
>
> (Kramsch, Cain, and Murphy-Lejeune,1996:106, emphasis in original.)

According to Lantolf (1993: 227), and Dunn and Lantolf (1998) learning a second language gives learners a second chance to create new tools and ways of meaning:

> Thus, accents, (un)grammaticality, and pragmatic and lexical failures are not just flaws or signs of imperfect learning but ways in which learners attempt to establish (new) identities and gain self-regulation through lingustic means. In an important sense, L2 learning is about gaining freedom to create- a freedom native speakers have a greater difficulty achieving but to which children, up to a point, have access in learning their L1.
>
> (Dunn and Lantolf, 1998:426)

Kinginger (2001b: 421), building on Engeström (1999), Lompscher (1999) and Kramsch (2000b), also explores the notion that language learning promotes change in people. For Kinginger, the fact that sociocultural theorists see all learning as appropriating new ways of naming things implies that, by allowing access to different cognitive tools, language learning has the potential to change not only people's motivations and identities but also the way they think.

2.5.6 An ethno-lingually relative perspective

Citron (1995) suggests that we encourage learners to develop what he terms an *ethno-lingually relative perspective*. Citron discusses Kellerman's 1979 study, where 81 Dutch speaking adults were asked to make judgements about the translatability of the Dutch word *breken*. Kellerman concluded that native speakers of a language ascribe varying degrees of translatability to the same word, with a core function, which is more translatable and a peripheral function, which is less translatable. According to Citron, this study suggests that:

> a skill of mastering a second language may be the ability to look objectively at a feature of one's own language to determine which of its uses are related to its core function and are likely to be shared with another language and which are more peripheral and therefore more apt to be idiosyncratic to the native language.

(Citron,1995: 106)

Citron identifies two sub-components to this *ethno-lingually relative perspective*, which he claims should facilitate learners' ability to learn a new language. The first one is the ability to recognise that languages are not directly translatable and that the way one's own language expresses a thought is arbitrary; the same thought can be expressed in a different way in another language and neither way is more correct than the other. Citron gives the example of *'I like that joke'* in English, where the subject, *I* is reacting on the environment, whereas in the Spanish translation *'Me gusta ese chiste'* the joke is having an effect on me. Using an argument based on the cultural variability of prototypes, (as discussed in Section 2.2.2) he sums up this first component thus:

> According to the ethno-lingual relativity hypothesis, then, a language learner who is less bound by his or her first language's way of classifying words and can recognize that the boundaries of words may differ across languages may be better able to learn a second language.

(Citron, ibid: 106)

The second sub-component he describes is the ability to recognise that one's own language can be culture-bound, with words which do not exist because the object or concept is unknown to its speakers. Citron gives the example of a student who was a native speaker of

English who was at a loss when she could not find a Spanish equivalent to *stooge* as in *The Three Stooges* and suggests that American students could have the same problem grasping a notion such as that of *simpático*. A student who can also recognize, accept and adapt to the fact that differences in cultural values are encoded in the language is also, he claims at an advantage. For, instance *waste* and *save* are common collocations with *time* which corresponds to the North American view of time as a valuable commodity, whereas in Spanish *pasar* is far more likely to be associated with *tiempo* than the equivalent *desperdiciar* or *ahorrar*. A student with the ability to understand the differing social distance or solidarity in the sociopragmatic use of *usted* and *tu* will also be at an advantage:

> According to the hypothesis, a language learner who can empathize with his or her interlocutors and recognize the culture-boundedness of each language would be better able to learn the language than one who cannot.
>
> (Citron, ibid: 106)

This ability to adapt to new situations is integrated into the cultural studies perspective, as described in Section 1.5.10. As we will show in our data analysis, a pedagogy of *languaculture* through telecollaboration provides opportunities for students to develop the various aspects of an *ethno-lingually relative* perspective.

2.6 A telecollaborative model for languaculture teaching

Taking into account the various models and arguments we have studied, the aims of our pedagogy of *languaculture* through *telecollaboration* can be summed up as follows:

> 1) To promote cultural awareness through the analysis of students' own prior texts. To increase understanding both of students' own culture and the foreign culture through the development of "un savoir interprétatif" (Zarate 1983) and an ability to become strangers to themselves. To explore both personal and public meanings, both *sensyl* and *znachenie* (Vygotsky 1986).
>
> 2) To increase understanding of the nature of language and culture as both product and process and to develop an *ethno-lingually relative* perspective (Citron 1995).

1 / 112

3) To ensure that students with advanced productive linguistic skills are not "fluent fools" (Bennett 1997) but develop both an awareness of appropriate sociopragmatic uses of the L2C2 and of the fact that multiple perspectives and voices are possible.

4) To encourage a move towards a "third place"where students find their own voice at the interstices of two or more cultures.

5) To promote empathy by exploring both similarities and difference.

6) To encourage students to become intercultural and multicompetent speakers, rather than deficient native speakers.

7) To offer an alternative to traditional classroom discourse as an extension of the communicative classroom. To motivate students who tend to adopt a responsive role to participate more fully and actively in the learning process and to take on "significant and serious epistemic roles" (Nystrand 1997).

8) To use new technologies to create a virtual space or "third place", building on both student and institutional enthusiasm for using new technologies.

9) To develop some innovative methods of teaching *languaculture* based on a virtual community of learners in a Grande Ecole and an American University, using double-voiced rather than single-voiced discourse.

10) To experiment with team teaching across geographical boundaries.

The pedagogical model used for this project is built around a toolkit metaphor, starting

with a *perceptual toolkit*, where learners can experience the variability of both individual and

culturally biased perception through exercises on visual perception and semantic categories.

This is followed by a *conceptual toolkit,* where insights gleaned from readings in

anthropology and sociology are used to prepare the students for the study of cultural

differences and the potential for miscommunication between the two groups, using texts such

as children's literature and American remakes of French films. The third toolkit, the

technological toolkit, includes e-mail exchanges between 'keyboard pals', web page design

and two real-time videoconferences for each group.[19] The students look critically at the

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[19] Acknowledgement. The ideas and exercises used in the courses result from a collaborative, ongoing dialogue between myself and my two colleagues, Solange and Andrée. The perceptual toolkit is my own design, based on my research with Francophone African students (Gourvès-Hayward 1992 and 1998), as is much of the conceptual toolkit. The original idea to integrate the study of remakes with that of anthropological texts and for a telecollaborative project were Solange's. The particular analysis presented in this thesis is, of course, my own.

images created within their home culture before confronting them with the corresponding images from the culture of the other, in a search for their own "third place", along the "cultural faultlines" (Kramsch 1993). Preparation for the course also involves communicative and creative activities, to encourage students to their find their own voice in the foreign language. These toolkits will be described in more detail in the context of our research methodology, where we analyse certain aspects of our pedagogy in practice.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The focus of this section is the methodology chosen for this study of *languaculture* learning through telecollaboration. In the first section, I describe the background to this thesis, which has both professional and personal motivations. Secondly, I outline the methodology used for classroom practice, my pedagogical aims and the selection of materials used to put those aims into practice. Finally, I will focus on my research design, the choices of methodology adopted to carry out this research and the methods used for data collection and presentation.

3.2 The background to the thesis

3.2.1 Institutional encouragement

The original impetus for this telecollaborative project derived from a specific request from the International Department of ENST Bretagne to participate in a project on Total Quality Management, set up by researchers at Capital University[20]. This was in line with two of the main aims of the Grandes Ecoles, to prepare students for international careers and to integrate the use of new technologies into the curriculum.

The cultural awareness aspect of this project was originally suggested by Solange, a French and linguistics specialist. This involved both groups of students studying parallel texts selected from works of anthropology and extracts from American remakes of French films. Students were encouraged to correspond with partners, using e-mail and a videoconference

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[20] At Solange's request I have given pseudonyms to the lecturers involved in the project, to the American students and the American universities. The French students all wished their own names to be used and I have done this systematically unless I felt I was including information which the students may not want to be made public. This difference in attitude, partly brought about by the increasingly litigious nature of American society, was one of the first major differences we noticed between the two groups.

was organised for their impressions to be shared in both English and French. This project was felt to be successful by all the participants, despite a lack of compatibility in terms of scientific objectives, and my colleague, Andrée and I were sufficiently motivated to continue the partnership with Solange when she moved to Midwest University in 1996 and from there to East University in 2000. We felt that the comparative approach to cultural differences showed great pedagogical potential and were interested in developing the use of multimedia which was particularly appropriate in a school of telecommunications. We also found that a more research-oriented approach to pedagogy, along with an opportunity to teach in a team were personally rewarding. From being a peripheral part of a science project, we became organisers of our own exchange and the initial ideas were constantly developed and modified by both sides.

3.2.2 From teaching to research

Although I had already participated in a 3-year research project financed by the European Commission, called the GRIPIL (Groupe de Recherche et d'Ingeniérie Pédagogique) and had also carried out a study on the problems encountered by Francophone African learners of English at ENST Bretagne, my initial approach to the project was as an interesting practical exercise for our students. However, my growing interest in finding out more about the role of culture in language teaching, along with a wish to address the problem of motivating our first year students and to find a coherent way to extend the discourse options afforded by the communicative classroom, led me to enrol as a PhD student at Dublin City University in 1997.

I was already very interested in Claire Kramsch's concept of the "third place", which had a personal resonance for me. I had studied and loved French as an undergraduate and had taught French in a British secondary school for four years, before moving to France, where I had lived for 15 years with a French husband and a bilingual child. As a foreigner in France, I

was quite aware of the advantages and disadvantages that a dual culture can confer. At the time of my enrolment until the present day, I was Head of the English Department at the ENST Bretagne, with research as part of my job description. Although this job involved a heavy workload, it also allowed me considerable freedom to organise the timetable to suit the project and my research design and access to technical support and a recording studio.

3.2.3 Background information on classes

3.2.3.1 Student levels

At the ENST Bretagne, we decided to work with a group of students who had already fulfilled the English requirements necessary for their diploma, as we had done with the experimental project. These students were at an advanced level in both spoken and written English. They had achieved a score of at least 160 on the Oxford placement test, with approximately a third of them reaching a score of over 180[21]. They had all succeeded at our Level 4 examination, which consists of an advanced level written and aural comprehension test and a half an hour oral presentation on a scientific subject such as Fibre Optics or Quantum Mechanics.

Solange was teaching French at an Intermediate or Upper- Intermediate level in both Universities. Although a small number of the American students had already been to France, most of them had great difficulties in expressing themselves and in understanding spoken French and had never met a French person. This was particularly true of the students from Midwest University. The difference in language levels and significance of the lack of access to native speaker peers will be discussed in detail in Section 4.8.4.4 .

The courses in Midwest University were described as follows by Solange:

As far as the curriculum is concerned, I think what I did was simply to pirate third year courses which were intended for French majors or minors. French 312 was a composition course, and French 326 was a conversation course. In each case, I arranged the work for the course so that it would fit the overall objectives of the curriculum, but I must say that I took advantage of a considerable amount of personal leeway to do this-- respectability and right to determine course content that I simply assumed based on my experience and publication record.
Solange, e-mail, April 2002

At East University, the students enrolled in the course had a higher level of French,

and had more access to French-speaking environments, as Solange explains:

I moved to East University in 1999 and we ran our exchange in the fall semester when I was teaching French 402W (the W stands for writing intensive, and 400-level courses are for seniors or others who qualify), a course intended primarily for French majors with advanced standing. This was an entirely different teaching experience from the previous ones for the simple reason that the students coped much better with the French language, many of them having spent time abroad in French speaking environments. These students were mostly conscientious in the extreme, that is, they were good at being students. They were prepared to do their best at analysis and writing. Some of them were relatively mature and capable in this work, others had pretty good French but no ability to analyze, others had excellence in neither of these categories. I suspect that in comparison to the Midwest University students, they were somewhat jaded. It was not fabulously innovative for them to interact in French, though they did like the technical part of the course very much. There was disparity in the participation I saw because some students developed relationships with keypals and others did not.

Again, Solange adapted the course from a traditional one but, as can be observed from

the Course description (Appendix VII), had to use the textbook as a basis:

As in the previous years, I had to add the exchange to the curriculum, make it fit in, and that was less obvious in this year compared to the past. At East University I was new, in an environment where I wanted to stay and needed to make a good impression on everyone as much as possible. I did not feel, as I had at Midwest University, that my contribution would automatically be better than what came before (because not much came before). This course is considered a key to competent performance in literature courses where students are expected to write correctly and in appropriate genres. So the course was taught largely as it had been taught in the past, with a gruesome textbook, a strict focus on composition skill and a standard syllabus.

3.2.3.2 Classes

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[21] A student with a score of 160 to 179 is considered to be at an upper-intermediate to advanced level and as a potential candidate for the Cambridge Proficiency examination. Those who score 180 and above are deemed to be at an advanced to near-native speaker level and potential candidates for the Cambridge Diploma (Allan 1985).

The French class met twice a week for one hour, although all the students were not always present. With the exception of the Autumn 1999 class, the classes were optional, which was a sometimes a problem for attendance and for the balance of numbers between the two groups. For the Autumn 1999 group, we combined two classes to redress the balance of numbers. The American students were in a more formal situation, in compulsory classes with formal examinations at the end of the course. They met three times a week. As with the rest of the Grandes Ecoles d'Ingénieurs, the French classes were dominated by male students, whereas the opposite was the case for the American students.

University term	No. of American students	No. of French students
Spring/ Summer 1997	11 females 3 males	3 females 5 males
Spring/ Summer 1998	12 females 1 male	2 females 8 males
Spring/ Summer 1999	12 females 2 males	3 females 7 males
Autumn 1999	18 females 4 males	1 female 18 males

3.3 Course design

3.3.1 Introduction

As we saw in Section 2.6, the course design was built around a toolkit metaphor. These three toolkits provide an initial category for the study of our students' understandings, misunderstandings, negotiations and conflicts and will be described in detail throughout the data analysis. Worksheets were prepared specifically for the course, parts of them being subsequently published or presented at conferences. The degree of effectiveness of the toolkits in promoting intercultural awareness and increasing motivation was assessed through questionnaires, interviews, student essays and e-mails and analysis of student reactions during one or two interactive videoconferences.

3.3.2 A toolkit metaphor- the perceptual toolkit

As preparation for the course, the students initially did a number of exercises looking at individual perceptual differences and then moved on to exercises on the semantics of colour, which highlight both individual differences and culturally biased ones (Appendix VIII). The physical properties of colour, hue, luminosity and intensity or saturation were looked at (Armstrong 1991) and it was pointed out that although they would appear to be universal, different conventions are used by different cultures to express this physical reality. A look at the electromagnetic spectrum which shows the difficulty of defining the border between green and blue or green and yellow was followed by an exercise using colour chips of ambiguous colours such as turquoise, apricot or maroon.

The individual differences which inevitably appear were then discussed, before the students were given background information about colour theory, for example the 1969 Berlin and Kay study of colour terms in 98 languages. Following the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, it could be assumed that there would be considerable intercultural differences in colour descriptors, but in fact Berlin and Kay's findings showed that there was a great deal of agreement on the colours judged to be the best examples of "basic colour terms"[22] and that there also seemed to be a universal order in the way these terms developed. The 98 languages tested could be divided into 22 linguistic groups, according to which perceptual categories they used, group one with two categories (black and white) and the last group with a more differentiated system of 11 basic colours (Munsell Color Company 1966). The distribution was organised as shown in the following table, but modified in 1975 to include languages which use the same word for blue and green like *glas* in Breton or *kinga* in Mooré, an

African language of the Ivory Coast (Gourvès- Hayward 1992). According to Berlin and Kay, the acquisition of these categories goes from left to right on the table. All languages have a term for black and white and if they have three terms they will be black, white and red.

Hierarchical organisation of basic colour terms: Berlin and Kay (1969)

					purple
White	Red	green	Blue	brown	pink
Black		yellow			orange
					grey

In her research on prototypes and natural categories, the American psychologist, Eleanor Rosch Heider[23], comes to a similar conclusion, with basic colours, or what she terms "focal colours" being consistently chosen as the "best example" of a colour. There would be for example, a universal representation of focal red, with all other shades of red belonging to a greater or lesser extent to the category red. The boundaries separating different colours would be different, however, according to the number of terms available. For example, red would also cover the other warm shades such as orange, yellow and pink for languages where there were only three basic terms, the central red remaining the same (Rosch Heider 1971, 1972; Rosch 1975a; Mervis, Catlin and Rosch 1975).

The students then reflected on to what extent the fact that a language contains a limited or vast number of terms in a particular area could be a reflection of a cultural reality, even if there are such universals (Rosch 1975b). They also considered the different associations of colours within different cultures (McNeill 1972; Abraham 1998). Finally, they did an

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[22]A basic colour was defined as (a) monolexemic, i.e. its meaning cannot be predicted from the meaning of its parts e.g. bluish (b) its meaning cannot be contained in another colour term e.g. scarlet (c) its application cannot be restricted to a narrow class of objects, e.g. blond (d) it must be psychologically salient for all informants, occurring at the beginning of elicited colour lists and have stability of reference across informants and usage. (Berlin and Kay, 1969: 6)

[23] Rosch Heider has published under both names: Rosch Heider, E. 1971, 1972; Rosch, 1975a, 1975b.

exercise where they categorised colour chips according to the three colours used by Gouro speakers from the Ivory Coast: **ti - black, fou - white and son - red** (Appendix VIII).

The main aim of these exercises was to provide first hand experience of using a far more limited number of categories than those available in English to define colour, in order to encourage students to see a different point of view, from a different cultural perspective. It also hoped to provoke discussion of the following question: To what extent does language 'colour' the world around us and to what extent does our perception of the world 'colour' our language? A similar exercise, using a category such as kinship terms where there are fewer terms in English was then added to give a more balanced view (Gourvès-Hayward 1998).

The French students' initial reaction, which was to reduce the exercises to an easily solved, deductive problem, was modified during the course. Andrée, who was present as an observer during the lessons, commented that I had gradually changed my presentation of the subject, in order to ensure more student participation and reflection. As well as answering the questions above, the students also reflected on whether there is such as thing as an objective, scientific reality. The individual perceptual differences also lead to discussion on inclusion and exclusion. For instance, several students reported feelings of inadequacy when they did not see the same pictures as the rest of the group.

> I asked them how they felt if they couldn't see the two pictures and both Flore and Grégory said they felt stupid and hated not seeing something other people could see. We talked about the system they are products of, where they have to be the best and have the right answer and about the fact that there can be more than one answer. When we did the colour activities, they talked a lot about personal differences and about what it must be like to have three colour words. They did it thoughtfully and not immediately, like the first time I did the lesson, where presumably I didn't give them enough to find out. They were really enthusiastic and Bertrand said it was "super-fun!". [.....] In the questionnaire, Etienne chose making the film as the most interesting, followed by reading and devising questions about Evidences Invisibles and then the colour and perception exercises, which is encouraging.
> (Extract from teaching diary, March 2000 and June 2000)

Others noted that they were able to see a different perspective after another student had explained it to them. This also prompted reflection on the importance of empathy and of appropriate communication strategies.

3.3.3 A toolkit metaphor- the conceptual toolkit

The main focus of the courses, both in essays set by the teachers and student discussion in their e-mails and the videoconferences emerged from the *conceptual toolkit.* The conceptual tools used for this toolkit consisted of lessons about intercultural communication and analysis of French and American cultural differences. We selected various readings, as deemed appropriate, from works of anthropology, sociology, newspaper articles and children's literature. American remakes and the original French films also provided a fruitful source of information, both for the study of cultural behaviours (Modleski 1988; Carroll 1989; Mancini 1989; Kramsch 1993) and as a metaphor for what Raby (1995) calls a "perilous and lonely voyage of discovery" which is faced both by the student and the foreigner as they enter an unknown culture.

The variety in these texts aims to both cater for the different interests expressed by each group and to strike a balance between erudite studies, more anecdotal accounts and the use of film and literature. Readings were taken, for example from Hall (1969, 1983, 1990) for discussion of attitudes to time and space and high and low context cultures, Trompenaars (1993) for workshop dilemmas built around case studies or from Platt's anecdotal but insightful guidelines for Americans doing business in France (Platt 1995).

The American students studied Wylie and Brière's textbook, which is written in French and is intended "to help American students better understand the French people" (Wylie and Brière 1995: viii). The French students read extracts from Stewart and Bennett's

work on *American Culture Patterns*, adapted for French readers by Dumortier and providing:

> une analyse en version originale sous-titrée de l'Amérique par des Américains pour des Américains selon une problématique de relations avec des non-Américains abordée avec des références intellectuelles typiquement américaines. Il offre ainsi la possibilité d'une quadruple lecture.

(Dumortier in Stewart and Bennett, 1995:7)

One of the most useful texts was found to be Raymonde Carroll's "Evidences Invisibles"(Carroll 1987), which was read in the original French version by the American students and in its English translation "Cultural Misunderstandings"(Carroll1988) by the students at the ENST Bretagne. Carroll describes various contexts such as home, friendship, conversation or parent/child relationships, where the difference between what is inherently obvious and thus invisible for either French or American people can lead to misunderstanding. The insights gained by these readings were intended to provide students with an initial approach to the "third place" as critical observers (Kinginger, Gourvès-Hayward and Simpson, 1999; Gourvès-Hayward, Simpson and Kinginger, 1999).

One of the major themes which emerged, partly out of the nature of the materials chosen and partly from the students' own preoccupations, was that of socialisation, primary socialisation, when the child acquires cultural "rules" and secondary socialisation, that of formal educational practices and

> those informal processes of learning which take place in and around or even during the other more formal processes.

(Scollon and Scollon, 1995)

Carroll (1998) notes that differences in such socialisation practices are a source of great misunderstanding in French /American intercultural discourse.

> Faced with such profound cultural differences at practically each stage in the life cycle, we can only marvel, not at the number of sources for misunderstandings, but rather at the possibilities for-and the existence of - any understandings at all.

(Carroll [1987] 1988: 57)

Confirmation or disconfirmation of these themes was then sought through the study of such texts as children's literature, and of a selection of French films and their American remakes, such as "Trois hommes et un couffin" (Coline Serreau, 1985), and its remake "Three Men and a Baby" (Leonard Nimoy, 1987) and "Neuf Mois" (Patrick Braoudé, 1994) and its remake "Nine Months" (Christopher Columbus, 1995). These difficulties, according to Carroll, can be traced to fundamental differences in views about sources of identity either in the individual or society. American parents feel that they have a debt to their child so that he or she can develop in the best possible way, but French parents feel that their debt is to the society, which must eventually accept the child as one of its members. A further source of misunderstanding would stem from differing beliefs about the lifecycle. American children tend to have a life of comparative freedom and self fulfilment followed by an adolescence dedicated to proving that they are becoming responsible adults, whereas French children are relatively constrained until adolescence, where they are able to taste freedom, even if they are still living under their parents' roof. French adults are often given financial, emotional and practical support by their parents to a relatively advanced age.

Support for this view was found in several remakes, for instance in "Trois Hommes et un Couffin" (Coline Serreau, 1985), and its remake "Three Men and a Baby" (Leonard Nimoy, 1987). Both films show three men sharing a flat and living a kind of prolonged adolescence, which is perturbed by the arrival of a baby, who is left on their doorstep. In both cases, Jacques/Jack, the baby's father, asks his mother for help to look after the baby. In the French film, Jacques is so sure his mother will help him that he takes a plane and arrives at her home with the baby. The underlying assumption in the French film is that it would be quite acceptable for the baby to be left with Jacques'mother if she were free. However, the French grandmother has to say she cannot be of help as she is about to go on a cruise with her

friend Marie-Rose, who is present throughout the proceedings. She does so reluctantly and with a term of endearment:

Oh, je vais pas pouvoir te la garder, mon Jacques.

As Carroll explains, for the French parent:

...my behaviour with respect to my child is constantly subject to the judgement of others, which explains why I am always tempted to justify myself when my child's conduct does not correspond, or might not correspond, to what a third party [..] might expect. If my child "behaves badly"therefore, I am immediately placed in a conflictful situation: I must show others that I know the rules and I am wearing myself out trying to teach them to my child; at the same time, I must also show my child that I love him or her anyway.

(Carroll, ibid: 47)

The scene is treated very differently in the American remake: "Three Men and a Baby". It takes place with no outside witnesses: Carroll explains that Americans feel that their offspring should not be corrected in public, and particularly not in front of their peers. Jack tells his mother over the telephone that she is a grandmother and invites her to his home to meet Mary. Jack is faced with the difficult task of making an unreasonable request of an American senior citizen. In Carroll's analysis it appears that:

they have earned the right to have a quiet or fast-paced life, as they choose, in any case a life free of the demands and tears of small children.

(Carroll ibid: 57)

In desperation, Jack attempts to persuade his mother to change her mind by joking:

I was kinda hoping that you could take care of her, just for a little while, not for ever. You know, until she's ready to vote.

Jack's mother says that of course she would have loved to do so, although the elegant way she is dressed, in a suit and with white gloves, which she does not remove, somewhat contradicts this offer. However, she enjoins Jack to face up to his responsibilities in no uncertain terms:

Cut the crap, Jack!

followed by :

Jack, you've always run away from responsibility. Now you have to turn and face it.

When Jack replies that he is a "screw-up" she retorts:

You were a screw-up, now you're a father. And you'll be a fine one!

Her response is in keeping with Carroll's view that in the United States:

[...]the implicit parental injunction is to always seize every opportunity, to climb farther and higher[..] Not to do so is to condemn oneself to mediocrity, to wasted chances, to the ultimate failure which consists of not exploiting one's human potential to the fullest.

(Carroll ibid: 53)

Another source of support for Carroll's observations was found in the study of classic children's literature. In Alphonse Daudet's: *La Chèvre de Monsieur Seguin* ([1949] 2001), the little goat who is determined to see the outside world, manages to escape to the mountains but is eaten by the wolf after only one night of freedom spent fighting off the enemy. In *Les Malheurs de Sophie* (de Ségur, [1862] 1977) Sophie only ventures as far as the farmyard against her mother's will and has her feet burned by lime. The readers of these, and many other such cautionary tales for children, learn that the world is a dangerous place and that one must listen to adults and conform to the rules of society if one wants to survive. This is in direct contrast to American tales, such as *The Little Engine That Could* (Piper [1930] 1976). In this tale we see the power of positive thinking, when a little engine manages to pull a bigger engine over the mountain to deliver the children's toys, by sheer will power and effort and by repeating "I think I can, I think I can". In the *Curious George* stories (Rey, [1941] 1993) the Man with the Yellow Hat's monkey also wishes to explore the world. His curiosity leads him into all sorts of scrapes but he always redeems himself, usually through his own initiative, showing that the world is fundamentally benign and it is always possible to save oneself, even without adult help.

3.3.4 Themes for analysis

From the students' initial approach to these texts, several recurrent themes could be identified:

1) Interpersonal relationships

Grandparent/ Parent / children relationships

Friendship

Love and marriage

2) Education

Comparison of education systems

Campus life

3) Class

Ascription/achievement societies

Differing attitudes to money and success

4) Food

Fast food

Genetically modified food

The importance of family meals.

5) Television and cinema

Hollywood

L'exception culturelle

Humour in film

Place of television in peoples' lives

6) Attitudes to authority

The Police

Teachers

7) Wider issues

Immigration

Globalisation

These themes provided a starting point for my analysis which were then supplemented by observations from the videoconferences and student and colleagues' feedback.

3.3.5 A toolkit metaphor- the technological toolkit

The technological toolkit consisted of web pages, which each group of students posted in the target language, correspondence with a keyboard pal and two videoconferences per class. The initial choice of a keyboard pal was made by reading personal histories, which students wrote in the foreign language. From then on, correspondence was left up to the individual students. Some of them tended to reinterpret this task as informal socialising, although others corrected each other's mistakes and tried to work together on some of their course work. Some students corresponded at length and developed a strong relationship, whereas others did not take up the challenge.

Our aim in using videoconferencing was not to reproduce the traditional teacher-dominated classroom, as is usually the case in Distance Learning programmes, but for the students to exchange their views. We hoped eventually to create a virtual classroom community. Each year we intended to programme two videoconferences. This was possible for three of the groups involved in this study, but not for the group of Autumn 1999, where only one videoconference could take place, due to the organisation of the American University timetable. For similar reasons, this group of students were our Level 4, students with an advanced level of English, but who had not completed our final level. This had both positive and negative implications for the project. The students produced more work than those who were attending lessons on a voluntary basis but had a lower level and were generally less positive towards the project.

Academic year	Group French side	Group USA side	Dates of videoconferences	Code
1996-1997	Level 5 Option	French 312	2 – 1 recorded VIDEO 1 April 1997	Mélanie Pilou
1997-1998	Level 5 Option	French 312	2 - both recorded VIDEO 2A March 1998 VIDEO 2B May 1998	"A quite too usual question." "Agreeing to disagree."
1998- 1999	Level 5 Option	French 326	2 - both recorded VIDEO 3A April 1999 VIDEO 3B May 1999	"Où est mon Etienne?" Dancing
1999- 2000	Level 4	French 402W	1- recorded VIDEO 4 December 1999	"L'exception culturelle"

Table of Videoconference links

3.3.6 Videoconferencing - background details

The videoconferences used ISDN connections with CODECs, which allow the video signals to be compressed and decompressed so that they can be sent over multiple telephone lines. In theory, the signal can be sent using two lines, but we found after experimenting that four lines produced the picture and sound quality necessary. At the time, the cost of these lines was approximately 0.6 Euro a minute but prices are rapidly being reduced. In spite of the use of four lines, technical problems can arise. These and other interactional aspects of the medium will be discussed in detail in Section 4.8.2.1.

In ENST Bretagne, which was directly financed by France Telecom at the time of the project, use of the technology was routine for meetings between researchers and directors and the other sites of the Telecom schools in Paris, Rennes and Lille. Experimentation had also begun for Distance Learning programmes but, apart from the Capital University project, there had been no comparable meetings between students. Although we were given a free rein, and

were subsequently given financing to present our project at various international conferences, there was initially little institutional interest in our project. The invitation to attend the videoconference sent to the directors was either ignored or dismissed in an e-mail, which simply stated: "Merci du renseignement." In Midwest University, there was no history of use of the facility and the first videoconferences were attended by the Dean, other members of faculty and reporters. The second videoconference was also featured on the local television news, where the Dean was highly enthusiastic as Solange comments in this e-mail received just after the conference:

> Objet:
> Re: Videoconference April 24th -Reply -Reply
> Date: Mon, 28 Apr 1997 15:00:05 -0600
> [..]You noticed all the attention we were getting- the flashbulbs etc. They put us on the local evening news, on a local public news radio and in the local paper. [..] on the whole my colleagues approve, some (like the dean) effusively. In places that are more accustomed to this kind of thing I am sure they might have been less hoopla, whatever, here it is new and interesting. And I think we are getting ever closer to an extremely worthwhile use of the medium, with the prior e-mail and the topics and so forth.

This media and institutional interest was to have both positive and negative repercussions; the presence of so many outsiders during the videoconferences added to the stress felt by the American students but it also made the project more exciting.

3.3.7 Organising the data

The subjects which had emerged from the *conceptual toolkit* were supplemented by themes which I identified from analysis of the student essays, questionnaires, web pages, e-mails and recordings of the videoconferences. Each of these categories was coded; the written documents were annotated and the video extract codes were sorted by computer. Some extracts, which illustrated different aspects of the analysis, had several codes, which was to present a problem when it came to the presentation of the data. The following table presents the choice of codes used to categorise my information.

Category	Code
Locus of control	LOC
Intertextuality	INTERTEXT
Intersubjectivity	INTSUB
This key board buddy thing is really important	KEYBUD
False understanding	FALSE
Misunderstanding	MIS
Misunderstanding/negotiation of meaning consensus –scaffolding.	SCAFF
Cultural information about home culture	CULT CONT
Giving a different cultural perspective	CULTPERSP
Attacking some aspect of the other culture An axe to grind	ATG
Positioning – as expert on own culture, as personal voice, as superior/inferior	POS
Children/parents/ grandparents	KIDS
Education	EDU
Authority	AUTH
Television	TELLY

These codes provided me with a focus, as suggested by Seliger and Shohamy (1989),

who define the process of conducting qualitative research in SLA, which I have extended to

SCA as follows:

1) Define the phenomenon of second language to be described

2) Use qualitative methods to gather data.

3) Look for patterns in the data.

4) Validate initial conclusions by returning to the data or collecting more data.

5) If necessary, return to step 1 and repeat the cycle, redefine the area of focus on the basis of the first cycle.

(Seliger and Shohamy 1989: 122)

and:

Deriving a set of categories for dealing with text segments from the text itself. This is an inductive procedure. Once the categories have been established they are applied to the remainder of the data; this leads to refinement of categories and the discovery of new commonalities or patterns. Thus they serve as an ordering system for the data content. This type of research study is usually descriptive and exploratory in nature.

(Seliger and Shohamy 1989: 205)

This procedure is particularly appropriate for the use of video, which, as Goldman Segall puts it:

> the process of making discoveries and the process of communicating those discoveries are both enhanced as a recursive reaction, within the data and among the users; that the meaning of an event, action or situation can be negotiated as "thick descriptions" as layered and contextualised narratives are created.

(Goldman-Segall, 1992:258)

For the purpose of analysis, all except the first videoconference were recorded by video[24]. This recording system is an integral part of the videoconferencing system. The camera zooms in on individual speakers as they are speaking, but the peripheral sound is also recorded. The advantage of this system is that it is invisible to the participants, who were nevertheless informed of the camera's presence. The main disadvantage is that each side of the interaction has to be recorded separately. In other words, each videoconferencing system records the interaction from the French side on one video recorder and the American side on a second video recorder. In order to show the whole interaction, a montage has to be done. This involves editing each separate turn and is highly time-consuming. The first of our montages was done by an American technician and the other five by the Audiovisual Department at ENST Bretagne. I also kept copies of each separate interaction, in case any vital data was lost during the montage process, although, to my knowledge, this seems to have happened only once. In this case, I had noted a comment made by a background observer and this had been cut from the montage.

Once I had identified, redefined and analysed the themes listed in Section 3.3.4, I edited the films to prepare an illustrative montage. This involved a huge amount of preparation in the studio, which I found the most difficult part of the project. I had already watched each videoconference countless times, made notes and and written transcripts and had produced

---

[24] At the time we were not aware that such a facility existed.

several short montages for conference presentations. However, this process involved meticulous coding of each sequence by counter number, subject, speaker(s) and code. A selection could then be made for the final montage, which had to have a logical progression. I also needed to learn how to type in titles and comments, which were then incorporated into the montage. I used an adapted version of the recording logs already in use in the school and followed Duranti's guidelines on data retrieval (Duranti 1997:340-344). The use of codes was once more very helpful and could also give a general impression of the dominant themes in each videoconference (the Log Sheets are included in Appendix XXI).

3.4 Choice of methodology

3.4.1 Introduction

As a Head of Department and English teacher in the French Grande Ecole involved in the study, I had responsibility for the implementation of the course and a privileged access both to student groups and to the technologies required for telecollaboration. My main aim was to develop a telecollaborative pedagogy for intercultural awareness, which I would then implement and assess. This was intended both to inform my own practice and to provide a model which could be relevant to similar institutions. I wished to make my own analysis as a reflective practitioner (Schön 1991) but also to integrate other perspectives, that of the students and my partners on the project. Given the nature of the study, which involved course design, observation and assessment of teaching methods and practice, along with analysis of student interaction through telecollaboration, an observational, qualitative approach seemed to be the most relevant.

An action research dimension to the research design was also applicable, in the sense that I was observing and analysing both my own pedagogical methods and my own classroom. As with the action research cycle of *planning, action, observation, reflection*

(Richards and Lockhart 1994: 13) both the contents of the course and the methods for assessing the course were constantly refined and modified. This was carried out after consultation with the students and my colleagues, classroom observation and analysis of student interaction through e-mails and videoconferences.

A third dimension of the research design was the integration of a theoretical framework informed by sociocultural theory, which has influenced both my way at looking at language and culture and my views on education. Finally, the notion of positioning (Davies and Harré 1990; Harré and Gillett 1994), which is explained in Section 3.4.7, was also used to elucidate student interaction.

3.4.2 Qualitative methodology

Seliger and Shohamy describe qualitative research as being *synthetic* or *holistic*, *heuristic*, with *little* or *no manipulation* of the research environment and using data collection procedures with *low-explicitness* (1989: 119).

Sherman and Webb provide the following list of characteristics:

context, discovery, natural settings, holism, non-interventionist methods, interpreting patterns and relationships, judging or appraising.

(Sherman and Webb, 1988: 5-7)

The approach adopted for the study described in this thesis is holistic, focusing on the experiential whole (Dewey 1938), a perspective in which, as Clandinin and Connelly (1991:261) put it: "education, experience, and life are inextricably intertwined." This experiential whole necessarily embraces both the individual and the social:

The primary language of the personal needs to be simultaneously individual, social, cultural, and personally historical, as in biography.

(Clandinin and Connelly, 1991: 262)

Having designed and implemented a particular pedagogical approach, I wished to observe the degree of effectiveness of such an approach in my own classroom and in the virtual classroom created through the use of telecollaboration. After an extensive review of the literature, I had begun my analysis from a sociocultural perspective, a view which stresses the historically and socially-embedded nature of interaction and the importance of context. I did not wish to test a hypothesis but to observe the effects both of the pedagogical design and the affordances and constraints (Gibson 1977) of the media used to interact with the native-speaker peer group. Finally, my aim as a participant-observer was to discover and then to interpret patterns which emerged throughout the five-year project, in order to suggest a pedagogical model that could be adapted by other teachers.

Although I do not adopt the bipolar view of the choice between qualitative and quantitative methodologies espoused by many researchers, qualitative research is being increasingly seen as both more easily applicable and more relevant to classroom research than quantitative research. Seliger and Shohamy (1989) list the following reasons for this:

1) It is not easy to apply the controls necessary for quantitative research in the classroom.

2) Many experimental studies, for instance those carried out in the 1960s to compare language teaching methods, for example to show the superiority of the audio-lingual method over the grammar-translation method (Sherer and Wertheimer 1964), were both cumbersome and provided inconclusive results.

3) Experimental settings which are controlled and artificial may elicit distorted data which is different from those collected in natural settings.

(Seliger and Shohamy 1989: 119)

Or, to paraphrase Bronfenbrenner (1977: 513), experimental settings involve the strange behaviour of strangers in strange situations, for the briefest possible period of time.

3.4.3 An emergent research design

The implementation and observation of telecollaborative pedagogy in practice was carried out based on an emergent research design. (Jacob, 1987; Maykut and Morehouse, 1996)

Maykut and Morehouse describe this type of research design as follows:

Analysis begins when one has accumulated a subset of the data, providing an opportunity for the salient aspects of the phenomenon under study to begin to emerge. These initial leads are followed by pursuing the relevant persons, settings, or documents that will help illuminate the phenomenon of interest. In other words there is a broadening or narrowing of the focus as the data suggests it.

(Maykut and Morehouse, 1996: 46)

For Seliger and Shohamy:

The procedures [of qualitative research] have been likened to a funnel or an upside-down pyramid, meaning that the investigation progresses from the general to the specific. Another image to describe them is that of the spiral – while the researcher progresses from general to more specific data collection, there is also a repetition of the cycles of observation and analysis. As the research progresses, each successive stage of analysis may lead the researcher to focus on different aspect of the phenomenon for observation as the picture becomes more focused.

(Seliger and Shohamy 1989:121)

The image adopted for the emergent nature of the research design used for this thesis resembles the spiral metaphor. Data which was categorised then formed new research foci, which in their turn were enriched by new categories of meaning. Many writers, such as Kane (1985) and Evertson and Green (1986), suggest this categorisation of data to form research foci:

Foci are selected because they are recurrent phenomena or events or they highlighted some specific area of interest.

(Evertson and Green 1986: 201)

3.4.4 Triangulation

Agar (1986, cited in Silverman 1993) criticises the "received view of science" which concentrates on questions such as "What's your hypothesis?" "How do you measure that?" "Did you pre-test the instrument?" He noted that:

> For some research styles, especially those that emphasize the scientific testing role, those questions make sense. But for other styles – when the social researcher assumes a *learning role* – the questions don't work. When you stand on the edge of a village and watch the noise and motion, you wonder, Who are the people and what are they doing? When you read a news story about the discontent of young lawyers with their profession, you wonder, 'What is going on here?' Hypotheses, measurement, samples and instruments are the wrong guidelines. Instead, you need to learn about a world you understand by encountering it firsthand and making some sense out of it.
>
> (Agar 1986:12)

Although this seems to be implied by Agar's statement, this does not mean, as Silverman (1993) notes, that issues of validity and reliability are irrelevant to qualitative research which cannot rely on anecdotal accounts or "intensive personal involvement" (Agar 1986) One method commonly adopted with the aim of ensuring reliability and validity is that of triangulation. This notion derives from navigation, which uses different bearings to give the correct position of an object. Triangulation involves using multiple sources of data collection to gain both an *emic* perspective, based on the concepts of the protagonists rather than those of the researcher (Boas 1943; Pike 1954; Goodenough 1956; Frake 1980) and an *etic* view, based on the researcher's perspective. For Denzin (1970), one of the major early advocates of the method for sociological research, participant observation would thus simultaneously combine:

> [...] document analysis, respondent and informant interviewing, direct participation and observation and introspection.
>
> (Denzin, 1970: 186)

This view is echoed by many researchers, for example, Maykut and Morehouse (1996: 65-6) or Kane (1985) who states that:

> theoretical triangulation uses several theories or perspectives to examine the same material.
>
> (Kane, 1985: 52)

and, somewhat melodramatically:

> If you had to stake your life on which of these three areas is likely to represent the most accurate, complete research information, you would choose the centre in which you get the information through interviews and questionnaires and reinforced by observation.
>
> (Kane, ibid: 51)

Jorgensen (1989: 37) elaborates on this point:

> The participant observer [...] rarely depends on a single form of evidence. Concepts are formulated and checked by multiple procedures and forms of evidence such as direct experience and observation, different forms of interviews, and different informants, artefacts, and documents.
>
> (Jorgensen 1989: 37)

He also stresses the advantages of discussing the data and the field experiences with colleagues:

> In short then, becoming the phenomenon is a participant observational strategy for penetrating to and gaining direct experience of a form of human life. It is an objective approach insofar as it results in the accurate detailed description of the insider's experience of life. In carrying out this strategy, it is important that the researcher be able to switch back and forth between the insider's perspective and an analytic framework. This may be facilitated by talking over field experiences with colleagues.
>
> (Jorgensen 1989: 65)

This view is also endorsed by Seliger and Shohamy (1989):

> By using a variety of procedures and by obtaining data from a variety of sources the researcher often obtains rich and comprehensive data. Such data usually provide an expanded and global picture of the phenomenon, as each source provides additional data.
>
> (Seliger and Shohamy 1989: 160)

As Silverman notes, the use of a combination of methods is non-contentious. However, along with other researchers (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983; Dingwall 1981) he warns against claims that different views will give a picture of the objective truth. The aim of triangulation advocated is rather to address the situated, context-bound nature of social interaction and accounts of that interaction. Each different aspect of the data is then used to make better sense of the other (Dingwall 1981; Silverman 1993).

In this study, I have adopted multiple methods in order to allow different voices and perspectives to emerge. However, I hope to have avoided what Hammersley and Atkinson term the:

> [..] naively optimistic view that the aggregation of data from different sources will unproblematically add up to produce a more complete picture.
>
> (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983: 199)

3.4.5 Creative leaps of imagination

I did not use a first person narrative style for the main body of my thesis and, although I recognise the interest of such studies, did not intend to give an account of my journey as a researcher, as in the following extract from the introduction to Pat d'Arcy's thesis:

> This thesis also tells the story of my journey as an educational researcher. It acknowledges the mistakes I made, the confusions I grappled with and what I discovered about myself as an educator and about the values that underpin my thinking which sustained the whole enterprise.
>
> (D'Arcy http://www.bath.ac.uk/edsajw/pat.html last accessed 26/07/99)

Nevertheless, certain aspects of my thesis correspond to the Action Research model as defined thus by Whitehead (1998):

> [..] research-based professionalism refers to the process of enhancing teacher professionalism through constructing our professional knowledge-base from our self studies of our own professional practice. Living educational theories are, for me, the descriptions and explanations

which individuals offer for their own professional learning as they ask, answer and research questions of the kind, 'how do I improve what I am doing?'

(Whitehead 1998)

and earlier:

The strength of the action research approach to professional development rests upon a creative and critical dialogue between members of a community which includes teachers, academics, parents, industrialists and politicians. We move ahead by creative leaps of imagination. We learn from our mistakes in detailed criticisms of our positions.

(Whitehead in McNiff 1988:xi)

Furthermore, I was not working as an outside researcher, but performing research as a reflective practitioner:

Teaching may be regarded as means of improving schooling, by focusing on generalized issues of the management of curriculum or class, or it may be seen as a means of engaging in a critical process of action reflection which is in itself education.

(McNiff 1988:xiii)

Ellis (1994), reporting on the relationship between research and teacher development, notes that current views diverge from that of Long (1990), who believes that research can be used to tell teachers how and what to teach. Widdowson (1990:60) suggests that teachers engage in "a process of pragmatic mediation" through discussion of pedagogic concerns informed by insights from r_search. Ellis extends this view, suggesting that research can provide teachers with "ideas at different levels which they can then try out in their own classrooms"(Ellis 1994:688).

However, he concludes by observing that:

[..] some educationalists might feel that research undertaken by professional researchers will always be of limited value to language teachers and that a more worthwhile and exciting approach is action research, where teachers become researchers by identifying research questions important to them and seeking answers in their own classrooms.

(Ellis 1994:689)

Freeman (1996) calls for a new definition of the relationship between teaching and research. He criticises educational researchers, who in their wish to link actions to particular results or outcomes, which are assessed as products

> [..] often create detached, stylised images of the messiness of teaching; they can then stand outside these images to examine what is going on within them. The study of teaching becomes the examination of what is done in classrooms, of teachers' and students' behaviors and activity. However, these orderly images might lie more in the images themselves than in the world they are meant to capture.

(Freeman 1996: 92)

For Freeman, teachers' stories and "narrative ways of knowing" (Bruner, 1986) provide them with a unique stance as a participant observer, able to both observe and intervene and interact.

Teacher-researcher Paley (1986: 124) describes this process as follows:

> The act of teaching becomes a daily search for the child's point of view accompanied by that sometimes unwelcome disclosure of my own private attitudes. The search was what mattered – only later did someone tell me it was research – and it provided an open-ended script from which to observe, interpret, and integrate the living drama of the classroom.

(Paley 1986: 124)

3.4.6 A sociocultural perspective

Over the last decade, sociocultural theory, or SCT, having gained prominence in developmental and educational research (Lave and Wenger 1991; Forman, et al. 1993) has been increasingly adopted as a framework for SLA research (Lantolf and Pavlenko 1995; Lantolf and Appel 1994; Donato 1994; Coughlan and Duff 1994; Kinginger 2001a, 2001b, 2002). As Lantolf and Pavlenko (1995), building on Lave and Wenger (1991), note:

> It [SCT] erases the boundary between language learning and language using; it also moves individuals out of the Chomskian world of ideal speaker-hearer and the experimental laboratory and redeploys them in the world of their everyday existence, including real classrooms.

(Lantolf and Pavlenko, 1995: 116)

For Kinginger, (2001a) SCT has the potential to go "beyond the boundaries" to provide a holistic alternative to the either/or duality between theory and practice, mind and society.

She points out that, by seeing learning and teaching as socially, culturally and historically situated activities, SCT can provide a theoretical basis for action research aiming for educational transformation. She goes on to explain that:

> the intellectual perspective offered by SCT is fundamentally different from the standard Western understanding of practice as applied theory. Rather, research within the SCT framework is grounded in social activity, asking how that action furthers the development of higher mental functions. Many of the insights this research generates are *directly interpretable in practical terms, and have immediate implications for instructional practice.*
>
> (Kinginger, 2001a: 221-222, emphasis added)

For Kinginger, the numerous interpretations of SCT share certain basic premises. Firstly, as we saw in Section 1.3.3.2, SCT emphasises the social origin of cognition, where development begins with and proceeds through participation in social activity. Secondly, the focus is on the fact that cognition is mediated through tools, such as language. Finally, and more appropriately for the present argument, the emphasis is on the observation of socially shared development as a dynamic process, using a "research methodology based on history over time" (Kinginger, ibid: 208). As Kinginger (ibid) points out, adopting a sociocultural perspective can provide a lens where:

> [..] the classroom begins to look less like a laboratory where students test mental hypotheses on input, or a dispensary of knowledge into the vessels of human minds, and more like a contact zone, where they get privileged access to discourse which they then appropriate, ignore or resist. To understand what is going on requires that we attempt to grasp the complex and dynamic interaction between learners and teachers, their identity and history and the opportunities available (or inaccessible) in settings designed for learning.
>
> (Kinginger, 2001a: 218-219).

Breen (1985) suggests that classrooms should not be seen as an "experimental laboratory" or as "discourse". He sees classrooms as living cultures, which are interactive and jointly constructed and proposes the metaphor of the classroom as "culture" or as "coral gardens". The metaphor of gardens, he argues, allows us to perceive the psychological change and social events characteristic of the classroom, which are "irrevocably linked".

(Breen 1985:142). More recently, (Breen 1996), drawing on Fairclough's Critical discourse analysis, (Fairclough 1989; 1992) which suggests an analysis of the communicative event at three levels, that of text, discourse process and social process, has suggested that we should see the learner as a discursive practitioner. Breen recommends that we go beyond discourse analysis, to study the way both participants in the classroom and people not present in the classroom, produce, interpret and combine texts.

> Analysis of the discourse, or more accurately of the text of the social interaction alone, is a rather superficial way of tracing the deeper and more complex influences of the social within learning process.

 (Breen 1996: 93)

Van Lier (2000) suggests an ecological perspective as an alternative to the input-output metaphor. His approach is grounded in a combination of sociocultural theory and the work of psychologists such as Gibson (1977, 1979); Bateson ([1958] 1972) and Bronfenbrenner (1977), to show that considerations such as time, place, others, goals and motives also have their importance. Interaction should be studied as a whole, integrating the context of learning opportunities with an assessment of the pedagogical value of the interactional processes involved. The researcher should study the effectiveness of the pedagogical strategies used and attempt to show the emergence of learning.

> The ecological perspective thus places a strong emphasis on contextualizing language into other semiotic systems, and into the contextual world as a whole. It also calls for a reexamination of assessment practices that attempt to locate success in the solitary performance of a learner, and of teaching practices that are cast in the form of 'instructional delivery systems'.

(Van Lier, 2000: 259)

3.4.7 Positioning

A final dimension of my analysis is the notion of positioning as posited by Davies and Harré (1990) and Harré and Gillet (1994). This notion is rooted in discursive psychology and is relevant both to my role as reflective practitioner and to my observations of student

interaction. Discursive psychologists argue for a change in perspective in the view of the construction of selfhood, from a transcendentalist to an immanentist perspective. This view of discursive practice is as a dynamic process, wherein the speaker adopts various shifting positions, rather than predetermined roles. As discourse unfolds, various subject positions are created and navigated by interlocutors. Any given interaction is mediated both by interlocutors' knowledge of pre-existing social structures and expectations and their own subjective histories:

> An individual emerges through the process of social interaction, not as a relatively fixed product but as one who is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate. Accordingly, who one is is always an open question depending upon the positions made available within one's own and others' discursive practices and within those practices, the stories through which we make sense of our own and others' lives.
>
> Davies and Harré (1990: 15)

Interlocutors both position themselves and are positioned by others in an "unfolding

narrative" where they can accept, refuse or renegotiate their position.

> As I enter into different discursive contexts, I come into different ways of conceptualizing and reacting to the same conditions. I must then position myself in relation to these possibly conflicting ways of construing events.
>
> (Harré and Gillett 1994:126)

In this project, students can be observed adopting or resisting the various subject positions made available by the confrontation with differing perspectives provided by the mirror group.

3.5 Data presentation

In order to present the data in a coherent way, I originally intended to take each of the main themes selected from the conceptual toolkit, such as friendship or parent /child relationships and present an analysis of students' cultural understanding or misunderstanding of the subject as expressed in the classroom, in questionnaires, in e-mails and in the

videoconferences. However, this proved very difficult, owing to the multiple, overlapping layers of each subject. For instance, a discussion of friendship in the videoconferences could illustrate a lack of awareness of other cultural schemata, which was also shown in a questionnaire answer on the subject of friendship but could equally be found in an essay on attitudes to authority or an extract from an e-mail message.

As shown in Section 3.3.7, I had analysed each of the media according to various other categories, which had been identified throughout the research period and which were exemplified in the videoconferences. I therefore decided to build my presentation of data around selected extracts from the videoconferences, which would provide a focus for each of my observations. These include not only evidence of cultural understanding or misunderstanding but, in keeping with the sociocultural theory perspective of my thesis, illustrations of collective scaffolding, the building of intersubjectivity and language play. An additional focus is the nature of the medium used and how it offers affordances or constraints (Gibson 1977) for communication and the development of cultural awareness.

Observations on each extract are supplemented by selections from the additional data. For example, in Section 4.8.4, "This keyboard buddy thing is really important" the title was taken from a comment in one of the student questionnaires. This and other extracts pertaining to " e-mail buddies" are also analysed and lead to a description of some e-mail relationships, which are of particular interest. Although I also had a large amount of student feedback on the contents of the preparatory lessons, I decided to omit a detailed analysis of this from the study, owing to the huge amount of data this represented, although some of these views are referred to when appropriate.

My initial research questions were open-ended ones such as: How can we extend the discourse options of the communicative classroom? How can we motivate our advanced students? How can telecollaboration promote cultural awareness? After a review of the

literature on the teaching of culture and on telecollaboration, as well as extensive reading on

sociocultural theory and the links between language, culture and thought, my questions

focused more on the opportunities both for cultural learning and for adopting various

discursive perspectives and epistemic roles. The change in locus of control afforded by the

use of multimedia was also of interest.

3.6 Feedback

During the project, I elicited feedback from the students on both sides of the Atlantic; I

also had access to Solange's student feedback about her courses and to the e-mails, which the

American students forwarded to their instructor.[25] We used this information to modify certain

aspects of the course. For example, some of the students expressed disappointment that the

questions in the videoconferences were too formal, so we tried to integrate an informal part.

Materials for the course were also constantly revised and added to. After the first year, I also

modified the research design by giving students questionnaires to assess their knowledge of

the peer group and foreign country as well as background detail about their exposure to other

cultures and their attitudes to the English and French language. This questionnaire was open-

ended and designed to obtain a general impression of the two groups, rather than as a test of

independent variables. I had initially been interested in the literature on learner variables,

such as personality, motivation or attitudes to the group under study (Ellis 1994) but decided

they were too many and too complex to be applied to my study.

Moreover, I also rejected the idea of pre-testing students for attitudes or eliciting lists of

stereotypes before and after the project. Such tests encourage dualistic thinking, by

evaluating attitudes to cultures in terms of bipolar traits (Seelye 1993). For instance the Grice

test (Grice 1934), which is still in use today, requires agreement or disagreement with

statements about a specific culture group, for example: "The French are emotional"[26]. Byram

and Morgan (1994) note the problems inherent in testing attitudes. They observe that testing

should match what has been deliberately taught and consciously learned. Moreover,

appropriate action in a given cultural context does not necessarily imply attitude change and

it is difficult to gauge openness, empathy or an ability to decenter in a quantifiable manner. In

my opinion, the search for a "third place" is an emergent, dialogic process, which cannot be

accounted for by traditional forms of testing.

Damen (1987) suggests four types of evaluation techniques: self report, enactments,

such as role plays or simulations, production of materials like essays or letters and teacher or

peer observation, which could provide an alternative to this type of test. Similarly, I provide

evidence, particularly that of the scripts of e-mails and recordings of videoconferences in the

virtual classroom, which give ample opportunity both for *ontogenetic* analysis, as student and

teacher understandings developed over time and for *microgenetic* analysis where learners are

caught in the actual process of learning (Vygotsky 1978). As Donato, paraphrasing Lave puts

it:

> [....] studies of verbal interactions in which participants are observed in the process of
> structuring communicative events jointly, and according to their own self-constructed goals,
> will provide important insights into the development of linguistic competence. The focus
> should be, therefore on observing the construction of co-knowledge and how this construction
> process results in linguistic change among and within individuals during joint activity.

(Donato 1994:39)

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[25] Although the French students all said they did not mind their e-mails being read, several of them admitted that
it would never occur to them to forward them to their teachers. Even with the American students, who usually
had no such reservations, some e-mails were lost, although we did have a database of about 500 e-mails.
[26] On the other hand, more recently, various educators (King 1990; Byram and Morgan 1994; Kelley and
Meyers 1995) have proposed interesting ways of evaluating cultural awareness and attitudes.

CHAPTER 4: LANGUACULTURE THROUGH

TELECOLLABORATION IN PRACTICE

4.1 Introduction

This section begins with a brief description of the "Grandes Ecoles" system and of the

particular school involved in the study, drawing on both theoretical accounts and student and

teacher voices. This is followed by a short description of the two American universities in the

study, highlighting the differences between the two systems. A general idea of some of the

students' personal prior texts, derived from questionnaires administered to all the students

involved in the study (Appendix I) and extracts from web pages, course work and e-mail

messages, precedes the presentation of a pedagogy of *languaculture* in practice, as outlined

previously.

4.2 Who are the students? -The "Grandes Ecoles" system

4.2.1 Introduction

The Higher Education system in France is unique in that it is divided into 2 distinct

sectors, that of the University and that of the "Grandes Ecoles", high prestige graduate

schools mainly specialising in Engineering, Administration or Business studies, the majority

of which are state-run and with minimal fees (around 900 euro per annum). As the French

school in this study, ENST Bretagne, is part of this system, a brief examination of the

background, admission procedures and of the status and importance in French society of the

"Grandes Ecoles" is necessary. This will situate the socio-historical context within which we

are working and explain certain student attitudes which are relevant to our study and which

will be explored in detail in chapter four. The importance of integrating the analysis of the

social context of learning, as exemplified by Vygotsky, Leont'ev, Wertsch and others, into a pedagogical study (Breen 1996) has already been examined in the methodology chapter. Furthermore, many of the French students' prior texts (see Sections 2.2.2.3 and 4.7) contain references to the system.

4.2.2 Noblesse d'Etat

First founded in the 18th century, where they were known as the "Ecoles Spéciales", the "Grandes Ecoles" system was consolidated under Napoléon I who, according to Albert Delfau (1902, in Magluilo 1982) saw in the schools the perfect opportunity to train a highly-qualified and devoted élite, and thus to retain control over the army, administrators and the engineering, medical and teaching professions. The schools were organised in small manageable units, with a competitive entrance examination. Although, theoretically, admission to the schools was on academic merit, many condemned them as being elitist centres for the transmission of privilege. This position, while meeting resistance to its strongest form which required closure of the schools, led to reform in the admissions procedures and to the expansion of the parallel University system which had hitherto been neglected.

However, Bourdieu (1989), in his highly influential, if controversial, study of four of the most prestigious schools, argued that the Napoleonic tradition continued with what he termed a "Noblesse d'Etat", a shared symbolic capital or state nobility replacing hereditary nobility, cultural capital replacing financial capital. As he stresses in his analysis, a large proportion of the schools are state-run, training Government officials, Directors and Managers of state-run companies or members of the professions, who in turn send their children to state-run schools.

Such sociological factors still limit the number of working-class students. Indeed, the figures taken from a survey commissioned by the Ministry of Education and published in the

journal *Education et Formation* (Euriat and Thélot, 1995: 41: 3- 15) which analysed the social origins of the students (based on both parents' professions) from four highly-rated "Grandes Ecoles", show a fall in the percentage of working-class students from twenty-nine percent in the early 1950s to nine percent today. Even taking into account the fall in the number of young people of working-class origin during this period (from ninety-one percent to sixty-eight percent of the population) the report concludes that, today, a working-class student is still twenty-three times less likely than a middle-class student to be accepted in one of the four schools, as opposed to twenty-four times less likely, thirty years ago.

4.2.3 The "Grandes Ecoles" today

4.2.3.1 Admissions

Nowadays, the University and "Grandes Ecoles" systems co-exist, with approximately three hundred Engineering and Business Schools. University entrance is open to all applicants with the "baccalauréat", (the French equivalent of "A" levels or the Leaving Certificate) which is obtained by approximately sixty percent of school leavers, although University students are more likely to have succeeded in the more academic S (Science), ES (Economics) or A (Arts) "baccalauréats". The "Grandes Ecoles" system requires success at entrance examinations with two (or more often three) years of highly intensive post-baccalauréat study called "classes préparatoires" or "prépa". Groups of schools require a common entrance examination ("concours commun") according to their specialisation, although all the engineering schools place particular emphasis on mathematics and physics. Many schools, including the school in this study (ENST Bretagne), now have parallel admissions, called "Admissions sur Titres", not always appreciated by purists, with an intake in second year of students with a French university MSc or a Higher National Diploma and

relevant work experience, although these students remain a minority[27]. The status or perceived status of these schools is a relevant consideration for the understanding of the attitudes of certain students in this study. This will be explored in detail in chapter four.

4.2.3.2 Ascription versus achievement

As we saw in Chapter 1, Trompenaars (1993) categorises French culture as an *ascription* culture, whereas American culture is an *achievement* culture. The definition itself contains a reference to the "Grandes Ecoles" system:

> Ascription means that status is attributed to you by birth, by kinship, gender or age but also by your connections (who you know) and your educational record (a graduate of Tokyo University or Haute Ecole Polytechnique).
>
> (Trompenaars, 1993: 9-10)

Graduates of such schools can be referred to for the rest of their lives (and on their death notices) as "Normalien", "Polytechnicien", or "Centralien". Achievement within the system is also highly prized, however. The student (called "élève" and not "étudiant") with the highest marks is known as the "major" of the "promotion" which guarantees him[28] the best jobs. This point can be illustrated by the following headline in the Figaro newspaper deconstructed by Polly Platt in "French or Foe" (1995):

> **David (X, inspecteur des Finances) intègre Stern**
>
> For French people, the headline resounds with coded information that Monsieur David is one of the most brilliant men in France (...) "X" is the code for the most prestigious and difficult engineering school in the world, the Ecole Polytechnique, in Palaiseau, near Paris, Inspecteur des Finances means that in addition, he not only went to the world's most difficult and

---

[27] 48% of engineering students come from "prépa" but this must be added to the 23% of schools which have their own "prépa". Source: Butzbach and Simiu, *Le Monde Informatique*, Nov. 1999. See also *Le Monde*, 30 August 1995 and Denoyelle, *L'Etudiant*, December 1998 and 2000.

[28] Or in rare cases her - only 22% of engineering students are women and this goes down to 15% in the most prestigious schools, according to Ministry of Education figures quoted in CE L: *Les Echos* August 2000. Ten to 15% of ENST Bretagne students are women.

prestigious civil service school, the Ecole Nationale d'Administration, known as the ENA (pronounced "enah") but also that he graduated among the first ten in his class, thus qualifying for the State's most devastating power network, the Inspection des Finances.

(Platt, 1995:143)

4.2.3.3 Esprit de corps

This "coded information" is particularly prevalent during the "classes préparatoires", which are known as "prépa" or "taupe", and is significant enough to appear in a lexicon in a handbook for prospective engineering students (Cier 2000:19). For Bourdieu and Passeron (1985), this use of language, continued to a lesser extent in the "Grandes Ecoles", provides, along with other rites of passage and initiation, a means of integration:

> un code des relations avec autrui qui suppose une hiérarchie de l'ancienneté, un argot qui sert à nommer ce qu'il y a de plus spécifique dans l'expérience et enfin un "esprit" qui fait reconnaître et se reconnaître, tout au long de sa vie, les 'anciens élèves'.
>
> (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1985 : 51)

According to Magluilo (1982) and Lazuech (1999) this "esprit" represents a social capital designed to replace the economic capital not available to all students; each member of the system contributes to the global value of this capital through their success, publications, distinctions and so on. These are appropriated both to reinforce the cohesion of the "corps" and to reproduce and consolidate the privileges associated with it. Membership of a particularly privileged "in-group" is likely to influence not only the self-conceptions of its members, but also their attitudes to "out-groups" or "strangers"(Gudykunst and Kim: 1984). These attitudes will be explored in more detail in Chapter 4, with reference to the particular students involved in this study.

4.2.3.4 Changing managerial models lead to changing pedagogy

In "L'Exception française, le modèle des Grandes Ecoles à l'Epreuve de la Mondialisation", (1999) Lazuech suggests that the "global village", posited by Marshall

McLuhan (McLuhan 1964; McLuhan and Fiore 1968) and increasingly a fact of life, can lead to the questioning of national models (Milcent 1995). Even if there are national ways of apprehending globalisation, there are inevitable effects on social spaces, leading to changes in national institutions (Allègre, in Arnoux 2000). The selection criteria for the "Grandes Ecoles" are dominated by mathematics, a model created by the Ecole Polytechnique and adopted by the most prestigious "Grandes Ecoles" for its universality and high degree of scienticity (Gillespie 1994).

Although, as Lazuech (ibid: 69) points out, this aptitude for abstract deductive reasoning was highly desirable for the Taylorist, rationalisation manager or "cadre" of the 60s and 70s, it is not quite so relevant within a context of changing managerial models[29]. French companies are increasingly adopting an American 'new management' model, based on the Mc Kinsey model (Peters and Waterman 1982), which encourages staff motivation by a flexible attitude to hierarchy, and by working in small groups with shared values, drawing inspiration from the Japanese notion of *Jishukanri* (self-management), where high levels of productivity are attained by close association with the workers (Ishikawa 1980). Attributes like creativity, imagination, intuition and charisma are at least as important as the ability to solve abstract problems.

This tendency is summed up by a quote from Michel Beffa, the Managing Director of Saint Gobain and himself a graduate of Polytechnique and the Ecole des Mines (X-Mines):

> Qui était le dirigeant type d'il y a vingt ans ? C'était le dirigeant qui dirigeait par son savoir. C'était l'homme qui savait. C'était l'ingénieur du Corps des Mines qui savait tout sur tout. On le respectait, c'était la plus haute autorité intellectuelle de la société. L'homme ou la femme dirigeant ne s'impose plus du tout par son savoir, il s'impose par ses capacités à convaincre, son charisme, sa faculté d'assumer des responsabilités et de donner l'impression aux hommes qui travaillent avec lui qu'ils sont épaulés, appuyés.
>
> (Professeurs du group HEC, *Ecole des Managers de Demain*, 1994:35-36, cited in Lazuech: 1999: 82)

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[29] It is clear, however, that the aptitude for deductive reasoning shown by many of the French students and illustrated in chapter four is also an asset, both in an academic context and in many professional ones.

Many analysts conclude that there must be a change in both the pedagogy and the selection criteria in the "Grandes Ecoles" system. This change is beginning, reflected both in closer contact with industry and in pedagogy based more on collaborative project work than on lectures. The schools are also becoming more international, building on their existing exchange networks to recruit more foreign students. Seventy-one percent of Engineering schools participate in international exchange networks, seventy-six percent require the study of two foreign languages and forty-eight percent send at least a third of their students abroad on work-experience or study programmes (Lazuech, ibid 155-157). The pedagogical approach advocated in this thesis integrates both these new tendencies.

4.3 Language study in the "Grandes Ecoles" system

The study of English, along with at least one other foreign language is seen as essential, by both the French Engineering Institutes: the "Conférence des Grandes Ecoles" and the "Commission des Titres des Ingénieurs". The reasons for this are both conceptual and pragmatic. Firstly, language learning is traditionally seen in France as a means of forming mental structures and clarifying thought. Secondly, English is the lingua franca of the global village and the knowledge of other languages can also be useful in a highly competitive world.

The teaching of English within this system is influenced both by developments in formal linguistics and by organisations for teachers and researchers. The most influential of these are TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages), which is dominated by the large numbers of English-speaking teachers, particularly Americans, in Paris, and UPLEGESS (Association of Foreign Language Teachers of the "Grandes Ecoles Supérieures Scientifiques), which is French dominated, albeit by teachers of English. Other influences include the British Council and the large numbers of English teaching books published each

year, particularly by Cambridge and Oxford University Press, which are also British dominated.

Over the last twenty years, as reflected by conferences and publications by these different groups, classroom practice has evolved from a drill-centred reiteration of set phrases, which we discussed in Chapter 2, through the functional/notional approach to the communicative approach and recently back to grammar, now called "focus on form" (Doughty and Williams 1998). Other trends have included suggestopoedia (Lozanov 1978); the Silent Way (Gattegno 1963, 1985); learning to learn (Flavell 1976); Neurolinguistic Programming (Bandler and Grinder 1979; Dilts, Bandler and Grinder, 1980) and the theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner 1983; Gardner and Hatch 1989). Most teachers adopt an eclectic combination of methods suited to their personality and the needs of their students. Within this, sometimes bewilderingly wide range of possibilities, little attention has been paid to the teaching of culture.

Until recently, textbooks used for English teaching in the "Grandes Ecoles" system have reflected a product view of culture: the behaviourist approach to "discrete practices or institutions", traditions, habits or customs, which can be observed. (Robinson 1988). Cultural content, as we have seen, is otherwise interpreted as Literature or "Civilisation"- History, Institutions, Politics, Art and Music. This is now included in many of the Grandes Ecoles courses as part of the intellectual background essential for the future "elite". However, when cultural awareness courses are available, they are often reduced to superficial advice on social practices for business travellers, such as instructions about what to do with your business card in Japan.

This situation is slowly changing. Organisations promoting cultural awareness and exchange such as SIETAR (Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research) are gaining impetus. The latest books, even if the dominant theme remains that of grammar-

based models with authentic texts or cultural information as an additional extra, do contain exercises designed to increase cultural awareness. For example, reflection on cultural differences in acceptable behaviour by guests (Gairns and Redman, 1995) or differences in non-verbal communication, greetings, use of personal space and attitudes to hierarchy (Viney and Viney 1996).

There are currently large numbers of resource books available, using poetry, role-play, and drama techniques (Maley and Duff 1978; Rinvolucri 1984; Ur 1988; McCarthy 1990; Porter-Ladousse 1993; Rinvolucri and Davis 1995; Davis, Garside and Rinvolucri 1998). What emerges from such resources is the need for the learner, even at a low level of linguistic competence, to find his or her own voice in the language, before learning can become truly effective. As we have seen, this project seeks to combine these two approaches: "doing things with words" but also "making do with words" (Kramsch 1993).

4.4 Official guidelines

The official guidelines for schools in many countries now introduce an element of analysis of the mother culture. In order to promote this awareness, learners are encouraged to look at their own cultural biases, question their own central position and modify their worldview in order to accommodate multiple perspectives and voices. The French national guidelines for secondary schools recommend the establishment of "repères culturels" so that students will be able to go beyond superficial linguistic exchange:

> La réforme des programmes des collèges, en effet, insiste sur les capacités et compétences de communication des élèves. Le lycée s'inscrit dans cette continuité, et dans la perspective du baccalauréat, de la poursuite d'études supérieures, de l'insertion professionnelle et de la formation du citoyen. Les enjeux sont évidents: pour le jeune Européen, le plurilinguisme devient un atout majeur. La communication est un objectif prioritaire; mais naturellement le contexte culturel est indissociable de l'apprentissage de la langue. Celle-ci étant le plus court chemin d'accès à la réalité et à la culture d'un pays et réciproquement, sans repères culturels, on ne peut aller au-delà d'un échange superficiel.
>
> (Bulletin Officiel 25. June 24 1999)

The British national curriculum guidelines explicitly introduce an educational aim, which is to encourage students to question what they take for granted in their own culture and to compare this with the foreign culture in order to gain a better understanding of both (Byram and Fleming 1998: 4). This comparative approach is also endorsed by the latest American standards for foreign language, which, under the heading "Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, Communities" makes ambitious recommendations for students learning languages. As well as the ability to communicate ideas and emotions, and present information, students are expected to gain knowledge and understanding of the relationship between the practices, products and perspectives of other cultures. They should also learn to make connections between the foreign language and other disciplines to further their knowledge. Students are expected to participate in multilingual communities for lifelong learning and for personal enjoyment and enrichment and to make comparisons between their own and the foreign languages and cultures studied (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project. 1996: 2).

The Council of Europe's proposals for a Common European Framework for language learning and assessment introduce the notions of intercultural awareness and competence. They suggest that learners should be able to bring their own and the foreign culture together, developing both sensitivity to other cultures and communication strategies to enhance contact with those from other cultures. Learners should become "cultural intermediaries" who are able to deal with conflict and misunderstanding between cultures (Council of Europe 1998: para 4.7.1.1.3 and para. 4.7.1.2.2). Recommendations to integrate an intercultural dimension into both language study and that of other subjects in European institutions of higher education have also been made by the Scientific Committee on Intercultural Communication of the Thematic Network Project in the Area of Languages (Kelly, Elliott and Fant 2001).

However, the French "Grandes Ecoles" have no such requirements. The Engineering Board "La Commission des Titres" encourages:

> une dimension internationale incluant l'enseignement obligatoire de plusieurs langues étrangères, la multiplication des stages à l'étranger, de nombreux accords de doubles diplômes européens et internationaux...
> (Commission des Titres website, last accessed April 2004)

Inspite of this, the official guidelines for testing are based on a view of language as a series of quantifiable skills, recommending, for instance, that graduates attain a minimum aggregate score of 750 in the TOEIC[30], a test which is highly popular with French companies. This examination tests listening and written comprehension by multiple choice questions, with no oral and no written production. Extravagant claims are nevertheless made for a correlation between these scores and communicative competence. For example, a high score of between 455 and 495 in the Listening Test means that a student can "understand mother-tongue speakers of English in meetings" and can also "*conduct* (my emphasis) meetings with mother tongue speakers of English."

4.5 Languages at ENST Bretagne

4.5.1 Background

ENST Bretagne, which was founded in 1977, has always emphasised the importance of learning foreign languages. Although the halcyon days of the beginnings of the school when all students were given both a free skiing holiday and a free "voyage technico-linguistique", which included language lessons and visits to Telecommunications companies in Britain, Germany, Spain, Portugal or Egypt are over, all students are still required to study at least two foreign languages. English is compulsory and the second language can be selected from Arabic, German, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese or Russian. A third language,

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[30] Test of English for International Communication.

which also includes Chinese or Japanese, can also be studied as an option. As the number of hours per week varies with the initial level, a student who is weak at English and a beginner in Spanish (typically a second year parallel admissions student – an "Admis sur Titre") could be doing ten hours a week from a total of thirty-five to forty contact hours. Classes are small with a maximum of twelve students, and both students and teachers have easy access to video, satellite television, language laboratory and computers. The videoconferencing faculties used in this study are not quite so easily available (see discussion of equipment and technical considerations in Section 4.8.2.1). Unlike in the majority of "Grandes Ecoles", language levels are validated by continuous assessment and internal examinations, although there is increasing pressure by the "Conférence des Grandes Ecoles" to adopt an external examination such as the TOEIC to test English levels.

4.5.2 Text-based realities

As we have seen, the acquisition of language is seen as an important tool in the development of cognitive structures, both in Vygotskian theory and within the context of French educational values. However, social acceptability in French society and abroad is not only a question of using grammatically correct sentences but employing the patterns of thought of the dominant, that is to say, educated discourse of that society (Bourdieu 1982). This attitude encourages a pedagogy described by Hall and Hall (1990) as follows:

> The goals of French education are the transmission of knowledge and the training of the intellect. French academic standards are high; discipline is strict; and teaching is deductive, rhetorical, and very concerned with style. Students are required to analyse and synthesize their material and are trained to be articulate.

(Hall and Hall, 1990:99)

Much of the literature which deals with the effects of schooling points to the difference in teacher /student expectations of discourse, particularly if students and teacher are from a different culture or discourse group (Tharp and Gallimore 1988; Rogoff 1990). Teacher

discourse tends to focus on what Vygotsky calls "scientific concepts", where "words are wrested from their designata and manipulated in the mind independent of their images" (Tharp and Gallimore 1988:105). Children who do not develop the cognitive skills to separate everyday concepts and practical thinking from schooled verbal symbols, are like Luria's unschooled peasants (1976) at a disadvantage in an educational system dominated by "text-based realities".

> Rational discourse in school can largely be explicated in terms of text-based realities. The problem space of a text-based reality is created, maintained and manipulated through the semiotic means employed in discourse. Furthermore, a text-based reality is characterized by boundedness and decontextualization. This decontextualization, which may focus either on the form or on the meaning of the expression, involves making words and other signs into objects of reflection instead of communication.
>
> (Wertsch and Minick, 1990: 78)

Students in the "Grandes Ecoles" system are, on the other hand, highly proficient in the manipulation of decontextualized abstract ideas and deductive logic. In other words, they are extremely proficient at "doing school" in a traditional way. However, they are not always quite as good at "doing communication" within the boundaries of the classroom. This can partly be explained by French attitudes to teachers, as Wylie and Brière remark:

> L'apprentissage de la défensive, de la résistance aux autres se fait aussi en groupe, de manière collective dans le milieu scolaire. L'enfant apprend à s'intégrer à ce qu'un sociologue américain, Jesse Pitts a appelé le "groupe des camarades". Ces groupes servent à protéger l'élève, qui, sans eux, serait isolé et sans défense face à la puissance de l'administration scolaire. Le groupe des camarades (une classe entière ou une partie de la classe) est là, prêt à résister et à défier le pouvoir de l'administration et des professeurs si ceux-ci veulent imposer quelque chose que les élèves jugent excessivement arbitraire.
>
> (Wylie and Brière 1995:98)

Another explanation could be the artificial nature of interaction in the foreign language classroom. As Leeman-Guthrie points out:

> Even in highly "communicative" classrooms, teachers and students do not address each other in the target language *primarily* because they have important things to say, but because practice is

part of foreign-language learning. Inevitably, however, this imbues the formal learning situation with a kind of artificiality that is rare beyond the walls of foreign-language classrooms.

(Leeman-Guthrie, 1984: 39)

4.5.3 *"Silent figures patiently waiting for me to tell them what to do"*

Fear of grammatical errors leads learners in traditional courses to express themselves in grammatically faultless silence.

(Dufeu, 1994: 43)

These problems of communication were reflected in the results of a questionnaire given to all English teachers in 2001. There were overwhelmingly positive comments, such as **"brilliant group" or "good, lively group"** about the Second year students. These were mostly, although not exclusively, groups with students coming from the University system, Admis sur titres (see Section 4.2.3.1) and not those who had come directly from the 'Classes Préparatoires" system. In First year, all thirteen groups were described. Five of the groups, mainly from the higher levels, were considered to have a positive atmosphere:

Atmosphere:

- **Very good, pleasant, relaxed**
- **Great, very enjoyable group, friendly, respectful, tolerant**
- **Good from the begi..ning**
- **Rather good, friendly**
- **Warm, pleasant, friendly.**

Comments about the other eight groups, however, ranged from satisfactory to negative:

Atmosphere:

- **satisfactory**
- **very passive**
- **very quiet**
- **very, very quiet**
- **slightly tense**
- **tense/afraid**
- **suspicious**
- **downright hostile**

Predictably, the biggest problem was seen to be lack of response. Students and teachers seemed to have very different expectations of classroom discourse. Presumably building on what they have known in school and "les classes préparatoires", many of the students cast themselves in a responsive role; that of the traditional classroom discourse model as described by many researchers and discussed in Chapter 1. This is clearly at odds with the objectives of the communicative classroom to which most teachers in the English Department ascribe, albeit in varying ways.

- **Very, very quiet. Obedient, but quiet. I would come into the classroom and find four or five silent figures patiently waiting for me to tell them what to do. (…..) If I asked a question, no one dared answer. I honestly think they never understood I was there to allow them to speak, and they probably thought they had nothing to say to ME. (Teacher 1)**
- **It was nearly always the same students who would have something to say. I really had to name the students and ask them what they thought before getting a reaction. (Teacher 2)**
- **They also suggested that they were used to having a name put on the end of a question, to being 'invited' to take the floor. (Teacher 3)**
- **Often very passive, very student-teacher, wanting/needing lots of directives. (Teacher 4)**

This was partly attributed to feelings of anxiety, variously described as fear of each other, of the teacher or fear of each other mediated by the teacher's presence:

- **They were afraid to speak. I think they were intimidated by each other. I didn't feel relaxed with them –a couple of students felt afraid of me (I think). (Teacher 5)**
- **I eventually asked for an explanation of their silences and was told (by one student, but no-one disagreed with him) that they were not put off by me, or my class subjects, but they were very wary of each other. (Teacher 3)**
- **I think there is a threesome, a sort of trinity at work, there's the group, me and the group and me. They appeared to be afraid of the group but in fact they weren't afraid of each other, they were just afraid of each other when operating with me. (Teacher 6)**

Great improvement was reported during the semester and cohesive groups seemed to emerge:

- **slightly tense at the beginning, quiet, on the whole but not negative –the more relaxed oral methods we use here were at first difficult for them to grasp. (Teacher 7)**

- **they did change a bit, they began to relax and have more to say. (Teacher 5)**
- **they felt more comfortable when they spoke. (Teacher 2)**
- **some students, who had not been used to expressing themselves before, gradually managed to do so. (Teacher 8)**
- **they were nervous of each other at first but fairly soon (1 month) began to feel secure enough to gang up on me. (Teacher 6)**
- **a very mixed bunch (...) it was difficult and virtually impossible at the beginning to bring them together (....) they gradually managed to laugh at themselves and each other and to consider themselves as a group. I think they liked each other without exception. (Teacher 3)**

The changes during the semester, and with the "Prépa" students who have gone into second year, do show that many of the students gradually change their attitude. This also underlines the importance of building up a relationship with the students. However, the problem of encouraging them to speak remains. One First year student expressed his dissatisfaction with being made to speak as follows:

> The subject is used in order to oblige the students to speak. I am going to apply the French proverb "Si la parole est d'argent, le silence est d'or", not mix up with "Silence et dort."

This attitude was also made clear in the French students' views of the role of the language teacher, for example:

> To make us speak us much as possible, to notice the mistakes that are often made and so to teach the corresponding rules. The teacher must however be the leader of the conversation, he or she has to choose the theme. (Spring/Summer 1998)

> The language teacher has above all to make the students speak, to correct them when they make a mistake … To make students speak is the main role. (Autumn 1999)

> Make the reluctant students speak. (Autumn 1999)

As we will see in our data analysis, the attitudes described in the last two sections are likely to have repercussions on the outcome of this project. Firstly, the French students' ability to process and analyse information quickly and accurately will no doubt be reflected in the quality of the work produced. Such a deductive approach could also provide rich insights into cultural differences and the students' emerging "third place". However, there could be discrepancies between the level of abstract reasoning expected by the French group

and their American counterparts who, as we see in Section 4.6, have not been educated in the same way. This could lead to a reinforcement of possible feelings of superiority on the French side and accentuate the American students' nervousness and feelings of inadequacy. Secondly, the passive attitude to communication could be an impediment to involvement in the course. As we will illustrate, this did not really pose a problem with the level 5 students, who had chosen to continue with English, but it was particularly evident in the Autumn 1999 group of the project, where the students were in a compulsory Level 4 group.

It was hoped that the attitudes of student solidarity described in Section 4.5.2 would extend to the American student group and that contact with a native speaker peer group would provide a degree of motivation to communicate which is difficult to achieve in a class where all the students share the same mother tongue. This sense of students providing a united apathetic front against the teacher could also be addressed by our pedagogy, which sought to remove the teacher as sole locus of control. The use of multimedia and the contact with a native speaker peer group were also intended to provide new motivation for students who were jaded after 8 or 9 years of traditional English lessons.[31] The extent to which these aims were achieved is analysed in Chapter 4.

4.5.4 Student views of the "Grandes Ecoles" system

You are the distance
Between my bedroom and the sea
Measured in the plaintive cry of oil-polluted seabirds.
You are the distance
Between the classroom and the bedroom
Measured in yawns.
You are the silence in the English class
When the teacher asks a question.
You are the moment when Mines de Saint Etienne said NO.
(Extract from poem written by Andrée's first year group 1998, with apologies to Roger McGough)

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[31] This situation was very different to that of the American students, particularly those at Midwest University, who were relatively new to the study of French. Their prior texts will be examined in more detail in Section 4.6.

A wish for a multi-voiced view of the system also led us to ask the French students the question: 'What are the advantages of the "Grandes Ecoles" system in France?' Many of them stressed the fact that the stringent selection procedure procured for them the advantage of more personal attention, better teachers and a guarantee for the future not provided by French Universities. They also observed that students were more motivated and had already made their choice of career.

This question was posed before the beginning of the project and shows certain ethnocentric attitudes, which were to change during the project. Some, for example the first student quoted here, tried to explain the unique aspects of the system. However, although he has understood that there is a selection process for English universities, he still makes the assumption that the criteria used are the same as for the "Grandes Ecoles" in France; excellent students must necessarily be good at mathematics and physics. [32] Some students did not attempt to translate *classe préparatoire*, thereby recognising the specifically French nature of the cursus. This recognition of the culture-bound, untranslatable nature of certain notions is one of the requirements of an *ethno-lingually relative perspective* (Citron, 1995). However, the writer gives no explanation of the system. In the final quote, the writer points out that the system is typically French but again does not explain what this means. These comments can be compared to the fuller explanations given during the videoconferences and in some e-mail messages, where the audience is the foreign peer group, rather than the teacher-researcher. As we will see, many American students also imagine that their education system is universally known and understood by others, beliefs which are also challenged during the e-mail exchanges (Section 4.8.4.7 and 4.9.15). These examples illustrate that the assumption of universality, where the second culture is seen through the distorting prism of

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[32] A description of these selection criteria is given in Section 4.2.3.1.

the first one (Zarate 1986; Fantini 1997) is modified through critical dialogue between the

two cultures (Bakhtin 1981).

- **In fact, the "Grandes Ecoles" system is a bit like the English Universities. You can't enter if you haven't a very good level in Maths, Physics or Chemistry. The biggest advantage is then to have very good students together in one place in order to get the best teachers and education that other students could not. Students of Grandes Ecoles are then supposed to be efficient and to manage any situation, that's why so many French managers come from "Grandes Ecoles".**
- **If you want to go to a Grande Ecole, you have to do a "classe préparatoire" where you learn a lot and which is very well organised and structured. Once you are at the Grande Ecole, it is much easier, and as they are well known, you can find a job quite easily.**
- **One of the advantages of the Grandes Ecoles system, if there are some, is the fact that they make a selection between students who are motivated to become engineers. Another one is the teachers, who are close to you, and lead you in your work; you don't have to go to the library to learn by yourself.**
- **The advantages of the Grandes Ecoles system in France lie in the fact that few people go to the Grandes Ecoles, so there are fewer people than at University. The teaching is more adapted and the level is higher. Companies know the capacities of the students, trust the school, and offer the students more job opportunities.**
- **First, this typical French system makes it possible to form high-level engineers, who are, most of the time, very keen on one or two subjects. In fact, the Grandes Ecoles are very interesting for people who know what they want to do in their future life. So the selection made is a kind of guarantee of serious, when we consider the students who leave and succeed in the system.**

Some of them described the system as elitist but concentrated on the positive benefits

for those included in the system:

> The advantages of the Grandes Ecoles system are in fact the usual advantages of an elitist system where you have all the equipment you want since they have a huge budget. Furthermore, it makes it possible for you not to worry about the job market, indeed the firms consider you as having good potential just because you come from such schools. Eventually you can easily have an interesting career, thanks to the relationship with the former students of the Grande Ecole you come from.

However, the elitist nature of the system was very occasionally questioned, as it is in

the following example:

> The advantages of the Grandes Ecoles system is its selectivity, and all the possibilities and installations that are available to the students. This would be impossible if there were too many students, simply because it would cost too much money. But too much selection isn't good either, and elitism can also be criticized.

Although the analytical and deductive capacities favoured by this approach are

undeniable, the training in "Prépa" seems to come with some personal cost. This is illustrated

by the poems quoted at the beginning of the section and also by these extracts from the

placement test, where students are asked to write a short autobiography and their plans for the

future:

- **At the Enstbr[33] I would live again after 3 difficult years.**
- **I want to discover all I have missed during the last two years.**
- **I have to go out to forget three years of working Maths and Physics all the time.**
- **After 3 years in 'prépa', I don't know really how I'll spend my time here.**
- **It was a very hard time because I was everything but carefree – I must spend all the week learning Mathematics and Physics ... I hope I spend the next three years more beautiful than in my preparatory institute.**
- **Actually and sincerely, I aim at a life that have nothing to do with the soon past one.**

These attitudes could have both a negative and positive influence on the project.

Students who are tired of intense study for a competitive examination may welcome the

change that an innovative course can bring, but there is a risk that the aims will not be taken

seriously and that attendance when it is not compulsory will be poor. Moreover, students are

not generally expected to produce a lot of work outside the language class, whereas the

American students had several written assignments to carry out, which could lead to

frustration when the Americans require help from the French students. These issues will be

explored in Sections 4.8 and 4.9.

4.6 The American universities in the project.

4.6.1 Midwest University

The American University involved in the exchange from 1997 to 1999 is a regional

University in the Midwest with around 18, 000 students. Their brochure claims the University

has academic excellence, which provides solid foundations for useful careers and courses,

designed to develop critical thinking skills and creative problem solving. However, according

to Solange, this was not really the case, as the University had only recently been converted

from school to college to university and:

> the senior faculty had come onto the staff before there were any expectations of
> research or other professional productivity outside the local context.
> (Solange, e-mail April 2002)

Views of culture in language teaching were based on a feasts and festivals approach:

> A huge shock came when I saw that the language faculty at Midwest University
> was obliged to put in an appearance at the annual college arts festival dressed in
> national costumes (sombreros for Spanish teachers, berets and striped shirts for
> French) and prepared to cook stereotypical foods, perform dances (Mexican Hat,
> tango, etc, etc).
> (Solange, e-mail April 2002)

French courses were taught traditionally, with a traditional textbook and Solange had to

adapt them extensively to fit in with our views on teaching *langaculture*:

> As far as the curriculum is concerned, I think what I did was simply to pirate third
> year courses which were intended for French majors or minors. French 312 was a
> composition course, and French 326 was a conversation course. In each case, I
> arranged the work for the course so that it would fit the overall objectives of the
> curriculum, but I must say that I took advantage of a considerable amount of
> personal leeway to do this-- respectability and right to determine course content
> that I simply assumed based on my experience and publication record.
> (Solange, e-mail April 2002)

For many of the students on the course, organised religion played an extremely

important role in their lives, which was not the case for the majority of French students. For

example, Jack had worked as a missionary in France and Lin's final project consisted of a

film and an illustrated booklet written in French about a religious ceremony in which she had

participated. One student left the course because her religious beliefs would not allow her to

watch the films we had selected and another wrote a vitriolic letter about the study of a film

which showed a baby "born out of wedlock". As Solange explains:

> The area around Midwest University is in the smack dab middle of the Bible Belt,
> not far from Branson, the "family values" version of Nashville. There is literally a
> church on every street corner, and the whole social organization of the town is

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[33] ENST Bretagne is also known as Enstbr, Télécom Bretagne or just Télécom.

done through the churches, especially the Assemblies of God which has its headquarters there (in a thing that looks like a hangar at a large airport). I would say that the vast majority of the students and most of the townspeople identify as Protestant Christians of various ilk, attending church regularly.
(Solange, e-mail April 2002)

For the French students, religious beliefs are a private matter and not a subject to be discussed in the *Ecole Laïque*. This cultural difference had an effect on the involvement in certain e-mail partnerships (Section 4.8.4.1)

Although the usual French language class in the United States is predominantly middle-class, in Midwest University, the majority of the students were working-class, some living in trailer parks and from deprived backgrounds. Solange described them as follows:

The students are largely working class and local, with some from as far afield as St.Louis or Kansas City, and a small population of international students. The tuition is relatively low. You can probably get stats on this from the webpage if you are interested. Local lore had it that many of them had been placed at Midwest University by their parents even if they had no use for or understanding of a college education. Many of the students I knew were working full time at menial jobs (Jiffy Lube, Kmart, McD's) in order to make their car payments-- their car being a more significant feature of their identities to them than their educations.
(Solange, e-mail April 2002)

As we have seen, this is certainly very different from the majority of ENST Bretagne students who are from middle or upper-middle class backgrounds. The difference in class, in attitudes to religion and in access to learning environments and to native speakers of the language could have been detrimental to the partnership. Indeed, as Stephan, (1985) points out, equal status and competence and similar beliefs and values are some of the prerequisites for positive attitude change, as summed up below:

1) Maximised cooperation /minimized competition.

2) Equal status.

3) Similarity of beliefs, values etc.

4) Avoid difference in competence.

5) Positive outcomes.

6) Strong normative and institutional support.

7) Extend beyond immediate situation.

8) Individuation group members.

9) Non-superficial contact encouraged.

10) Contact voluntary.

11) Positive effects.

12) Variety of contexts in-group and out-group.

13) Equal members of in-group and out-group.

(Stephan, 1985:105)

Some of these conditions were clearly not met, particularly with the Midwest University exchange. As well as huge differences in beliefs (3), there was a big gap between levels of competence, both linguistic and analytical (4). Although there was great enthusiasm for the experimental side of the project on the part of both American Universities, Solange still had to adapt traditional courses and to retain an out of date textbook, whereas at the ENST Bretagne we were given a free rein (6). There were far more American students than French ones, leading to some unsatisfactory e-mail exchanges, although we included more French students in the Autumn 1999 group (13). However, as we will see in our data analysis, although some of these differences did limit the contribution of some students, many of the other criteria for a successful exchange were met, including maximised cooperation (1), positive outcomes (5), extension beyond the immediate situation (7), voluntary contact (10) and opportunities for a variety of contexts (12). Indeed, personal contact between students seemed to take place on an equal basis, with wider issues being the main cause of potential conflict (Section 4.9, Axe to Grind).

4.6.2 East University

There were far fewer class and educational differences between the students in East University and those at ENST Bretagne. East University is ranked in the first 14 public

universities in the US News and World Report of America's best colleges (2002) and in the first 20 in Kiplinger's "Top 100 Public Colleges" (1999). The department Solange was working in had a strong research tradition, with experts in the field. Students needed high scores on SAT ranks to be accepted in the University and fees were high. The University is huge, with a total of almost 82,000 students (2001 figures), 35,000 of whom are undergraduates on the main campus, as opposed to 500 at ENST Bretagne. As with Midwest University, however, the course Solange took over was also quite traditional, as we saw in Section 3.2.3.1.

The purpose of this study is not to compare the relative merits of either education system. However, certain differences in approach can be noticed. These were summed up by Dan Moraske, a French/ American teacher, who was recently interviewed for the newspaper, Le Télégramme (Marc, June, 2001). He explained that, although there was an examination at the end of secondary school in the United States, for University entrance:

> On regarde par exemple ce que tel ou tel individu peut apporter aux autres, s'il peut facilement s'intégrer dans un groupe. On ne néglige pas non plus leurs performances physiques ou leurs capacités artistiques par exemple. Les appréciations des profs (de véritables lettres motivées) sont capitales. En France, vous accordez peut-être trop d'importance aux diplômes et peut-être bien que vous vous retranchez derrière le bac.

He concluded, however, that:

> Certes vous êtes un peu trop académiques; mais inversement, aux Etats-Unis, on aurait bien besoin de votre rigueur.

4.7 Students' personal prior texts

One of the aims of this project was to question both our own and our students' prior assumptions (Kramsch and von Hoene, 1994). In order to gain an impression of students' prior texts, a questionnaire (Appendix II) was administered to all the students in the project. This gave both a global impression of the project and a more precise idea of each separate group. The following results are of direct interest to the study.

4.7.1 Cultural background and attitudes to foreign group

Many of the French students, especially in the first three groups, came from bilingual backgrounds or had had opportunities to travel and to live abroad, although only a minority had been to the USA. These students were used to operating in different languages and cultures and could be said to already have access to "third places" even if they had not been used to analysing their position but rather to take it for granted. The following were typical answers to the question about the backgrounds of students in the first three groups.

Please write a paragraph about your own cultural/ethnographical background, parents'/grandparents' nationalities, places of birth, countries lived in etc.

- **My father is a pedagogical adviser (conseiller pédagogique) and has decided to live in Germany, among French forces. His first language is French but he's bilingual in Spanish. My mother works as a French teacher in a language school and is bilingual in German.**
- **My parents were both born in Madagascar but they have been travelling all round the world. That gave me the chance to live in Ivory Coast (7 years), Niger (4 years) and to go to Mali and Chad to see them during every holiday for 7 years.**
- **My parents were both born in Argentina. From my mother's side, there is one "argentinian generation" more. Her origins are catholic, Italian and French. From my father's side, my grandparents were jewish immigrants, from Poland and Russia. So I'm a pure product of the new world's "melting pot". I was born in Argentina (Buenos Aires), but I haven't lived there very long. My father used to work in the Oil Industry, so during my 15 first years, I have lived in a great number of countries, mainly in Africa, Latin America and Europe. My family's language, the one I used to speak at home when I was a kid, is Spanish. But my education was in French, and today we speak mostly French at home.**
- **My parents travelled a lot around the world, to remote places such as Tibet, Indonesia, Madagascar, Central Africa, and when I was old enough for them to take me, well …. they would. My mother would sometimes speak English to me and I have often been to Britain and to the States. My family is now scattered all over the world which makes wonderful opportunities to travel and learn about other cultures and civilizations.**

Although these students were quite open about their backgrounds when writing, there was a tendency for some of those from different ethnic backgrounds not to refer to this in class discussion and to adopt the "French view". As we shall see, the Autumn

1999 group, with some notable exceptions, was dominated by monocultural students who had

not had the same opportunities, which perhaps had repercussions on the degree of

ethnocentricity shown by the group (Section 4.9). The following were representative answers

from this group:

- **I'm a French student whose parents come from eastern France, as well as my grandparents. I was born in Strasbourg and I lived in France for all my life.**
- **Every member of my family is French but that's all they have in commun[34] as they come from very different places in France!**
- **My whole family come from the North of France. It's the place where I was born and where I still live.**
- **I come from Versailles which is situated next to Paris, but my parents both come from Lille in northern France.**
- **I have always lived in France, especially in Paris where I was born.**

The American students tended to come from diverse origins, as one student from

Midwest University puts it:

- **Les Etats-Unis est pleins de gens qui ne viennent pas du même pays. Ma famille est comme les autres, nous ne sommes pas venus du même pays. Par conséquent, il y a beaucoup de diversité aux Etats-Unis et dans ma famille.**

Many of the students from Midwest University claimed to be descended from Native

Americans, a term which they translated literally into French, and were very proud of this,

although some, like the student in the first example, explained that this has not always been

the case:

- **Ma grand-mère n'est pas anglaise. Elle est native d'Amérique. Elle est Cherokee. Les ancêtres de ma grand-mère sont morts sur "la route des pleurs". Ma grand-mère est très fière de ses ancêtres native de l'Amérique mais elle était très, très pauvre quand elle était jeune. Personne ne voulait pas employer les services des natifs de l'Amérique. La mère de ma grand-mère a caché ses cheveux noirs et a poudré son visage basané. Ils ne parlent pas de l'histoire de la famille. Ils font semblant ils de ne pas être natifs de l'Amérique.**
- **Ma famille vient de beaucoup d'endroits différents. Nous vennons d'Irelande, d'Angleterre, d'Allemagne et d'ecosse. Aussi nous sommes un peu indien Navajo.**

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[34] Student answers are reproduced exactly as they were written, without correcting errors.

- **Mon arrière grand père est Indien Cherokee. Je suis en partie Indienne Cherokee et je pense que l'interet que je porte à l'astrologie et à la spiritualité provient de l'Indien Cherokee.**

Other Midwest University students stressed their Romanian or Mexican origins, the latter example emphasizing the huge difference in background between some of the American students and the French ones:

- **De ce que je me rappelle, ma famille a ses racines dans la communauté roumaine des paysans. Je peux dire que je suis au moins 95% d'origine roumanie et j'en suis fiere. Mes parents viennent d'une tres belle region de la Roumanie appelle la Moldavie.**
- **Mon père est du Mexique et il a sept frères et sœurs. Ma mère est née au Texas, aux Etats-Unis. Ma mère n'a pas une bonne éducation parce qu'elle a travaillé très dur à cueillir le coton et les legumes pour peu d'argent. Chaque jour mon grand-père est parti avec ma mère et ses onze frères et sœurs pour travailler très dur parce que mon grand-pere a pensé que sa vie Americain serait meilleure que sa vie au Mexique.**

The French students were initially very surprised at the amount of self-revelation shown in these answers, especially as the American students posted their autobiographies on their web page. (See also Section 4.8.1.1). The 1997 French group were totally opposed to doing this and posted only superficial details about their hobbies. With subsequent groups, we took this cultural difference into account and the students filled in questionnaires, as shown above or wrote essays destined only for the eyes of the peer group. This feeling was common to all the French students, even if it disappointed some of the American students, as we see in the following quote:

> Having the background essays on all the students was cool, but it would have been cooler had they all put them on the web page with a picture.
> (Joanne, post-course questionnaire, Spring/Summer 1998)

The second immediately obvious difference was the wish, and indeed the ability, to trace generations of ancestors, a need which was not felt by the majority of French students. This is illustrated in the next two examples, again from Midwest University:

- **Mes arrière grand-parents maternelle viennent d'Irelande. Ils s'appellent Michael et Mary Carroll. Michael est né en 1876 et Mary est né en 1881. Mes arrière grands-parents paternelle sont John et Elizabeth**

    Jane Howatt. Ils sont anglais. John est né en 1870, et Elizabeth Jane est né en 1890.
- Mon arrière-arrière-arrière-arrière-grand-père, Thomas Dufy est venu d'Irlande vers le commencement du dix-huitième siècle. Il a été colon en Caroline du Nord et ses descendants ont colonisé les environs de DeSoto. Mon arrière- arrière-arrière-arrière-grand-père, Angus Hurley, est venu d'Ecosse.

The second student quoted here explains this need to trace one's ancestry as deriving from a feeling of displacement:

- Je voudrais pouvoir appeler un endroit en particulier "chez moi". Malheureusement, je suis une personne qui peux seulement dire "Je deviens adulte" au Midwest. Ma famille n'a pas toujours habité le Midwest. Donc je sens que vraiment je suis américain, mais avec réalisme, je ne suis pas américain. Je suis un descendant d'immigrants.

Although the Midwest students all had similar stories and thus to some extent opportunities for triangulation, only a very small minority had left the USA, two or three had been to France on holiday and, apart from one student in the 1998 group who had worked in France as a missionary, they had had no opportunities to meet any French people of their own age.

In general, the Eastern University students were from more privileged backgrounds and had had opportunities to travel. Some of them, like those in the following examples, were from other countries and were bilingual or trilingual, one even having lived in Brest, the nearest town to the ENST Bretagne which was quite a coincidence. These answers are in English, as the Eastern University students were sent the same questionnaire as the one filled in by the French students, whereas the Midwest University students wrote their autobiographies in French.

- I am Vietnamese, my parents were born in Vietnam but I was born and raised for ten years in France. I was born in Pontoise near Paris and I grew up in Brest, in Brittany. About 10 years ago I moved with my mother and my sister to the US. I am Vietnamese, French and Chinese mix.
- I was born in Geneva, Switzerland. My parents are both British. Therefore I have British nationality. I lived in Geneva for twelve years before moving to the US.

- **I am from Spain. It's a very interesting country as it's been a mixture of many different cultures throughout history. I like visiting other countries so I've travelled a lot and I've lived 3 months in Ireland, one year in Reunion Island (France) and now in the USA.**
- **My family is mostly Romanian Jewish and Austrian Jewish (Vienna). I've lived in the US, England, France and Romania.**
- **Armenian by origin, born and lived in Lebanon for 17 years, three years in US. Family born and raised in Lebanon too. Family lives in US now. Happy to be here.**
- **My parents immigrated from Iran in 1976 but we are ethnically Armenians. My sister and I were born in the US. I went back to Iran with my parents briefly but came back to the US. I studied in Paris for 5 months.**

Other students in this group, who were born in the USA but from different cultural backgrounds, also seemed to idealize their second culture as with the Native American students Midwest University, for instance in the case of Maureen, who was of Puerto Rican origin:

- **Both my parents and all of my other family was born in Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico is a very diverse country. There are very white people with blonde hair and blue eyes and there are black people; but they are Puerto Rican. My country is kind of like a melting pot, which produces a variety of beautiful people.**

However, her e-mail messages to Charles and her participation in the videoconferences also show an ability to triangulate to her two identities, which is shared by many of the mixed culture students on both sides of the Atlantic.

An initial idea of students' attitudes to the USA and to American students and to France and French students could also be gained from the questionnaires. The French students showed very ambivalent attitudes to the USA, which is not surprising given the attitudes in the French press and French opinion in general, which are both highly critical of globalisation and big consumers of American cultural products (see Section 4.9.2). They are both attracted to and repelled by different aspects of the country and are highly aware of the paradoxes of the American dream which is not available to all.

- **A huge country, obviously. A political economic leader. However, might have a lack of cultural background? The country of so-called prosperity. I may be quite sceptical about the happiness of living in the States.**

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- **The country with no social security for citizens. It's also the country of cinema and Michael Jackson!**
- **A place of contrast on many grounds: in the field of justice (it's constitutional to have a gun but you can't use it) in the field of wealth, origins..**

Many of the students consider the country is strange, a word which is recurrent in their answers. Many of these views come from a view of a country with many extremes, contrasts and contradictions:

- **It's a country which seems really strange to me, its inhabitants are extreme in everything they do: religion, policy, TV shows.**
- **A country with strange but quite well applied laws (allowed to wear weapons forbidden to smoke in the street!)**
- **A great country but with strange habits.**
- **A very strange place where you can find both the best or the worst things. A country with high technologies and where people can be ill and dye [sic] alone without any help from the state. A country with a puritan religion and where you can see scores of movies full of sex and violence, where 12-year-old kids become murderers. A country where thousands of people take diet pills and where 20% of the population are obese.**

One student, who had never visited the USA, also described the country as strange but did not dismiss the possibility of going there to find out for himself:

- **It's a strange country where I have never been and that frightens me. Don't think I would be happy over there but I'd like to spend some time there.**

The following answer also shows both the attraction and apprehension felt towards the country:

- **A huge country I have already went to twice; many opportunities and a place I'd like to live in, even if violence frightens me.**

Another student, who had visited the country many times, tried to give a balanced view and criticized those who reject the country and its people automatically:

- **A very powerfull country, where much of the way we live today or will live tomorrow is decided (sometimes it's frightening !) The New World, with all its good sides (for example, I think their hospitality is much greater than the French's) and bad sides. We have to be carefull and not accept systematically everything that comes from the USA, but I also hate the attitude of those who reject the whole american culture without giving any chance to some of it.**

The following student also expressed a similar view:

- **A huge country where people are very patriotic and really think they are the only one to have technology, but they are very welcoming.**

Some students explained that the French attitude to the USA originated from religious differences, whereas others thought it came from the distorted image provided by television series:

- **The land that supplies people from Europe and other countries with standardized items. It also means rock music, beautiful landscapes and hamburgers. The USA are marked by Puritanism which darkens the image that French people keep within their memory.**
- **A paradox. A powerful country capable of blowing a hot or cold puff. The States are more known worldwide through the numerous series which contribute to giving a false image of the country.**

The double view held by most of the students was neatly summed up by the following:

- **The only country where you can order a double Big Mac with sauce, large chips….. and a diet coke!**

The French students' view of the USA was rarely totally negative, although the Autumn 1999 group, which we have already identified as appearing more ethnocentric, had the most negative comments, for example in the following answers. Some negative ideas were on political grounds, whereas some, like the first answer, are quite extreme and ill-informed (no correct food, no real history or culture) even if the student tried to balance some of his statements by suggesting that Europeans are also ignorant of what happens in the USA.

- **No correct food, so fat people. No precise knowledge about Europe (not really better in Europe concerning the USA). No real history or culture, but feel really to be the best in the world…. Really proud anyway.**
- **Business world, "world cops", sports, big!!**
- **An interesting country because of the high technology and their habit of giving lessons to the whole world.**
- **The country that invades the world with its music, movies and language, the one where you go to court for just anything and the one where everyone eat vitamins, but maybe the most beautifull country for those who like big avenues (for roller skating or skate boarding).**
- **The reason why English has become the international language and why I have to learn it!**

Many who had visited the country were enthusiastic:

The second time I went to the US was two years ago. It is my best time ever. Spending two months is very nice because you can discover a lot of things and you can make some good friends.[..] Now I'm going to tell you my best time ever. It was when I went to the Glam Slam (Prince's club) for the release of his album 'Come'. That was awesome. I was happy as you cannot imagine. Incredible, you must see it once. Two days after I was with some American friends and they told me they knew where Prince's house was. So we rode to Minnetonka and stopped just in front of the house. It is a Big White Mansion'. Someone came and just told us to park elsewhere so I discussed with him and I told him I was a poor Frenchie who adores Prince. At last I was authorized to come in. I saw Prince's studio, his guitars and the motorbike he rode in 'Purple Rain'. That was the best time ever, ever, ever.
(Guillaume e-mail to Lily 1997)

Some who had not been to the USA had an idealized image, similar to that held by

many of the American students about France:

- **The USA is like a dream for me since I've never been there. Since I was a young girl, I've dreamed of going to Florida and visiting 'Disney World'.**

When asked about American students, those who had not visited the country admitted

that many of the images they had of them came from films and television:

American students:

- **I get the image of a wealthy Californian campus that we can see in a TV series. And another one about a desperate High school which has to deal with violence.**
- **Apart from what I saw in Beverly Hills I don't know much about American students. This may not be representative.**
- **It is quite difficult for me to give my point of view about American students since I've never been to the USA. I only have images of American films or series, which cannot but distort the truth.**
- **I know them only through the series and soaps that we watch on TV. I don't know any American students personally.**
- **The only American students I know are those we can see through television, for example in sitcoms. They seem to be different from us, freer. A thing which shocks me all the time when watching such films is the cupboards in which they put their school belongings.**

Others, who also had not had much direct contact with American students, gave a view

which they were careful to qualify as hearsay or generalisation:

- **I don't really know them but I think that they care too much of their own country. I mean there is nothing else but USA for them. From what I**

have heard, I believe they are quite superficial but you know I've never been to USA so I can't really say.

- Well, I can't really talk of them at all. I can only tell the feelings I have always had, which is that they are nice people, but they are often dramatically ignorant of what exists outside the USA (foreign languages, main characteristics of foreign countries) of course, one must not generalize but it's my experience.

The previous view was expressed by a student who had been educated in French schools abroad, although neither of her parents was French. In comparison, she held a more positive view of the French education system, which she observed from both an insider's and outsider's perspective:

French students:

- My friends! I'm very proud of the French education system, even if it's criticized a lot. I do believe that it's not practical enough sometimes, but I think we receive a lot of bases to "think well" .... if we pay attention. I think French students are brilliant compared to those of most of the countries I know: they have a strong cultural background and are aware of what happens in the rest of the world. But I must say I've always been surrounded by "good" students: I've never been to school in the "hot suburbs"[35] of Paris for example, where the situation is not so marvellous.

Many other French students assumed that the American students worked less than their French peers:

- Not so hardworking.

- They don't seem to work really hard at school. Their campuses are wide and well equipped even in small universities. They often have part-time jobs to pay their studies.

Some were very disparaging about this:

- I went to a high school, but didn't see a lot of students. I don't now (sic) a lot about them. It is strange to learn almost nothing until 18 years, but rather good to have the opportunity to change easily subjects; it helps to do a real choice.
- American students can play basketball very well.

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[35] As with the descriptions of the "Grandes Ecoles" system, this student from the 1997 group, recognises that the term is problematic by putting it in inverted commas, but does not see the need to explain it. We illustrate how this situation changes when the students are confronted with a peer from the foreign *languaculture* in Section 4.9.15.

Others had a more balanced view:

- **I think that they behave very differently. I guess that they're more independent in America, whereas in France we pay more attention to the course followed.**
- **American students have to work to pay their studies but they have a nice life on great campus.**
- **I have known only two American students. They are rather funny and at the same time serious. It would be interesting to learn more about them.**
- **I guess French students have a good scientific training. The latter is probably stricter and more rational than in the USA. But due to this rationality, French people are likely to be less imaginative, creative and pragmatic than Americans. The main shortcomings in our training is that we are not really required to use our capacities. In our school, for example, I do believe that being involved in associations, such as the "Gala" or the "Forum", is as important as some of the things we learn in class.**

The student in the last example tries to look at the advantages and disadvantages of both systems, giving a view which is echoed both in the recent critiques of the "Grandes Ecoles" system (Section 4.2.3.5) and in Guillaume's comparison of the two education systems in the first recorded videoconference (Section 4.9.15). He is able to sustain a critical distance from both his own system and the foreign one, adopting the hermeneutical approach advocated by Hunfeld (1990: 15, cited in Kramsch, 1993: 184), where one neither adopts nor rejects the thinking of others but rather relates it to one's own thinking. This ability to decentre, which such students already display, is at the core of the search for a "third place" and is encouraged throughout the project behind this thesis.

As we have seen, the American students, particularly the Midwest University students, had had fewer opportunities to travel and to meet native speakers of French. As Solange pointed out in an e-mail (Section 4.8.4.4), many of their views of the French were taken from popular stereotypes from films or television, which show them as a people somewhat obsessed with food, wine and romance:

- **I guess the image of people who love their wine and food comes to mind. I imagine hundreds of little cafés on the streets of Paris, all filled with people drinking lattes.**

- **French people seem to eat a lot of good food (bread, cheese, pâté) drink wine early and have fantastic style. People always want to act sophisticated like the French.**
- **French people eat good food, especially lots of bread and brie! I think of French men as very romantic.**
- **I picture French men as people who REALLY love the ladies ... or more precisely who love to flirt with them. I also picture French people as very romantic and having a great love for life. Since I have never been to France, I have formed these images through cartoons and from the media or French films on television.**

They tended to have an idealised view of France, sometimes seeing the country as far superior to the USA and full of interesting, sophisticated, cultured people and even, in one interview with Solange, (personal communication) comparing the country to a fairytale land, like Oz or Wonderland:

- **I have always dreamed of going to France. If I ever actually get there I would just weep for joy for about a day!**
- **I wouldn't care where I went in France -it would all be exciting to me.**
- **France is interesting and exotic.**
- **Stylish people wearing scarves, impossible exams to pass and bureaucracy to deal with. Fewer, but more lasting friendships among them.**

The view of the French as cultured, refined and romantic was also echoed in some of the American views of the French language:

- **Beautiful, it sounds soft and romantic, it also sounds to me sophisticated, a way of sounding elegant and refined if you know how to use it properly.**
- **I think it is beautiful and full of romantic connotations.**
- **Sense of history in the form of the language, a certain kind of defensive snobbism, more dynamic and clever.**
- **The most beautiful language in the world.**
- **Beautiful, rich.**
- **A beautiful, passionate and culturally rich language.**
- **Beautiful, elegant, pleasant to listen to, sometimes hard to listen to.**
- **Very rich, pleasant to the ear, necessary for everyone to learn.**
- **French is a beautiful language with a rich history. I like learning it. Other than that it doesn't mean too much to me.**

Other students also focused on the difficulties of learning French, particularly in the classroom:

- **Fascinating to me, but very frustrating. It's something that I learn because I love it, not because it comes easy to me.**

- **Fascinating and beautiful, difficult to master speaking it in a classroom setting.**
- **A beautiful language that is similar to several others in Europe. An understanding of French has given me a basic understanding of Spanish as well.**
- **I enjoy being able to speak French, although I tend to write it much better than I speak it. I think learning another language is an important part of the education system.**

Many of the American students felt an emotional involvement with the language:

- **I love French! I have spoken it practically all my life and miss being in Geneva very much. The French language is so expressive and beautiful.**
- **It means a lot to me because it is the first and only language I've ever studied besides Latin.**

When describing the English language, the French students often concentrated on the

view of English as a useful tool for international communication:

- **A world language, everybody has to know it for the next century**
- **The language you have to speak if you want to go abroad.**
- **The principal language in the world.**
- **When telling about the English language, my first idea is that it is THE universal language. Thus, it's an important language to learn if you want to communicate with people. For example, in the summer I met a German boy – I understood some German words, but the conversation was about all the time in English.**
- **Very practical for business, also sounds very nice (funny and pleasant accent).**

For some, the language is universal because of its simplicity:

A simple language and thus an international one.
- **Not to (sic) hard to learn.**
- **An easy to learn language.**
- **English is simpler to learn than French. It is a universal way of communicating for people all over the world. It tends to unite people but it is often accused of making the world uniform!**

Others, however, provided a more detailed analysis, stressing the fact that the grammar

only appears simple or that the language is easy to learn at the beginning, but its subtleties are

more difficult to master:

- **Good language, useful in the context of globalisation of economy, due to apparent simplicity of grammar.**
- **A language quite easy to learn at first sight but on second thoughts, difficult to use the right way, for there are many images in few words and it makes the evocationary strength of that language compared to the**

French one: in English you say <u>little</u> but mean <u>much</u> (example: the concert was rained off).

- **Rather easy in the beginning, harder then; has a rich vocabulary that a lot of people don't use. My brother says that 2 different languages exist, English and International English.**

This last point is also taken up in detail by another student:

- **In my opinion there are three English languages: British English, American English and English as a foreign language. British and American English reflect a particular culture, whereas "common English" is rather a kind of Esperanto, a language that all people use to be understood everywhere. This third English language is not as interessant as the two real ones, because most people speaking English as a foreign language have very little vocabulary.**

Other students focused on the phonetic or semantic properties of the language:

- **I think it's a language that can allow people to make themselves understood very easily. To speak it well is more difficult. I think its sounds are perfect for singing.**
- **Nice language with a melody.**
- **The English language, a better formulation of complex ideas. French authors, scientists for example, use to make simple things complex, while English ones are often easier to understand. But I regret the lots of phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions in English that make this language more difficult to study.**
- **Fact-oriented, I believe, with the will for concise words, for the true sentence with the least number of words. A language for lazy persons or efficient ones I presume.**

Although many of the French students showed great enthusiasm for English and were

indeed attending classes on an optional basis, they rarely expressed any emotional

involvement with the language, although a minority did say they appreciated the language:

- **I like it very much, it's not only to please my English teachers that I say that. I think the English accent is singsong. It is pleasant to speak English to other people, and to hear this language, which is also spoken on a worldwide scale.**
- **I like this language, not only to please my readers, but also because I had not to write too many essays in it. At the beginning I surely enjoyed it as it was the videogames and software language. For me, it was the language of leisure more generally. This may still be true.**

The majority, however, remained more distant and analytical, a trait which was constantly noticed during the study. This tendency to analyse was noted by one of the American students when asked to describe French students:

- **Often more serious than American students; more interested in theory than application.**

She opposed this to her view of American students as:

- **More practice-oriented, i.e. how their studies will impact future jobs; social aspects (parties) have an important role.**

Many of the American students considered that French students worked harder and were more knowledgeable in certain areas than their American peers:

- **I think French students are very studious. We are not as serious and do not know as much about our country and current affairs.**
- **Probably more serious than most American students, more committed to their studies.**
- **I think French students are very studious and seem like they like to do the same things as us.**
- **More focused on their path throughout school. They know what they want to do with their life.**
- **Social, cooperative, well-educated.**
- **Hard-working, diligent individuals.**

This echoed the French students' view of American students as freer and less hard-working, although as we will see in Section 4.8.2.6, the American students tended to work harder than the French ones in this particular context.

As with the French students, the majority of the American students, with the exception of those from Eastern University who had studied in France, admitted to not knowing anything about French students, although the impression they had was also often of studious, hard workers, particularly after they had watched a documentary about the *Classes Préparatoires* in class:

- **I don't know enough about French student culture to make an accurate judgement, but it does seem like they are expected to work harder than American students at an earlier age.**
- **When I think of French students, I think of the videoconference because that is the only experience I have ever had with French students. I know they work very hard, but that's about all.**

Some American students expressed their fascination with students from another culture, concentrating on difference:

- **French students are very interesting to me. It's fascinating to think of people my age experiencing life in a totally different cultural environment.**
- **Interesting and exotic.**

Many others concentrated on similarities, feeling that they were part of an international community of students:

- **I am to be studying abroad soon in Paris and intend to interact with French students to find out more about their way of life. I believe there are many similarities between us and them.**

This perception of similarities between the two groups of students could lead to positive outcomes, particularly given that one of our aims is to establish a community of learners. It also supports the Bakhtinian view of socio-ideological groups which go beyond national borders (Section 2.2.1). Indeed, such feelings of solidarity are observed throughout the e-mail exchanges and videoconferences (Sections 4.8 and 4.9). However, in some cases, this can lead to ignoring fundamental differences, as in the two following examples, where the American students over generalise about the role of Higher Education in France:

- **I have no immediate feelings on these two. French and American students are just that – students who want to better themselves through education, socialization, liberation etc. – all the things obtained by being a student.**
- **Students who want to improve/secure their lives by obtaining an education and also a good job. Hardworking.**

The student in the last example also described American students in exactly the same way at the beginning ("people who want to improve/secure their lives by obtaining an education and also a good job"), before adding that Americans concentrate more on the earning power that a university degree can bring them rather than the educational aspects. Both these examples, like that of the French student who thought that British universities

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selected their students with relation to their ability in mathematics (Section 4.5.4) show a lack

of awareness of difference, such as those between an *achievement* and *ascription* culture

(Section 1.4.2). In this case, access to upward mobility and self-improvement are clearly not

the goal of the majority of students in the "Grandes Ecoles" system, who, as we have seen,

are already ascribed high status through their family backgrounds and are merely taking their

place as part of a "noblesse d'état"(Bourdieu 1989, Section 4.2.3.2). This overgeneralization

or over attribution is also observed during some of the e-mail correspondence and in some

videoconferences and is discussed in Sections and 4.8.4.2 and 4.9.9.

4.8 *Languaculture* through telecollaboration in practice

This section will consist of observations of our pedagogy of *langaculture* in practice; as

we explained in the methodology chapter, these observations will take as a basis extracts

from the recordings of the six videoconferences, with additional information gathered from

student questionnaires, e-mails, web pages and essays. The extracts are presented on both

film and CD Rom, and are divided into sections, as shown in the table below:

SEQUENCE	SUBJECT	TIME
SEQUENCE ONE	INTRODUCTIONS Locus of Control	3 minutes 23 seconds
SEQUENCE TWO	INTRODUCTIONS Breaking the Ice Locus of control- technical problems	58 seconds 1 minute 39 seconds
SEQUENCE THREE	Intersubjectivity	1 minute, 8 seconds
SEQUENCE FOUR	This key buddy thing is really important! Où est mon Etienne?	1 minute, 55 seconds
SEQUENCE FIVE	An axe to grind?	30 minutes, 33 seconds

	Positioning	
SEQUENCE SIX	False Understandings	11 minutes, 51 seconds
SEQUENCE SEVEN	Misunderstandings Leading to Dialogue Television	19 minutes 6 seconds
SEQUENCE EIGHT	Negotiation of Meaning Clarification Moves	4 minutes, 31 seconds
SEQUENCE NINE	Negotiation from misunderstanding Scaffolding Friendship Agreeing to disagree	5 minutes, 59 seconds
SEQUENCE TEN	Friendship Ami, copain, camarade	12 minutes, 3 seconds
SEQUENCE ELEVEN	Parents and children	4 minutes, 1 second
SEQUENCE TWELVE	Education	2 minutes, 8 seconds
SEQUENCE THIRTEEN	Attutudes to Authority Towards a global classoom	6 minutes, 15 seconds
SEQUENCE FOURTEEN	And it's fun!	1 minute, 17 seconds

These sequences are in turn divided into 48 extracts, as shown in Appendix XXI.

4.8.1 Introductions

Video Sequence 1
Solange: Je pense que ce qu'il faudrait faire c'est comme la dernière fois, les étudiants se présentent..
Elizabeth: D'accord
Solange: Ça vous va?
Elizabeth: Oui, c'est très bien. Vous allez commencer, peut-être?
Solange: Oui alors, voici ma classe ….

Drawing on our experience of videoconferencing with Solange at Capital University,

we had decided to begin each videoconference with introductions in the foreign language.

We would then continue with prepared questions and answers in French, before moving on to

prepared questions and answers and, it was hoped, some spontaneous discussion in English. It was expected that discussion in French would be beyond the American students' ZPD and this proved to be the case, with some exceptions, which we explore later. The students' questions were based both on the texts studied during the conceptual toolkit stage (Section 3.3.3) and their own preoccupations. They are reproduced in full in Appendices XII to XVIII. Their differing reactions to similar materials are discussed in Section 4.8.2.6. These introductions allowed each student to take the floor right at the beginning of the videoconference and contributed to breaking the ice.

4.8.1.1 Life Histories

The students had already introduced themselves in writing both formally and informally. In order to set up the exchange, we had decided to let the French students choose their partner after reading a Life History written by the American students, who had started the course far earlier in the year. As we discussed in Section 4.7.1, these Life Histories were initially posted on the students' webpage but after the French students' negative reaction in 1997, they were subsequently written in essay form and sent by post.

Choosing partners in this way proved quite successful for some students:

> The e-mail partnership is a good idea and I prefer having chosen the partner that having been chosen but the opposite would also work. In my case the motivation was enough to keep a good rate on almost times but sometimes you let a blank for two weeks. I was lucky to have partner that wrote often what forces me to reply often.
> (French student, Autumn 1999, post-course questionnaire, anonymous)

> E-mail partnerships is really a good thing. It allows to speak about cultural differences. The choice of the partner is difficult, some of them don't write enough about them and, generally speaking, presentations should be longer. The motivation depends on both sides of the penfriendship. Time and equipment are sufficient to provide a good correspondence rate (1 letter/ week).
> (French student, Autumn 1999, post-course questionnaire, anonymous)

However, others were totally opposed to the idea, as we see below:

> I found it very interesting to correspond with an american student. But I didn't like the way the partners were chosen. I personally think that I had a chance to write to Jane. But some friends of mine had very different subjects of interest from their pals. Therefore I think it would be interesting to find another way of choosing the correspondants.
> (Karine, e-mail, May 2000)

This concern with having something in common influenced both the choice of partner and the level of engagement during the e-mail correspondence. For instance, Etienne A. in the 1999 group, who is probably one of the students mentioned by Karine, chose a partner with very different interests from his own, who had been "rejected" by some of the other students. The partnership was unfortunately not very successful, as we show in Section 4.8.4.1.

In general, the French students were not enthusiastic about writing to someone who was obviously different from them in age or interests, although this was not true of the 1997 group, who were far more open-minded and flexible. Many of the male students wanted to correspond with younger female students, which, given the opposite male/female ratio in the two groups, did not pose an organisational problem. However, some of the students appeared to see the e-mail partnership as a virtual dating agency, a view which can be illustrated by the development of a certain number of virtual flirtations, as we see in Section 4.8.4.2.

There were several other cross-cultural problems involved in this approach. Firstly, the French students were often extremely intolerant at the French mistakes shown in the essays, although some students did show evidence of decentring by remarking:

> Oh, no, that's what our English must seem like to them!

One of the main problems seemed to be the difference in the amount of self-disclosure, expected in the two cultures, as we saw in Section 4.7.1. Some of the French students took

exception to statements such as:

> Je suis une personne sympathique et généreuse. Les gens de ma famille sont
> simples. Ils sont travailleurs et honnêtes. J'ai un fils de trois ans qui est très beau
> comme son père. Il est intelligent et gentil.
> (Life History sent by e-mail Spring/Summer 1997)

Or:

> La famille de mon père était et est encore renommée dans leur village d'origine
> pour avoir produit plusieurs générations de maires[..]. Voilà, ceux sont les braves
> hommes et femmes qui m'ont précedés! On va voir ce que je vais faire.
> (Extract from Life History Spring/Summer 1999)

concluding that Americans were "very proud of themselves"

This problem was partially addressed by reading an extract from Stewart and Bennett

1995:

> The American ease of self-revelation is shared by people of few, if any, other cultures. A
> consideration of American communication with Europeans reveals a somewhat less stark
> contrast [compared to the Japanese] in personal style but one that is troublesome nevertheless.
> Europeans are surprised when Americans open conversations with reports of activities and
> experiences. For Europeans, acquaintance is more typically made through discussion of
> intellectual issues –politics, religion, or philosophical topics. Disclosure of experience and other
> personal matters comes later in the relationship assuming that interest has been established on
> an intellectual level first.

(Stewart and Bennett, 1995:150)

One student then concluded:

> We are proud of ourselves too, but we try not to show it.
> (Antoine Spring/Summer 1998)

At first, many of the French students did not wish to divulge any personal details about

their families. However, interestingly, when they started to write their essays they wrote

candidly and often eloquently about their lives:

- **Time brightens up the colour of a family story. Events once considered as
  banal take on importance as though they were marked with the weight of
  the years; that is how I feel about the story of my family.**
- **There are some interesting anecdotes to tell about my parents; they first
  met in a nightclub in 1973. According to them, they found immediately
  that they were fitting together so they stayed together. However, God
  only knows why, they decided to be original, in fact they were quite
  freethinking, I guess, so they didn't marry. Furthermore they decided to
  have an only child, myself. Since they didn't marry I wear both their
  names.**

- **I could have said more ...for example I could have told you my grandfather was very interested in history and that it was a delight listening to him, or I could have told you about my father's possessive mother and how he broke away from her.. but that's another story.**
- **The story could have begun with "Once upon a time", though it didn't exactly resemble a fairy tale. In its beginning at least.**

These narratives were far more colourful and interesting than essays the students had written on a similar subject. For instance, the student who wrote the story from which the second extract is taken wrote a purely factual account:

> I was born in Tours, in France but I have lived in many different cities since then, most interesting of which was St Pierre and Miquelan, a pair of small islands lost in the Atlantic Ocean, near Newfoundland. Thus am I really interested in hiking and sailing, both activities widely practiced there.

One of the French students explained that she did not like giving personal details in class, as she was afraid of being judged and also of being banal. However, she often went to the United States and was quite happy to talk about her personal life in a culture where it was more acceptable. Possibly this reaction was extended to the Life Histories; the fact that they were intended for an American audience could have encouraged more self-revelation. Furthermore, although the students knew their essays would be read by the teachers, a different voice clearly emerges when the implied reader is also a native speaker peer:

> The word in a living conversation is directly, blatantly oriented toward a future answer-word. Forming itself in an atmosphere of the already spoken, the word is at the same time determined by that which has not been said but which is needed and in fact anticipated by the answering word. Such is the situation in any living dialogue.

(Bakhtin, 1981: 280)

This was expressed by one American student as follows:

> The videoconference has changed my perception because at first it was just this class and now I feel like I have a personal connection with them so the future web pages and correspondence with them will be easier.

The initial lack of tolerance towards the partner group was to change radically as soon as the French students had direct contact with their peers, as we show in our discussion of the e-mail partnerships. The assumption of similarity suggested by the common interests of a

global youth culture would also have both positive and negative outcomes on the development of the students' "third place" (Sections 4.8.4 and 4.9).

One of the other problems encountered when setting up the project was the choice of language used. We had initially left this open, intending to look at the various strategies adopted by the students and indeed this was of great interest. The majority of the students wrote all their e-mails in the target language, with many of them seeing the correction of their partners' mistakes as an integral part of the exercise, as we show in Section 4.8.4.2 and 4.8.4.5. In some cases, such as in the correspondence between Leila and Frédéric, which we analyse at length in (Sections 4.8.4.2 and 4.8.4.8), both the French and American students write predominantly in English. Although this is the most extreme case, other American students also write in English, for instance if they are tired, or do not have a dictionary with them or, as we see in Section 4.8.2.6, they are worried they will not get their message across effectively. The former points can be illustrated by the following examples:

> Thu 6 Feb 1997
> Salut Will!!
> Desole j'ai beaucoup de devoirs cette semaine. Ca va? Je suis tres fatigue aujourd'hui. Je ne suis alle pas a class aujourd'hui. My brain is just not thinking in French today. But I'm going to send a letter in French this weekend. I promise. [...]
> Comment from Will in next e-mail, Sun 16 Feb:
> You forgot? ☹

> Wed 12 Feb 1997
> Merci pour votre e-mail encore. Je n'ai pas beaucoup de temps ecrire parce que j'ai un grand examen demain et je n'etudiait pas. C'est la vie ! C'est bien avec moi si vous desirez corriger mon texte. [...] helas, je n'ai pas beaucoup de temps ....j'ecris en anglais.
> Uh I am running out of time here... Oh yes, I am the webmaster here [...] If you are interested in viewing our class page, check out (web address)
> Merci, je voudrais ecrire plus en francais dans l'avenir mais....Je n'ai pas beaucoup de temps.
> John

> Tuue 4 Feb 1997
> Salut Olivier! Comment ca va?
> I am so sorry that it has taken me so long to write you back. I wanted so to write to you in French but I know that it would have taken me all evening to write you even a short message. I promise that I will write to you in your language soon. [..]
> Sincerely, Lauren

> We only e-mailed a couple of times and I kept meaning to write in French, but I
> kept saying next time.... And I never did!
> (Caitlin, post-course questionnaire, Spring/Summer 1998)

This situation seems to arise from the fact that disparate language levels between the

two groups often mean that, initially at least, the American students remain object-regulated,

lacking the confidence to express themselves in French in front of more able peers, although

most of them do try to write in French. In John's second e-mail to Nadia he expresses this

neatly:

> Tue 18 Feb 1997
> Merci mille fois pour votre e-mail! Pardon mon ordinateur ne produit pas les
> accents. Quelquefois j'ecrirai les betises. C'est parce que je ne pense pas avant
> j'ecris. C'est moi. J'espere que je n'ecris pas comme un livre ou un enfant mais je
> n'ai pas beaucoup de confidance en mɔn francais. Je suis enchante avec votre
> anglais. Vous ecrivez en anglais comme j'espere d'ecrire en francais.

Nevertheless, even those, like Leila and Michelle who are more reluctant to use French,

gradually overcome these difficulties by building up a trusting relationship with their partner

(Sections 4.8.4.2 and 4.8.4.5).

In addition, the French students are understandably reluctant to use French in their

English lessons; they have been used to the communicative method, which banned the use of

the mother tongue in the foreign language class and focused primarily on sociopragmatic

competence rather than metaknowledge (Section 1.2.5). The issue of the language to adopt is

shared with the *Cultura Project* (Furstenburg et al. 2001), where the project leaders report

that the students involved in their project were required to fill in questionnaires and write on

the open forums in the language of the country where they were studying. They argue that

this was in order to have access to intrinsically language-bound cultural values and to allow

students to express their thoughts in as complex a manner as possible. This caused problems

among the French students, who resented having to write in French during an English class

and even petitioned their teachers about it. The students are said to have subsequently

accepted the above arguments given to them in a letter from the project leaders. Morgan and

Cain (2000: 104) report on possible difficulties when the mother tongue is used in a foreign language class, but also stress the advantages of access to up-to-date authentic peer usage provided by a dialogic project between representatives of two target languages.

A few of the French students, like Will and Frédéric use some French to help their partners, as we show later. One good example of a successful combination of the two languages by both partners is the correspondence between Wayne and Ludovic (Autumn 1999). Wayne wrote the following message to Ludovic in reply to his first e-mail, which was in English:

> Sat 9 Oct 1999
> Salut, Ludo,
> [...]
> Est-ce que je pourrais te demander une seule chose? Je crois que ce serait
> beaucoup plus utile pour nous deux si nous faisions l'échange français-français et
> puis anglais-anglais--je veux dire, tu m'ecris en français, je t'écris en français, et
> puis, si tu veux, tu m'ecris en anglais et je t'écris en anglais. Je trouve que c'est plus
> important, si on étudie un langue, de lire ce qui a été écrit par un parleur natif.
> Qu'est-ce que tu en penses?

Ludovic replied half in French and half in English, as we see below, and the exchange continued in both languages on both sides.

> Mon 18 Oct 1999
> Hi Wayne,
> I' m very sorry for writing to you so late. But, I've just spent about 10 days doing a
> report about economy, which took all my "leisure" time last week. So I was very
> busy. I hope you didn't worry and think I gave you up. I'm quite agree with you
> about exchanging time to time messages in our first language. So I begin this
> evening. Tout d'abord, je pense que ca serait sympa si, de temps en temps, tu
> corrigeais mes erreurs d'anglais (particulierement si je me trompe de mots). Je
> pense que c'est un des interets de cet echange.

However, these cases remain a minority. For instance, even when Frédéric did try to use the bilingual approach adopted by Leila, he found himself unintentionally lapsing back into English:

> Thu, 30 Jan 1997
> Je vais faire comme toi: un peu d'anglais, un peu de francais. J'ai trouve ca
> amusant a la lecture. Congratulations for your French! You still do some mistakes,
> as I probably do in English but in general, it is quite good. [3 paragraphs in
> English]

Dis donc j'ecris en anglais. Excuse moi. Je disais donc que tes suggestions de lectures anglaises m'interessaient au plus haut point. Au fait, quel style de littérature te plait le plus ? [1 paragraph in English]
Bye, Leila, gros bisous et bonjour a ton copain.
(Frédéric, e-mail 5)

As we show later, some of the French students began to appreciate the educational value of having to accommodate their own language to a foreign audience and to analyse certain aspects of their own *languaculture*, but many were still not convinced of the benefits to be derived from the reciprocal nature of the exchange. We only intervened in the case of Leila, whose use of French in her first e-mails was almost non-existent, but the reasons for some judicious use of the mother tongue do need to be clarified for future groups.

4.8.2 Locus of control

4.8.2.1 Technical considerations

One of our aims in the course was to move away from a teacher-centred approach, a goal which was not necessarily shared by some of our students. The videoconference for the experimental course with Capital University had been deemed very successful, but we were aware that the teachers had dominated the proceedings. Throughout the conferences, we tried to let the students hold the floor as much as possible. However, as this extract from an e-mail from Solange illustrates, we had found after the first two conferences that questions needed to be prepared in advance. There also had to be some element of prepared turn taking.

Date: Tue, 02 May 95 10:44 EDT
From: Solange@
Subject: Re: culture project
To: Liz@vaxli.enst-bretagne.fr

Hi Liz-- Please forgive my delay in replying to your post-conference message. [..]
As promised, I will get you a copy of the videotape and once things settle down here (in about two weeks) I plan to watch it and do some reflecting on what went well and what could be improved next time. We will also be asking for some feedback from our class tonight- our first class period after the conference. My initial feeling is that it was extremely exciting to do this and that we are very much on the right track in terms of the kinds of topic that might elicit useful

participation. What surprised me as a total neophyte was the difficulty of conversational interaction in a medium where you can never tell how to locate pauses. (This should not have surprised me- I have read lots and lots of reports about interactional difficulties created by varying pause lengths, so when the technician mentioned this I should have realized what it would mean [...] It may be more appropriate next time to structure the event with small presentations by the students, and to follow these with question and answer times? Or think of some other participation format-- with lots of detailed preparation before the event so that everybody can anticipate more or less what the general outlines of the talk will look like. Once you get your copy of the tape, maybe we can e-mail a bit around these questions? I'd also really like to know how your students reacted.

The reasons for this can be summed up as follows:

- **Perceptual latency caused by the time in satellite transmission leads to a gap of approximately one half of a second between an utterance on one side and its reception on the other. Although experience makes this quite easy to manage, it is quite disconcerting at first. Moreover, we understood that pause length is a significant factor in the degree of success of intercultural communication (Scollon and Scollon 1981)**
- **Technical problems such as sound loss or distortion and occasional picture freezing sometimes made the questions unintelligible.**
- **Strong foreign accents made some of the questions difficult to understand.**
- **A prepared question helped to dispel some if the nervousness at speaking in a foreign language in front of a double audience (and sometimes the Dean and the Press)**
- **One aim was to encourage students to think carefully about their questions and answers in order to learn as much as possible from the exchange. A well-documented and thought-out reply would provide the partner class with as much information as possible about the L2C2. The students could also give their own personal perspective.**
- **In certain cases the questions needed to be rephrased to make them relatively palatable to the foreign audience (see Section 4.9.8).**
- **We wanted to make sure everyone had a chance to participate.**
- **Another aim was to move away from teacher-dominated discourse.**

The degree of success of this strategy is analysed in Section 4.8.4.3.

4.8.2.2 Breaking the ice

The teachers often break the ice at the beginning of the videoconferences, as the second extract shows. Some students also have the confidence to do something outrageous, right from the beginning, as illustrated by Karma who introduces herself as follows:

Bonjour, Je m'appelle Superwoman!
(Karma April 1997)

We had to intervene in the case of technical problems, as shown in the third extract on the montage. In this case, all three teachers tried to dispel tension by making a joke. At first, the picture quality is poor, which could be disastrous, particularly on the French side where we were working without a technician. Solange sets the tone by code switching and both Andrée and Elizabeth respond in an informal way:

> **Solange:** You're both very sort of 'floues' [blurred in French]
> **Andrée:** It's probably the weather.
> **Elizabeth:** I think it's deliberate.
> ((laughter))

Later, the problem is feedback and sound quality:

> **Elizabeth:** Solange, the sound's very bad still and there's some kind of saturation.
> Can you get your technician to check the sound [......]
> **Solange:** You have a feedback problem he says [...]
> **Elizabeth:** We can hear him perfectly, so I don't know whether it's the position of
> the microphone He's hogging the microphone!
> ((laughter))

It is interesting to note the degree of tolerance with which these technical problems were accepted; this contributed to a feeling that participation roles were more evenly distributed than in the classroom, where any equipment problems were seen as solely the teacher's responsibility.

4.8.2.3 Teacher discourse

In spite of this, to a certain extent, we tended to reproduce the format of our classrooms, even if the majority of the students agreed that we spoke less. During the planned questions, we called on the students by name, thus applying discursive pressure (Breen 1996) just as certain students had asked us to do in class. The layout of the videoconferencing rooms and the nature of the technology could be observed to have a direct influence on the nature of the interaction (Lantolf 2000, Thorne 2000). Although the new systems have cameras, which automatically zoom in on the speaker, the systems we were using have a kind of keypad, which needs to be directed manually. In Midwest University, Solange had to walk around the classroom to pass this keypad around, whereas in East University and ENST

Bretagne there were several keypads, with one at the head of the table. I had deliberately asked a student to take control of the keypad although in one class a student had replied, "You do it, you're the teacher!"

However, apart from the first group, where Nadia took total control, I was still prominently at the centre, something which I had not fully realized until I analysed the recordings of the videoconferences. In an informal interview, after volunteering to analyse the recordings of his class's two videoconferences, Thiébaut (Spring /Summer 1998) noted that the interaction on the American side seem slightly more teacher-directed. He explained this as follows:

> The set-up in the rooms was completely different. We were in a semicircle and they were in rows. Solange was in the front but you were sitting with the students. The American students also took control which was a good thing, but Solange intervened more, saying things like: "Cassie works for local television" .... But then there were more of them than us ....
> (Thiébaut - informal interview, June 1998)

4.8.2.4 Student participation

The relatively large numbers in Solange's class, added to the more formal nature of the American classes and the fact that she was managing the proceedings alone, but with countless observers, made the situation more difficult. Nevertheless, her students generally felt that they were in charge of the interaction and appreciated it very much:

- **My professor tried very much to stay out of the way. She helped guide us along but she didn't at all try to take over our time. I could tell she wanted us to have a great experience (which we did).**
- **She directed a little but let us run the show.**
- **She basically just mediated the conference and in class she does five times more talking.**
- **Usually our teacher just leads the class and that's it. In the teleconference there was less teacher intervention as the conference went according to schedule. Nothing for the teacher to do except direct our participation @ the conference.**
- **She helped keep the structure but did not interfere in our learning by experience.**
- **Solange really tries to let the teleconference be ours and not hers. But she wants us to learn from it, so she is involved in that aspect.**

Many of the student comments, on both sides of the Atlantic, showed that this medium was certainly conducive to more student participation and co-construction of meaning:

> Transformation: jointly managed talk that has the potential to change learning situations, role relations, educational purposes and procedures. Here it is no longer the case that one person, the teacher, has the agenda, and the students have no option but to follow it. Rather, the agenda is shaped by all participants, and educational reality may be transformed. Participants' contributions are self-determined or produced in response to others' requests. At this level it is appropriate to speak of true co-construction of meanings and events.
>
> (van Lier 1996: 180)

Teachers were described as 'mentors' or facilitators and the class was felt to be much more equal:

- **Solange sat back and let us work all together. She wasn't the 'teacher' and us the 'students'. She didn't lecture. She was more of a mentor.**
- **I appreciated the fact that the teachers didn't enter into the conversation too much -only when clarification was needed and let the students basically communicate as they wished.**
- **It was important for the students to take charge during this class. We needed to take responsibility in our own learning.**
- **I think it is better that teachers don't speak much during the videoconference. It seems much like talking to friends than an English lesson.**
- **The teachers shut up for once!**

On the French side, Andrée kept in the background throughout most of the videoconferences, although she did intervene to break the ice on some occasions, for example in Extract Two, where she had gone to look for some of the latecomers and suddenly appeared in front of the camera. She considered that it was more practical for one person to take charge of the management of the conference. She reported being pleased that the students participated so much, but also:

> Keeping quiet was sometimes really frustrating, especially when they gave what I thought was a wrong answer! I was really annoyed with 'Jean-Paul' -- he didn't do any work, didn't understand what we were trying to do and then hogged the limelight.
> (Andrée 1998)

This view was supported by Lucy, one of the American students in this group, who

wrote the following in the post-videoconference questionnaire:

> I certainly enjoyed the videoconference but I thought perhaps the French class held the floor a little too long at some points, and since time was limited, I think sometimes the teachers could have intervened to speed things up. [...] There should be more teacher intervention when responses tend to get wordy - everyone's questions should have ample time to be answered.
> (Lucy, post-videoconference questionnaire (Spring/Summer 1998)

4.8.2.5 There were teachers there...

One of the students, Benoît, (Autumn 1999) felt that the students were more inhibited

because of the teachers' presence, as we see in the following extract.

> [My overall impression of the videoconference was]:
> good. I enjoyed it but it was short. Moreover, I think that the answers were too "standard". I mean that some students didn't speak their mind because they felt they had to say something interesting in front of their teachers.

He also made the same observation in his e-mail to Rosie later in the evening after the

videoconference:

> 10:36 PM 12/1/99
> Hi Rosie!
> How are you? I'm fine. Did you enjoy the videoconference? I did find it interesting. I wouldn't say that it was great because it didn't last long enough and we couldn't spend much time speaking (I know, it costs a lot...). Also, there were teachers there (you don't really behave as you would normally – I mean with friends- when you're with them) and this made the discussion a bit much too organised. I thought we could have a chat on the net between students. Vivien would be interested, and I am of course. I can ask to the other students from my class if some of you are interested. [..]
> Bye
> Benoît

Rosie replied an hour later:

> Bonjour Benoît,
> C'est bon de parler avec tu! J'etais heureuse avec la plupart de la discussion, mais tu as raison concernant les attitudes d'etudiantes avec leurs professeurs. [..] Oui, je serai interesse dans un'chat'. J'ai besoin de la 'practice' (je ne sais pas comment dire cela) avec le francais.

Benoît spent a lot of time and effort attempting to set up a computer meeting, trying to

cope with time differences and incompatible equipment, but with no success, as these e-mails

between him and Rosie show:

> Date: Sat, 04 Dec 1999 09/02 PM
> Hi, I'm back!
> I think that we're 7 hours ahead of you in France (I hope that I'm not wrong..just
> to chek: it was about 19h00 when the videoconference ended, was it 12.00 at East
> University? We'll be ready at about 3h00 and that should be 20H00 for you (sorry
> for not using pm's and am's but I don't want to get it wrong and I find it easier
> without them) Vivien and I are sure to be awake at that time. Do you know if there
> are any other students interested by a little chat on the net? The more, the merrier!
> We also have to agree on the technical way to meet, do you use IRC? We'll sort the
> next issues (like where do we connect) when we'll be ready to chat (the first one
> ready will mail the other, OK?)

> Date: Sat, 04 Dec 1999 15:07:56
> Bonjour Benoît,
> Si je te comprends, il sera 3.00 AM pour vous quand nour ferrons le chat- n'est-ce
> pas? Ici il sera 9.00PM (je pense) parce ce que quand j'ai reçu mon message, il a dit
> 9/02 PM aujourd'hui et ici il est 3.00PM, six heures de différence, n'est-ce pas? Je
> ne connais pas IRC. Nous avons IIICQ and 'instant messenger' mais je ne sais pas
> si ils sont les memes choses. Ecrit-moi et nous pouvons discuter.
> Rosie

> At 09:50 PM 12/4/99 +0100, you wrote:
>   ICQ is not working here (we have a firewall protecting our network). I don't use
> "instant messenger" either. IRC is probably quite similar. Are you using windows?
> If you can install Pirch98 you'll be able to join with us.
> Will it be possible?
> Benoît

> Date: Sat, 04 Dec 1999 16:04:05 -0400
> To: Benoît @enst-bretagne.fr
> From: Rosie hlb154@
> Subject: Re: benoît50
> salut!
> J'ai deux choses a dire: - Ou est ce que je peux trouver Pirch98? et, Ce soir, je ne
> pense pas que je peux participer parce que j'ai besoin de trouver le systeme donc
> tu as parle. J'essayerai.
> A bientot
> Rosie

This effort points to a high degree of motivation for communication between the two

groups, in spite of technical obstacles, problems which have been solved since 1999 with the

use of systems such as Net meeting. Benoît, Vivien and their friends are quite prepared to

begin this chat at 3 a.m. thus placing the exchange firmly in the realm of peer-group

communication. In this exchange, Benoît positions himself as an expert peer, sharing his

knowledge as a computer-science specialist. This technical help is often provided by both

sides, giving another example of students' attempts to include their peers in a community of practice (Section 4.8.4.5).

Other students also noted the difference in interaction in front of teachers, for instance Paul, on the American side (1999) noted, unusually, that teacher intervention was the same as in class and that there were:

> Some restrictions –more formal due to teacher presence.
> (Post-videoconference questionnaire December 1999)

Both Paul and Benoît were in the December 1999 group, however, where there were larger numbers of students in both groups. These, and other comments, point to the fact that numbers need to be relatively small for the experience to be maximally beneficial, although this is clearly a financial matter. They also raise the question of to what extent we do want to intervene as teachers in our classes; if our students become 'self-regulated', does that mean that we have painted ourselves out of the picture?

> I've been studying English for 10 years and this year Andrée and Elizabeth are my English teachers. Attending lessons is quite boring but talking with someone else, I'm quite fond of it.
> (Guillaume, e-mail to Lily, January 1997)

4.8.2.6 Painting us out of the picture

Unfortunately, we did not analyse the amount of teacher/student talk in class, which would have made an interesting point of comparison. However, the students took more charge of their learning than usual in various observable ways. Firstly, they were writing to and working with a group of native speaker peers, which brought other people into the classroom, as recommended by the educator Mario Rinvolucri at a recent workshop (January 2001). For instance, students arrived in class asking to discuss a particular point or watch a particular film extract, which is usually a rare occurrence in our school. Secondly, they produced web pages in the target language, which they organised totally by themselves:

> Nos correspondantes et correspondants americains ont mis sur le web un site qui les presente. En voici l'adresse http://commedia.smsu.edu/courses/frn312

Enjoy it!
Our web site is ready at last
(Messages from Guillaume 1997)

The wider audience addressed by these web pages modified the way some students wrote and made them more aware of their potential audience, which extended beyond the conventional teacher/corrector. This phenomenon was observed by several of the American students in the questionnaires[36]:

- **I thought that posting work on the web was a great idea and I tried to make my writing better. I also wrote less formal and more loose.**
- **It made a difference to have a specific audience targeted.**
- **I didn't change my writing but I think it encouraged me to be myself-knowing that others my age are reading my work.**
- **It did change the way I wrote for that particular audience- I was mindful that they are the same age as me, and I know the kind of things I want to read about, so I wrote about those things.**
- **I changed my way of writing because you have to be very specific because they might not understand you and because you might offend someone.**
- **I think it made a difference to the way I wrote. I think I wrote more to an audience rather than to a professor and it made a difference in the mood of the writing.**
- **I changed the way I write because instead of pleasing a teacher, you have to respect a whole other population.**
- **I didn't change my writing that much but I think it does make a difference. Being on the Internet our work will reach many in a very innovative and creative way.**
- **I wanted my writing to be better since more people were reading it.**
- **I definitely attempted to post work without grammatical errors, but also with detailed, descriptive writing. I did not want to write in "baby-talk", but tried using more complicated structure and construction.**
- **I wrote as well as I am able- it doesn't really matter to me if lots of other people see my work. The web page does make me feel kind of cool, though.**

These comments point to both a wish to target content to a much wider audience and to pay more attention to form, in the interests of greater intelligibility. The motivation of an attentive peer group audience also provided the impetus for students in both groups to appropriate certain tasks to their own agenda. When asked, for instance, to produce a short

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[36] We had specifically asked them if they thought they changed their writing when they posted it on the web. This was not relevant to the French students, who actually included very little of their classwork on their web pages.

film to inform their American counterparts about the Higher Education System in France, the group wove the information into a detective story in French and English where they also managed some ironic comment on lack of attendance in lectures. This film was called 'Three Men in Black and a Coffin' and included a coffin, which appeared all over the campus, including in lectures. Students from previous groups, or even from different groups, were also involved in helping with script writing and filming. The 1997 group also designed a detailed questionnaire as a response to the points raised in Evidences Invisibles (Carroll 1987). This was administered to other groups, used as a basis for the first videoconference and adapted by the students from following years (Appendix XIII). This layering of multiple meanings, where different student voices were added to their peers' work, illustrates one of the outcomes observed in other *sociomedia* projects (Barrett 1992; Slatin 1992; Goldman-Segall 1992).

In a similar way, the American students produced highly imaginative and idiosyncratic work, ranging from sketches of Hillbillies to a documentary on dancing styles that to the surprise of the French audience, included footage of the Campus Police dancing! This led to much discussion about the differing expectations and associations embedded in apparently similar notions, a key aspect of the development of a critical stance, which is analysed further in Section 4.8.4.6.

The American students also involved other students on the campus and in the wider community, for instance in a series of interviews about primary school children's views of the French. For these creative projects, the teachers provided the necessary practical support but tried to let the students make their own decisions and mistakes. This was felt to be a positive experience, although, while there was more potential for equal relationships outside the classroom, there was also more scope for conflict. For instance, as I noted in my teaching log, helping the students make a film was extremely time-consuming. There were various

problems of organisation: some of the students invariably arrived late, or without their costumes or even without the camera. The students doing the camerawork made many basic mistakes, such as filming into the sun, or leaving the camera on all the time. It was difficult for the teachers to stand back and let them learn from their mistakes and I personally found that I was far less tolerant than when in the classroom. In addition, as Etienne A. pointed out, very little English was spoken:

> **What would you add or remove if you were designing a course for new students?**
> I found what we studied about cultural differences very interesting. I would therefore spend more time on discussing these problems. I have chosen "making the film" as my favourite activity in the preceding list. It was really very amusing. However, we didn't practice our English a lot during this period. That's why I would try to find something which would perhaps be a bit less funny but would make students speak English a little more.
> (Etienne A. post-course questionnaire, Spring/Summer 1999)

However, eventually the students organised themselves and did both the filming and the montage themselves. By presenting an aspect of their own culture, the students began to question their own assumptions and to see their environment from the other's perspective, while learning to work more closely with their peers at home. This kind of work also created a closer relationship between teachers and students; many of the participants remained in contact long after their course was over, a situation which is atypical in our particular context.

The students also helped each other with their projects about cultural differences and the remakes, particularly in the Autumn 1999 group, where we had asked them to work with their partner on an essay about a remake of their choice. This was partly to address a problem raised by several of the students in the previous groups, as the following quotes from questionnaires illustrate. Firstly, the American students were upset that the French students did not produce more work, a result of the course being optional on the French side. For example, the 1997 group were disappointed that the French students did not send them a video of their campus, a situation which was rectified the following year. Secondly, several students wanted to work more closely on cultural differences with the partner group. Finally,

they wanted more variety in the remakes studied and to be able to choose films which they

felt had an intrinsic worth as well as material for cross-cultural comparison.

> I was involved in a project to donate music to the French students. We also
> videotaped ourselves many times and our campus- I was hoping they would send
> us a video.
> (Katie, post-course questionnaire Spring/Summer 1997)

> I wish there had been more feedback about our web page from the students in the
> French class.
> (Jack, post-course questionnaire Spring/Summer 1998)

> I would suggest that we had more contact with the French-speaking students so
> that our papers can get feedback from people different than those in the class.
> (Edward, post-course questionnaire, Autumn 1999)

> **Thanks very much for your prompt reply, Lise. I noticed you put the**
> **preparation side of the course (remakes, perception, colours etc.) at the end. Is**
> **that because you think there is no need for that sort of preparation, or just**
> **because you preferred the practical side? I'd be interested in any ideas you had**
> **if you have time.**
> The preparation part was not what I appreciated most. That's why I put it at the
> end. But, this "mark" does not take on account the value or the interest I took in it.
> It just reflects the fun I had while doing it. I think those parts did not lack interest
> but the problem is that we eventually did not confront our opinion with those of
> the Americans on the various subjects.
> (Lise, follow-up from questionnaire Spring/Summer 1999 group)

> **What would you add or change if you were planning a course for next year's**
> **students?**
> I would work on more interesting remakes than that miserable Nine Months. I
> loved the part of thinking of the differences between American and French
> culture: more elements! Maybe you could watch some extracts of those series that
> are so successful in America: Friends, Seinfeld etc. and try to understand why.
> (Nadia questionnaire 1997)

The final point made by Nadia about the quality of certain remakes was also echoed in

some student essays (Appendix XXIV). Some students are philosophical about this,

recognising that the American version is often intended to appeal to a wider audience and that

changes are necessary to fit in with the cultural expectations of the American viewers.

> Thanks to all these changes, a movie can have more success in a country than he
> would have had without any change. However, the remake is often not as good as
> the original.
> (Essay 14, , French female student, 1998, Appendix XXIV)

> In conclusion, differences between the original movie and the American remake
> are mainly due to cultural differences and I think also that some scenes are a little
> "exaggerated" in the American version to make it more commercial.
> (Essay 17, , French male student, 1999 Appendix XXIV)

To conclude, all the differences, even if they can strongly change the original story and appear shoking [sic] for the public of the original film, are necessary. Making a movie exactly like the original one would lead to bad film, which would not respect some kind of cultural codes. These elements allow us to understand what is funny, or sad in a movie (for example the behaviour of the two grandmothers, or the behaviour of the fathers towards a nurse at the middle of the movies).
(Essay 12, , French male student, 1999, Appendix XXIV)

However, others react strongly to the changes made to the original French film, even if they are aware that they are doing this:

I might sound like a basic "US go home" French guy, but that's because I was sick to see what they had done with this film (and many others) just to make it meet their own value system.
(Essay 16, French male student, 1999, Appendix XXIV)

One of the problems of this comparative approach stems from the fact that the remakes tend to make explicit a message, which is sometimes only hinted at in the original. This "low-context" approach (Section 1.4.2) lacks appeal for the "high context" French students:

I am making fun of this because many of the coups de theatre in "Diabolique" lead to something quite ridiculous compared to the French film. In a general view it seems that nothing is left at random in the American version, everything is clear-cut, whereas Clouzot left a few incoherencies and mysteries.
(Extract from essay on "Les Diaboliques" and "Diabolique", 2 French male students, 1999)

In some rare cases, the study of the remakes actually appears to reinforce ethnocentric attitudes, for instance in the following extract. Here the French author associates "good" films with French ones and, one assumes, "bad" films with American ones.

I think that there are remakes of some films (such as La Totale, Trois Hommes et un Couffin, Diabolique...) because the Americans want to introduce their culture in a good film (that is a French film...). So they change the scenes that doesn't [sic] fit with their ideas, feelings, culture, and they produce a new film that is the copy of the French one but in which we can see some cultural misunderstanding.
(Extract from essay on remakes, French female student, 1999)

However, the majority of the students recognise the value of studying the remakes and their originals, as we can see from the following extracts.

Remakes are made to make a foreigner movie fit better in the culture of the country. Therefore, there are often lots of differences between a movie and its remake, which are very interesting in a cultural point of view.
(Extract from Essay 6, Appendix XXIV)

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One of the best ways to reveal cultural differences is to watch movies based on a culture and their remakes. Why do producers shoot remakes? In fact, it can be explained by situations that would not be seen the same way whether you are American or French: you may not react to the same situation or even miss jokes or funny scenes.
(Extract from Essay 13, Appendix XXIV)

Sometimes when watching a film, an American one, you just don't notice the difference at all comparing to our own way of life. But when you come to compare it with its French counterpart, the difference is truly obvious. At first sight you might think that both of them are designed for the same worldwide audience, but as you go through them carefully you can notice that they were both referring to cultural points of their own.
(Essay 9, French male student, 1999, Appendix XXIV)

Le film "Trois Hommes et un Couffin" et le remake américain "Three Men and a Baby", montrent beaucoup de différences culturelles entre les français et les américain. Un bon exemple et le mot de Sylvia; le changement du mot et du personnage qui ont lieu dans le remake. Le mot de Sylvia a dû changer et le personnage a dû devenir une étrangère pour être acceptable et raisonnable pour le public américain.
(Essay 10, American female student, 1998, Appendix XXIV)

Many of the students discussed the remakes in their e-mails. These discussions were sometimes in the foreign language and sometimes in their own language[37] if they were worried about getting their message across adequately, as the following extracts from e-mails illustrate:

Pour ma projet finale je discuterais un différence culturelle entre France et les Etats-Unis. J'espère que tu m'aide avec cet projet. J'ai quelques idées. Ce sont: La musique - quel rôle est-ce que la musique joue en ton société? (I am going to say this in English so that I know I am saying it right.) Recently two young kids went into a school and opened fire on the students inside. A lot of them were killed. Our society blamed music for this deviant behaviour.
In our English courses we are studying the way the French and American people use the telephone. It's rather strange: you (the Americans) use the phone as a tool, i.e.; just to pass information, but you use it all the time. We use the phone more like a letter, i.e.; it's very formal. You have to call for this and that (birthday, Christmas etc. ...) but calling someone without good reason is considered very rude... Do you agree?
I don't know all the films you've listed so I'll pick one from those you have seen. True Lies would be fine for me, but do tell me if you'd rather speak about another one.
About your project, you sent me some ideas. I found them all interesting. If you want we can talk about education and work, I think there is a lot we can compare in both countries. Tell me if it's OK and we will start the discussion. You send me

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[37] The issue of choice of language is addressed in Section 4.8.1.1.

also a copy of your work about the film Diabolique. I am sorry, but I haven't seen both versions of them yet. I'll try to watch them this weekend.

Nous avons un devoir dans ma classe (pour toi aussi?) Il faut que nous choisissions une paire de films (un français et son "remake" américain) pour les comparer. Voici une liste de films que ma prof. nous a donné ...

(Reply): Our English teacher decided to show us the American "remake" of"Trois hommes et un couffin", have you seen both films? The French one is quite old and had a huge success. In the list you sent me last time I have seen: Le Grand Blond avec une chaussure noire and La Chèvre: old comedies where you can see Pierre Richard (the main character) who has played in lots of this kind of films. La Cage aux folles: originally, it was a play that had a great success for a long time. It is about homosexuals and prejudice about them. Nikita: the first famous film of Luc Besson I think, a lot of action, very impressive and different from American action films. You can also find the same characters in "Léon", another Besson's film. Les Miserables: I don't know which version it is but you may know Victor Hugo's book (same name) which is very interesting.

J'ai finis de regarder de regarder les deux films et maintenant je dois commencer ma composition. J'ai pensé à deux sujets et peut-être tu pourrais m'aider à decider le quel je devrai faire. 1) Comparer les fins des deux films plus qu'ils sont très différentes. 2) Comparer les scènes de violence plus que dans la version américaine, il y a plus de violence que dans la version française. Dis-moi ce que t'en pense. Je dois rendre la composition jeudi alors si tu n'as pas le temps de répondre, ça ne me gène pas.

(Reply) Yes why not, about the violence, it may be explain by the fact that the french version is older and the violence was usually suggested, but not shown as often as you can see it nowadays. the old films was shot in order to make the people who watch experiment feelings: the situation, the game of the actors, the way it was filmed, was theorically enough for that. Nowadays you have to attract visually, the watcher is more or less flabby [sic] and the pictures is doing all the job. Before, the movies was a bit like the theatre but with a more visual tool. If you watch an Hitchcock film, it is similar to the French Diabolique, by watching the eyes of the birds, their blackness, and the expressions of the actors, you were suppose to be threaten, now to make a scary movie you need a serial killer with a bloddy knife [sic], if you want to do a remake of Birds, I think that if you want to have it massively sold you need to see a bird enucleating someone in a close-up. You now have to show violence directly if you want to express it, people are use to see it in films that are not comedies with famous actors. So if you don't see it you (the basic watcher that usually don't think about what is suggested but take everything at the first degree, not you personnaly !) won't catch it.[38]

The discussion of remakes was taken particularly seriously by Barbara-Jean and Jérémy, (December 1999) where the American student wrote in French and the French student in English. Their exchange had worked very well on an academic level; they were both extremely able students, with the best marks in their year and capable of perceptive analysis (see also Appendix XIX). In these extracts, they exchanged information and completed each other's analyses, layering different levels of understanding and modifying

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[38] E-mails from the American students are in bold type.

their original position. The following extracts come from several exchanges in October and November 1999, before the videoconference. Jérémy usually replied to Barbara-Jean's questions by pasting his answers into the original, and as Barbara-Jean observed in an e-mail to Solange, rarely asked questions himself. He seemed to position himself as an expert advisor on French culture but did not feel the need to ask advice about American culture, presumably because he had lived in the United States as a young child and had since returned for many visits. Barbara-Jean is able to give Jérémy some information about the American remakes of certain French films, when he actually asks a question:

> **Je crois que ta classe étudiera un sujet similar en classe et que tu devras regarder des films américains, n'est-ce pas?**
> Yes, but we haven't started yet
> **Mon professeur nous a donné quelques films comme. suggestion, par exemple, Neuf Mois, A Bout de Souffle, Le Grand blond avec une chaussure noire, Cyrano de Bergerac [...]**
> I have seen Le Grand blond, Trois hommes, Un Indien, Cyrano .. I would be glad to discuss them but I had never heard of their American remakes ...how are they called? I really liked all these movies, especially Cyrano and Trois Hommes et un Couffin.
> **Voici les titres des remakes américains; The Man with One Red Shoe (avec Tom Hanks), Three Men and a Baby (avec Tom Selleck et Ted Danson) et le remake le plus récent de Cyrano s'appelle Roxanne (avec Steve Martin). Nous avons regardé quelques scènes de Trois Hommes et un Couffin et mon professeur a dit que ta classe a aussi regardé un peu de Three Men and a Baby. Donc il va être très facile de discuter de ces deux films, mais si tu préfèrerais discuter Roxanne et Cyraneau [sic], nous pouvons le faire.**

In the following e-mails, the two students have an interesting discussion, about the differences in the remake and the original, both giving a "French" or and "American" perspective. This is done in a detached, non-polemical way, except when Jérémy says that the American hero would be seen as "pityfull" in France. Jérémy explains typical French attitudes to the police and the hero, and Barbara-Jean gives her analysis of the reasons for removing the serious scene, where Jacques laments the fact that men cannot have children, in a case of what Chodorow calls 'womb envy' (Chodorow 1978; Modleski 1988; Durham 1992). She dissociates herself from "les américains qui l'a regardé le film", who simply want

to be amused. Jérémy then adds another possible reason, arising from the narrative structure of the film and American attitudes to the police:

> **J'ai regardé le début de Trois Hommes et un Couffin hier, mais malheureusement je ne pouvais pas voir le fin.**
> We've seen both

(several turns about the difficulty of finding French films in the United States)

> **Quand-même, j'ai trouvé le film français très interessant. C'est interessant à noter que dans le remake américain on a ajouté une scène de poursuite avec les vendeurs de drogues. Il y toujours (ou au moins très souvent) dans les films américains!**
> Yes, this seen (sic) is very important: in the French version, they don't trick the drug dealers, and they don't become heros. I think that's a very French attitude; I can't really explain that, but we don't like this kind of heros: they have a Plan, it works out perfectly well, they trick the bad guys and the police arrives a bit too late: in France that would look pityfull.
> **J'ai vu finalement la fin de Trois Hommes et un Couffin. J'ai trouvé les changements fait par le metteur en scène américain dans le remake très interessant parce que je croix que ces changements montrent quelques différences culturelles.**
> I agree.
> **Non seulement la scène de poursuit que nous avons discuté mais aussi le fait que dans le remake américaine on a éliminer la scène dans laquelle Jacques parle d'être enceinte, et dans laquelle il dit qu'il est triste de ne pas être capable de donner naissance à un enfant.**
> Yes, I wondered why, but wasn't able to figure out…
> **Dans le remake, Jack joue à être enceinte (la scène avec l'oreiller), mais il n'explique pas ce qu'il fait. Je crois que c'est à cause du fait que Three Men and a Baby était un film comique, et les américains qui l'a regardé voulaient seulement être amusés; ils ne veulent pas penser.**
> Yes, maybe, but I think this scene allowed to speack with the policemen… The French relationship with the police is a bit special, as showing the policeman as a human being is quite important because it isn't very common (especially when the movie was made)
> **Au sujet de la scène avec la poursuite je suis d'accord avec toi.**

This exchange illustrates the benefit of adopting a comparative approach to help students gain access to a "third place". The students are exploring differences in a cooperative, non-confrontational way, moving between perspectives and adopting a critical distance from their own culture. They each recontextualize the film for the other, giving reasons for the cultural differences which are expressed in the remake. Jérémy explains typical French attitudes to the police and to the anti-hero, while Barbara-Jean analyses the

tendency for American comic films not to go beyond the purely comic. While there may be a slight confusion between cinematic conventions as representations of a culture and more deeply held beliefs and values (see also Section 4.9.16), their discussion has the potential for the development of both an insider's and outsider's view, as recommended by Kramsch (1993).

4.8.3 Intersubjectivity

During the videoconferences, many of the students had recourse to gestures, possibly to set up the beginnings of what Rommetveit calls intersubjectivity, where contexts of shared understanding are negotiated. This is defined by Lantolf (2000a), following Rommetveit (1974, 1985) and Habermas (1984), as follows:

> Human communication becomes intersubjective when interlocutors undertake not only to share a perspective with regard to the reference of their talk but it also allows for the taking of the other person's perspective and the suspending of one's own, at least temporarily, in order to value the other person's perspective.

(Lantolf 2000a:85)

This change in perspective can be observed in many of the students' productions and during some videoconference discussions, for example in Section 4.9.13. This position is similar to the suspension of disbelief required for Byram's intercultural stance, which we explain in Section 1.5.6.

This beginning of such dialogic interaction is illustrated in Sequence 3 of the montage, where students address an individual student, or, in the case of the April 1997 conference, to control an unruly peer group. These examples show that the students are unfamiliar with the medium, but also point to a wish to create a feeling of solidarity in the group:

> **Nadia:** ((waving)) Tu crois qu'ils m'entendent, là?
> **John:** ((waving)) Bonjour tout le monde!
> **Karma:** ((trying to speak above the noise from the French class))
> Pardonne-moi!
> ((laughter))
> **Lily:** ((holds up hand, cut-throat gesture)) **Silence!**
> **Frédéric:** Pay attention, please!

These gestures and facial expressions were also perceived as important to many of the students, for instance, as both Karma and Lily remarked in the post-videoconference questionnaire:

> The videoconference allowed not only verbal but also non-verbal communication. I think this non-verbal communication is the key to truly understanding the French and their cultural tendencies. I enjoyed it very much.
> (Karma, post-videoconference questionnaire 1997)
> I loved the videoconferences- I wish they had been once a week. [...] The conferences were almost more personal than the e-mails because of the visual elements, facial expressions.
> (Lily, post-videoconference questionnaire 1997)

4.8.4 This keyboard buddy thing is very important.....

4.8.4.1 A personal rapport

The importance of building up a personal rapport to aid the development of intersubjectivity is one of the main themes to emerge from student feedback. Excited reactions when students realized that they were talking to their partner, such as those featured in Sequence Four were fairly common. The first example, "mon Etienne", is taken from the April 1999 conference. At the ENST Bretagne, Etienne was seen not only as the clown of the group but also as the mascot of the whole year. We had been slightly worried about his presence in the group, as he was repeating a year and his English level was weaker than that of the other students in the group. However, he proved to be an asset, both through his involvement with the partner group and his attitude in class, which helped to bridge two very different and often incompatible student groups. His idiosyncratic way of participating in the course is illustrated in this extract from his "life story":

> The story you are going to hear is the most extraordinary story you've never heard before! My father was an important Martian. While the people of the planet decided to do research about its environment, they discovered that a little blue planet was existing, for years, just near the one they were living on. One day, my father was walking on this planet, thinking about finding a wife to have children and give a new king to the planet, he decided to go and see the blue planet and its inhabitants [...]. Fortunately for me, my mother rescued him from a crash and they fell in love. Of course my grandmother was too old so my father couldn't fall in love with her. Anyway, my grandfather wouldn't have liked it. With the

maternal's benedictions, they've lived in Alsace [...]. I'm sure I'm not the only one who can invent such senseless things. For your information, I'm doing a training period in the school ENSTB in order to learn how to build a new rocket in order to go back on my father's planet.

Although his attitude could be construed as frivolous, he had shown great interest in the e-mail partnership, where he and Francesca seemed well matched, and played a leading role in the film "Three Man in Black and a Coffin". He and Alexis participate fully in both videoconferences and are instigators of the "fun" side of the exchange, which we discuss in Section 4.9.16. This exchange with Francesca is also one of the few examples of spontaneous French in the data, even if the second part is half in English. Many of these exchanges (as in examples two and three) take place at the beginning of the videoconference and clearly help to dispel nervousness, as well as indicating a more personal involvement. The students who have not been singled out in this way also seem to enjoy the situation, as we can see in the example of Etienne and Guillaume F., when the student in the limelight is encouraged by his neighbour. It is interesting that this more personal note is nearly always introduced by the American students, with the French students in the 1997 group being the exception.

- ((At the beginning of the videoconference))
Francesca: Où est mon Etienne? Oh, c'est ça!
((laughter))
Andrée: C'est ça; oui!
((laughter))
At the end of the videoconference
Francesca: Etienne, ce soir, ta compagnie was very funny
Etienne: Merci beaucoup!
((laughter))

- Kelly: Where's Greg?

- My name is Guillaume.
American student: Lequel Guillaume?
((laughter))
Guillaume F.
((laughter))

- Maureen: ((with a dazzling smile)) : OK c'est pour toi, Charles
Charles: ((looking slightly embarrassed)) J'écoute, j'écoute!
((laughter))

Another conference finished with "Xavier, mail me, TONIGHT!" and during the 1997

conference Guillaume remarked:"Oui, en plus c'est ma copine!" when he started talking to his

keyboard buddy and Steve added in English: "You don't know how it means to see you!"

Leila (1997) was very enthusiastic when she realized that she would have an e-mail partner,

as we see in her first e-mail to Frédéric.

> Wed. 22 Jan 1997
> [.....] I am very excited to have someone to write to in France. I was very
> surprised to find your message tonight. I didn't even know we (my class) were
> getting specific people to write to. I am very glad we are, though. It'll be much
> better like that.
> (Leila, e-mail 2)

Other students expressed disappointment if their keyboard pal was not present at the

conference:

> Sat 4 Dec. 1999
> Hi Wayne
> I'm so sorry for not having seen you at the conference. It was very nice to see our
> penfriends through TV in LIVE. My English teacher told me that you were at an
> interview at the Oxford University. I hope it was all right. It would be great if you
> could come back to Europe for your studies. I hope you'll be able to write me back
> as soon as possible.
> Bye,
> Ludo
>
> Next time make sure all the keyboard pals are there! I was really disappointed not
> to see mine.
> (Anonymous questionnaire 1998)

Students who had not managed to build up this kind of relationship often regretted it:

> I have written Jean-Yves several times since the conference and now feel very at
> ease. I wish I had done this before the conference so that I would have had the
> chance to bond with him a little- maybe I wouldn't have been so nervous[..] I think
> this keyboard buddy thing is very important for the conference (..] if we knew
> each other before the conference (via e-mail) it would (might) make us more at
> ease.
> (Joanne, questionnaire Spring/Summer 1998)

The main problem with this kind of exchange is the frustration felt if the other partner

does not reply. It is difficult to gauge why this happens and how to avoid the situation. Some

students are philosophical about it:

He didn't write me much but I didn't really mind because it was part of his personality
(Karma, post course questionnaire, Spring/Summer 1997)

Alas, it did not work very well. Let's say that a kind of mutual laziness compromised our correspondence (2 or 3 messages, not more). Nevertheless, this was really interesting; the 'partners' were the same age as us and seemed very enthusiastic. Moreover, as there were videoconferences with them, we could have for some time a more lively contact with them.
(Antoine, post course questionnaire, Spring/Summer 1999)

Others were more disappointed:

I received one from Vincent and I immediately responded with ½ French, ½ English. He responded once more and that was all – so I emailed him just 2 times. I was very disappointed that I had no partner. E-mail is so easy and I feel like I could have learned more about culture etc. if I had someone to ask all my questions to.
(Lucy, post course questionnaire, Spring/Summer 1998)

Etienne A. explained the problems he had problems of setting up an e-mail with Lin as follows:

My "cyberpal" was not fond of new technologies. She checked for new mail once a month. That's why I sent her several messages without any reply at the beginning. As I had her address rather late, we had only two months to exchange letters. Our response delay was between one and two weeks as far as I remember. It means that each of us wrote three or four times in all. This exchange has unfortunately not allowed me to learn much about her. I think she had been learning French for only about 6 months or so. She could not therefore build very complicated sentences and the content of our letters remained simple and vague.
(Etienne A. post course questionnaire, Spring/Summer 1999)

Varying degrees of computer literacy and differences in language level did no doubt contribute to the lack of enthusiasm on the part of some students, as did the fact that many of the French students proficient in languages were also highly active on the Students' Union and other associations. However, another reason for the breakdown in this particular partnership was probably too large a distance between the personal beliefs and values held by the two students, as predicted by Stephan (1985). Etienne was aware of this when he agreed to write to Lin, and intended to use the partnership as an exploration of difference. Unfortunately, he found it very difficult to identify with someone whose religion was so

central to her identity that it was the subject both of her term essay, the film she made for the French group and her question in the videoconference.

Some of the students also wonder why certain partnerships work and others do not as we can see in this e-mail from Guillaume:

> Thu 30 Jan 1997
> [...] I've talked to the people in my English class about their mailfriends and they do not seem to exchange a lot of mails. Do you know the reasons? Anyway, we are mailfriends and it works quite well. [....]

4.8.4.2 *The dream of a someone*

Some successful exchanges work well on an academic level, as we have seen with Jérémy and Barbara-Jean. For others, the partnership appears to fulfil an emotional need and develops into an intense exchange, which could be termed a virtual flirtation. Some of these exchanges are reminiscent of the e-mail correspondence shown in the film 'You've got Mail' (Ephron 1998), where the two main characters confide everything to their unseen computer correspondent. Their developing affectionate relationship leads the heroine, Kathleen Kelly, played by Meg Ryan, to confess to her friend that she does not have a new partner, but the "dream of a someone". As Thorne (2003), building on Walther (1996), suggests, personal cues are expressed through CMC in such a way that similar and positive characteristics can be over attributed to the conversational partner, leading to an intimate interpersonal relationship. This "hyperpersonal interaction" can develop into idealisation or infatuation and this is clearly the case in the two examples discussed below.

The exchange between Maureen and Charles[39], in the Autumn 1999 group, which we reproduce in full in Appendix XIX, was a mixture of information, flirtatious comments and jokes. These, unlike the second example we examine here, were all written in the foreign language. Maureen was addressed as "my dear Maureen" or "chère correspondante" and she

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[39] Unlike with the other French students, Charles and Frédéric are pseudonyms to avoid any possible embarrassment.

signed her e-mails as: "ta correspondante préférée:

Mon 25 October 1999
I'm glad that you did answer me at last and I was also very interested in what you
told me ! So my penfriend is likely to become 99 'Miss Latina!! I had no idea of
what you look like but, NOW, I guess you are very very pretty and I understand
that the chaps who see you dancing with a friend of yours try to forget their
jealousy by getting drunk! Yet, I'd like to stress an aspect of your lattest mail: you
may think that I'm the cute boy who is riding the funboard on the picture but...I
AM NOT!!! It's a picture I found on a web site and I only sent it to you for it's a
beautiful photo...and that's all! I hope you are not too disappointed! I shall send
you a picture of myself on my board and you will assess the difference [...]. Have
a nice time Maureen, and a` tres bientot j'espere! (isn't it what you American
people call the "French Touch"?)
 Bye bye.
C..H.A..R..L..E..S
 NB: My penfriend is going to be Miss Latina! I can't believe this!

Ah Charles!
       Tu es vraiment charmant! Si je deviens Miss Latina, je t'envoyerai une photo
de moi avec ma coronne parce que m'encourage! C'est un reve de devenir un
reine de beaute, meme si c'est au niveau universitaire. Je suis vraiment decu. Je
pensais que c'etait toi dans la photo. J'attenderai ta photo avec impatience.
Ta correspondante preferee,
 Maureen

Bonsoir, chere Maureen,
 just a few words from your "favorite pennfriend" to tell you that I really enjoyed
your lattest mail and I wish we shall keep on like this because it's really fun to chat
with you
 Bye bye et a` tres bientot par courrrier, chere correspondante!
C H A R L E S

Mon cher, drole Charles,
       Dans une semaine je serai dans mon concours pour Miss Latina :) Toute cette
semaine, je dois pratiquer la danse que tous les contestants feront ensemble. Nous
allons danser un merengue qui s'appelle <Sauvemente> par Elvis Crespo; c'est une
chouette chanson. Les mots disent quelque chose comme ci: Doucement,
embrasse-moi car je veux sentir tes levres en n'embrassant encore. Nous aimons
bien cette chanson ici, et on la joue beaucoup dans les danses latins [..][40]

Although the correspondence could appear superficial, the students did exchange

information about their cultures and preoccupations and apparently also corrected each

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[40] We do not have all the dates for this e-mail exchange as the e-mails were all forwarded at once by Maureen,
who had sometimes pasted them together without the dates.

other's mistakes, although we did not see all the e-mails. In any case, the partnership was

clearly very important to Charles, as we discuss in Section 4.9.2.

Leila and Frédéric, in the 1997 group, who sent each other over forty e-mails

between January and May 1997, also built up a similar flirtatious relationship, addressing

each other as "dear" and "darling", to such an extent that it caused jealous reactions from their

respective partners:

> Fri. 25 April 1997
> I hope that I don't make you feel awkward by my jokes- I am also very attached to
> my boyfriend. Maybe if we had met sooner and lived in the same country...but in
> the meantime, I'll still tease you about coming to the US to be with me and hope
> your girlfriend doesn't come and hunt me down. I really, really hope we continue
> to write the traditional way long after this project is done. Even though we tease
> each other sometimes about romance, I've come to value our friendship and I do
> care about you and your life. I hope your girlfriend doesn't mind if you continue a
> correspondence with me. My boyfriend will be jealous but I have to ignore him
> sometimes or I would not have any male friends[..] Don't worry about your
> charming words. You can charm me all you want!
> (Leila e-mail 28)

After describing his girlfriend's jealousy even of his male friends, who can be with him

all the time, while she is in Paris, Frédéric continues:

> Sun 27 Apr 1997
> For those reasons I can't really think of visiting you (I mean as a friend, let's not
> afraid your boyfriend) but you know I would like it very much [...]
> I'd love to come and "charm you all I want" anyway.
> (Frédéric, e-mail 29)

His e-mail a week later continues the discussion:

> Tue 6 May 1997
> Anyway I showed your letters to Clementine this weekend and she appeared to be
> very jealous but that was foreseeable ("Love"). So she doesn't want to go and see
> you for the moment, we'll have to wait for her temper to soften a little bit [..]
> (Frédéric, e-mail 36)

The fact that they have developed a close relationship without seeing each other is

referred to several times in the correspondance. In one e-mail, Leila mentions the

forthcoming videoconference and then adds:

> Tues 25 Feb 1997
> [.....] We shall see one another for the first time! Odd that you can learn so much
> about another person and not even know what they look like!
> (Leila e-mail 17)

Leila specifically states in one of her later e-mails that she appreciated a relationship which was initially based on sharing written views and feelings in an anonymous way, rather than being influenced by appearances:

> Sun 27 April 1997
> [......] I know that you are not writing to me because of the way I look, nor I you. The most wonderful thing about our friendship is that you were so kind to me and interested in what I had to say before you had any idea as to what I looked like. That means more to me than you'll ever know. I've known so many guys over the years try to get close to me just because I was a model, they didn't think I had an intelligent thing to say. I will always thank you for offering me your friendship from the beginning – that makes it one of the most special friendships I've ever had, since all the other relationships in my life were based from appearances first.
> (Leila, e-mail 30)

Here the nature of the medium appears to have an influence on the degree of intimacy, which is reached quite quickly. Frédéric replies to Leila's first enthusiastic e-mail (Section 4.8.4.1) in a relatively formal way:

> Wed. 22 Jan 1997
> Dear Leila,
>   Hello! I'm Frédéric Cam and I'm in the fourth level language group of the ENSTBr. I was demanded to choose one name, and yours has popped out. I'm also very glad to have a relationship with students of a foreign country and I hope I will match with the image of a correspondant you may have. Of course, we don't know each other, that's why I don't really know what to talk about: then, the faster you answer, the faster I know and we will be able to correspond in a productive way. Tell me what you like, the topics you have in mind ....anything you want.
>   Yours sincerely
>   Frédéric Cam
> (Frédéric, e-mail 1, after choosing Leila as a keypal)

After Leila's reply and one more letter each where they sign "yours sincerely" or "sincerely yours", Frédéric uses "big kisses, as we say in France". As well as being the beginning of more focus on the foreign language (Section 4.8.4.5), this marks a rapid progression into intimacy to which Leila replies: "Much love". On the 18th February, less than one month later, after 7 messages from Frédéric and 10 from Leila, Frédéric addresses her as "darling". Leila usually prefers "Gros bisous", although she later calls Frédéric "dear" and her final message, on the 14th of May, finishes with "Love always".

As Leila points out, physical appearances have not been able to influence their initial perception of each other and this can be a liberating factor. The students confide their problems and past disappointments to each other and support each other both academically and personally. Occasionally they position themselves as caring parent, with Leila even signing her final e-mail as "Mom". Both students appreciate having a conversational partner they perceive as more intelligent and interesting than many of the peers they have face-to-face contact with:

> Sun 27 Apr 1997
> [...] It's really nice to have an intelligent conversation with someone. It's so hard to do such things here because Americans are so preoccupied with appearances and other people's opinions of them [...].
> (Leila, e-mail 27)

Frédéric replies:

> Mon. 28 Apr 1997
> [...] Now I'd like you to know I'm also very pleased to have interesting conversation with you: you speak about American people but here in France it's quite the same: people talk about clothes, computers.... Nothing very exciting. It's even worse here in the school (that's why I have so few friends here) because they come from preparatory school (words?) they think they are better than the people who don't: they are very proud of themselves .....[....] You have to know that preparatory school are a very closed world, where many students only work, all day long, never go out ......so they're cut off the real world; of course, not all of them, but maybe a majority! Then what a releaf to talk to any outsider of that world! The consequence of this phenomenon is that I give as special attention to my real friends, and you're one of them now.
> (Frédéric, e-mail 31)

These examples of "hyperpersonal engagement" also highlight one of the unexpected outcomes of the project behind this thesis. As we discussed in Chapter 4, the French students are products of the "Grandes Ecoles" system, living on a male-dominated campus in an idyllic but isolated setting. Although the majority of the students, particularly those in the 1997 groups, are actively involved in student activities and thoroughly enjoy their time at ENST Bretagne, Frédéric represents a minority who suffer from not being part of an "in-group". His fellow students' negative attitude to his girlfriend, who had stayed in Paris and was at a University, rather than at a "Grande Ecole", causes him to see the system through a

hypercritical, outsider's eyes. His relationship with Leila provides contact with a positive outsider who, although she does not understand the system of "preparatory schools" (Section 4.8.4.5) gives him uncritical support. Although this is an extreme example, many other French students express pleasure at communicating with students who are studying other subjects and, also at being able to write to a member of the opposite sex:

> Thu 10 April 1997
> Hi Katrina,
> Anyway, I have received your photos. My god! You are a pretty nice girl! I know some people are going to be very jealous in the class. [...] By the way, as I am writing to you I can see the sun decreasing on the sea, giving this orange light. Wow! How romantic I can be sometimes I can't believe it. [..] I won't forget you during my holidays.
> Cheers (Is that what we say?)
> Olivier

> Sun 12 Dec 1999
> [...] Une chose amusant que je dois te dire est ce que mes amis dans ma classe m'a dit que tu es tres mignon et elles etaient un peu surpris parce qu'elles ne voient pas beaucoup de jeunes hommes francais!! J'ai pense que tu pouvais contente de l'ecouter. [...]
> J'espere que tu serai passer une bonne vacances avec ta famille et tes amis !!
> Sue ☺

> Sun 26 Jan 1997
> Dear Lily,
> [...] Now a completely change of topic. About how we have chosen our "mailfriend". That was very easy. Andrée, our teacher, gave to us copies of all your messages and we had to choose. First, I chose your letter because your French is good and it was one of the longest mail. And second, because I am fed up with people who talk about Science all day long. Talking with someone who appreciates literacy is far more fascinating and interesting.
> See you soon
> Guillaume

> Wed 29 Jan 1997
> Hi Lauren,
> [...] I've seen that you were studying French, biology and ethnology. That must be very interesting (at least different from maths and physics). I'd like to know more about you, so don't forget to write back to me.
> See you soon
> Olivier

Frédéric and Leila also sometimes take on the role of teacher or more capable peer, both in the e-mails and videoconference (Sections 4.8.4.5 and 4.9.11). However, the personal relationship takes precedence over the academic one. For instance, when he sends Leila a

detailed analysis of a children's book she has sent him to read, Frédéric first apologises

because the message is not personal enough:

> Sun. 27 Apr 1997
> In fact, this letter won't be very personal (even though I would have liked it to be).
> I'd like to tell you what I felt when I read the book you've studied at school.
> (Frédéric, e-mail 29)

For Leila, the relationship is more important than practicing her written French, which

she uses very little in her e-mails, although it is also connected with her determination to

improve her comprehension skills and her increasing ability as a *languaculture* learner

(Section 4.8.4.5).

The importance which the relationship had taken on for the two students is shown in

the following extracts from messages about the first videoconference. By this time, Frédéric

has seen pictures of Leila on her webpage and pronounced her a "tasty girl". When she was

not present at the first videoconference, both students were extremely upset:

> Thu. 03 April 1997
> Hi Leila,
> What have you done for the videoconference? I was so sad you weren't there,
> giving me a chance to see you moving this time! In your previous message you
> said you didn't remember the schedule..
> (Frédéric, e-mail 26)

> Thu. 10 April.
> Frédéric,
> OK here's what happened with the teleconference—in English. Basically I got my
> days mixed up. I went to class and no one was there. I went to the computer lab to
> check my e-mail and read the letter that said our preparation for the conference
> was at 7.00PM on April 2, and the conference was between 9-10:00 A.M. April 3.
> Since I thought it was the second that day I continued to e-mail while you all were
> still having the teleconference and missed the whole thing. I realized at lunch my
> mistake. I was so upset I wanted to cry. It was devastating. I heard it was
> wonderful though.
> (Leila, e-mail 27)

Their correspondence becomes more intense after they do see each other during the

second videoconference[41].

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[41] Their exchange during the videoconference is discussed in Section 4.9.11.

For instance, Leila writes the following:

> Tues. 13 May 1997
> [...] Guess what? I have you on video tape. I received a copy of the videoconference with you on it. My friends think you're a cutie! One of them wants to venture to France but I told her that you were a wonderful guy and very devoted to your girlfriend. And if she took advantage of you, I'd kill her!
> (Leila e-mail 38)

> Wed 14 May 1997
> [...] American girls find French guys quite sexy! Especially because of their accents. My friends who saw the video tape only wanted to hear you speak in French! French men in American movies, books etc. are always the sexy lover – types. Very stereotypical. They are supposed to be sooo romantic and know just how to please a woman. It's quite amusing.
> (Leila e-mail 40)

She even writes the following message to Solange:

> Thu. 24 Apr 1997
> [...] The teleconference was so much fun! I am so pleased that I took this class and was able to be part of the project. Thank You.
> P.S. Frederic is so cute!

Frédéric's last e-mail is also more flirtatious, even if it also contains references to his

plans for marriage and children with Clementine:

> Tue 13 May 1997
> Subject: Last Time?
> Hi Mom,
>   Your fault: you shouldn't have said it to me. Are you such an elderly lady? Then some other people may ask you the secret for remaining so young and lovely! [...] Your navy friend isn't the only one who knows French words: proof: Je t'aime, Leila. (That's the only words I know by the way). Te quierro. Ich liebe dich. I love you ..... are the first sentences you learn in a foreign language, isn't it?
> (Frédéric e-mail 39)

Frédéric and Leila had expressed a strong wish to continue the keypal relationship after

the end of the term, as these extracts from some of their later messages illustrate[42]:

> Wed 5 Mar 1997
> [....] For the summer holidays or the next semester: it won't be as convenient as e-mail but maybe we could go on (if you mind of course) writing the ordinary way? We'll speak about it if you're interested, and give our real addresses to each other: just tell me what you think about it. [....]
> (Frédéric e-mail 20)

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[42] See also e-mail 28, which is quoted at the beginning of this discussion.

Fri 7 Mar 1997
[...] I would be very interested in continuing contact with you and exchanging addresses once summer comes!
(Leila e-mail 21)

Thu. 10 Apr 1997
[...] I'll miss you dearly over summer vacation. We will exchange home addresses before the end of the semester so we can keep in contact.
(Leila e-mail 27)

Mon. 28 Apr 1997
After the holidays there are two possibilities: either I will spend another year in Brest (and then you'll be able to reach me at the same internet address) or I will be in Paris in a different school, whose address is http: www-enst.fr. It's a bit complicated because I've asked to be transferred to Paris in order to live with my girlfriend, as you may suppose. Anyway if you don't find me on the Web, one day ask to Julien Moreau here in ENST Bretagne. He's a friend of mine and will answer you kindly. His address is the same as mine, except that you have to replace names.
(Frédéric e-mail 31)

Their correspondence did apparently continue but finished after Leila started working, as Frédéric said in an e-mail to me, sent after he had transferred to a school in Paris. It is interesting to note that he mentions the correspondence in a very casual way, but with echoes of the language used in French dating advertisements, "pour amitié et plus, si affinité":

Fri 05 Mar 1999
Writing to keyboard pals was the best part of the course for me, followed by the two videoconferences. If money was there, I'd organize a meeting between keyboard pals if affinity. Unfortunately, I have lost touch with Leila, who is entered in active life.

Many of the other keyboard partnerships also continued. Some led to face-to-face meetings; for instance, in 1997, Lily visited Guillaume, and also came to some of our classes. Some of these meetings took place without our knowledge at the time. For instance, when we saw Joanne at a conference in the USA, we found out that she and Jean-Yves (keyboard pals in 1998) had met twice in Paris, although, as we saw in Section 4.8.4.1, their correspondence took a while to take off and Jean-Yves never mentioned it to us.

As we discussed in the previous section, it is not clear why some relationships develop in this way[43], others work well but in a more academic manner, while others never take off at all. Both Frédéric and Charles had expressed dissatisfaction with the English lessons before the project began. Frédéric, who was in the 1997 class which I shared with Andrée, had been uneasy with the informal atmosphere created both by the students in the group, who were particularly extrovert, and by my attitude to teaching. Charles, from the Autumn 1999 group, was unhappy at the lack of explicit formal grammar teaching in my classes and had asked me to find him some additional classes at the University, where he felt the teaching would be better. Indeed, his view of teaching, as expressed below, was clearly incompatible with mine:

> In your opinion, what is the role of the language teacher?
> Guide the pupils and show him his gifts and mistakes; it is important to do exercises to maintain the level and I wish we did many more instead of just talk! If you can write a gramaticaly [sic] correct sentence you won't make the mistake when you tell it for it will be automatic.
> (Charles, questionnaire 1999)

He also expressed a similar opinion in one of his e-mails, where he tells Maureen that her corrections are more useful than my lessons:

> Fri; 15 Oct. 1999
> Hi Maureen, nice to speak to you again,
> First of all thanks a lot for your lattest mail which showed me that even if grammar was OK, I still have to improve the way I want to say things and thus avoid "run-on-sentences". To tell you the truth, I do prefer speaking with you on the internet rather than attending english lessons; indeed we discuss many subjects but our teacher seldom corrects our mistakes and on the whole she lets us express our ideas whether it is good or bad English.

Both students had an extremely formal attitude in class but also sought individual attention, staying after class to discuss their expectations of the lessons or, in the case of Frédéric, to confide personal problems. This wish for individual attention could partially explain their strong attachment to a relationship with a native speaker peer who gave them immediate positive linguistic and personal feedback. Moreover, both American students

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[43] More examples of virtual flirtations have been found in the data from subsequent projects, suggesting that this is not an isolated phenomenon.

fuelled the French students' fantasies by finding them "charming" and "cute" and positioning themselves in stereotypical female roles (actress, model, beauty queen, dancer). As we saw above, Frédéric's attitude to his fellow students may also have increased his reliance on a virtual "real friend" (Frédéric, e-mail 31) but there is no evidence of such problems in Charles' e-mails.

The large number of e-mails sent by Leila, as well as her feedback on questionnaires, show that her interest in the relationship is both personal and academic and is central to her growing confidence and development as a *languaculture* learner.[44] Maureen appears to be less dependent on the exchange, probably due to the fact that she has already had access to both bilingual and bicultural environments through her own background, has already visited France and intends to spend the following academic year there. She also has more confidence in her linguistic abilities, no doubt due to her relatively high level of competence.

As we have suggested, the nature of the medium used appeared to encourage intimacy and minimise difference. It also provided the opportunity for certain students, such as the two dyads considered here, to create supportive emotional and academic networks on their own terms. The asynchronous nature of the e-mail exchange allowed opportunities for the creation of a polished textual self and to find a voice which was more fulfilling than that available in the classroom. As Kramsch, A'Ness and Lam (2000), following Turkle (1995), point out, students in the computer age are more interested in playing the interactive, communicative game, than analysing rules. Language is used as a tool, both to solve problems in a community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1999) and to create intimacy, rather than as an object of academic reverence. Why this opportunity was seized by some students and rejected by others is still uncertain, particularly given that the two French students in

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[44] The benefits for both sides of this dyad, in terms of increased linguistic ability and confidence and *languaculture* awareness are discussed in Section 4.8.4.5.

these dyads initially had a conventional academic approach. Although some tentative

explanations for the level and nature of the students' engagement can be given, it is clear that

if students are to be seen as individuals with agency, choice and their individual discursive

histories (Lantolf with Pavlenko 1995; Dunn and Lantolf 1998; Kinginger 2001b) then there

will be unpredictable outcomes in this kind of exchange.

4.8.4.3 Videoconferencing as a motivating factor

However, whether or not the students had built up a relationship with a keyboard pal,

the French students unanimously chose the videoconferences as the most positive aspect of

the course and American reactions were equally enthusiastic. This enthusiasm was partly due

to the novelty of the medium, but also to the excitement of 'meeting' the partner class. Many

students also felt they had learned a lot about the other culture in an authentic way and also

that the experience was fun, an aspect which we explore in more detail in Section 4.9.16.

These attitudes are illustrated in the following representative examples of answers to the

question:

My overall impression of the videoconference was:

American students[45]
• The videoconference is quite motivating. First of all you get to see real French culture, not just French people portrayed on TV or in movies, but college students my age. I really got a glimpse of their culture and where they are at this point in their lives. For an hour I was immersed in a culture different from mine and that is a learning experience in and of itself. I loved the conference. It's changed my perception, because before it was just this class and now I feel like I have a personal connection with them, so the future web pages and correspondence with them will be easier.
• It was a great chance to interact socially with students from another culture.
• I loved being able to see their faces and smiles. I also enjoyed learning about the French culture.
• I was very impressed, I had no idea how advanced the technology was and that it was available here. It was really interesting to actually see and speak with the French students. I really enjoyed participating.
• I found it extremely interesting and international. The French students were really great and I was glad to finally see my partner.

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[45] Questionnaires were in English for both groups. This reflects usual practice in both institutions. Soliciting written feedback about lessons is not usually carried out in the Language Department at ENST Bretagne, so the questionnaires were administered in English as an integral part of the course.

• An uplifting feeling that I got to participate in the new technology and spend an hour in France while staying here.
• I was extremely pleased with the videoconference. I felt that it was a culmination of all of our studies this semester. By integrating the two cultures it became a truly rewarding experience in seeing diversity addressed and respected.
• It was very interesting because I have never participated in one before. It was also very educational to hear different cultural perspectives from people from that native country without having to leave my own.
• Exciting and nerve-racking, a great learning experience.
• It was really fun and exciting I would have liked to do it again.

French students
• It was really fun to see our partners and communicate with them, although they were in another part of the world.
• At last we could truly meet them! Then it was very interesting and I really learnt things on the American attitude.
• Personally I found it quite amazing, since, on the one hand it was fun to discover our partners, and besides it enabled us to learn little more about the USA and the American way of living. Finally, I would say that to communicate with another part of the world was really pleasant.
• I was really happy to do it because I had never done it before. I was really impressed by the quality of the pictures, moreover I think both American and French students were really interested and focused on what was said.
• It was a very nice experience because it was the first time and it was exciting as it's a technology we can't use everyday. The atmosphere was cool; we could see people didn't feel obliged to attend the conference. I was disappointed my penfriend was not there. It was a moment when I could go through my shyness.

These positive comments are also found in many students' e-mails, for example:

Sunday 6 April 1997
Le videoconference etait si merveilleux et amusement, j'ai desire de te telephoner et continuer la conversation. Je voudrais avoir un video-conference chaque semaine –donc nous deviendrons plus personnel et casuel. Tu etais si amusant avec ton t-shirt. Nous avons un nouveau 'Hooters' ici mais je n'irai pas la, probablement, a cause de je suis trop feministe. C'etait amusant, aussi, quand tu as dit 'I know you go to parties and drink alcohol'. Est-ce que ta classe entière a aime le video-conference? [..]
Je doit partir. Je t'ecrirai bientot!
Lily [46]

Friday 18 April 1997
[...] Alors, qu'est que tu pensais de la teleconference? J'ai amuse. Tout les étudiantes dans ta classe sont gentilles. Et aussi, j'aime tes cheveux, tes tresses! [...]
A bientôt, Karma
3/12/99
Salut Val!
Ça va? Qu'est-ce que tu as pensé du visioconférence de l'autre jour? Moi, je me suis amusé beaucoup—nous devrions le faire encore dans l'avenir! J'ai trouvé les questions et les réponses très intéressantes.

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[46] I have reproduced the e-mails exactly as they were. In 1997 it was difficult to write orthographic accents in e-mail but this situation had changed by 1999.

These comments point to appreciation of the technical aspects, excitement at seeing the other class and recognition that they have had an opportunity for learning. This kind of conference was a new experience for all the students. The exchange had been highly publicised at Midwest University and at East University was part of an ambitious, federally financed research project, which was not the case on the French side, but all the students seemed delighted. The few reservations were to do with the lack of spontaneous interaction and, particularly for the American students, comprehension problems. Although most students agreed that a prepared agenda and some prepared questions were necessary, they were disappointed that this did not develop into more informal discussion. This point is analysed further in Section 4.9.4.

The spoken French in the videoconferences proved in many cases to be beyond the American students' ZPD, particularly in the case of the students from Midwest University (Section 3.2.3.1, Section 4.8.1, Section 4.8.4.4, Section 4.9.11). This situation is reflected in some of the answers to the question: "The answer to the question I asked during the videoconference was:" in the post-videoconference questionnaire:

> I'm not sure. I was so nervous and so excited that I listened too hard and can't remember what she said. I had trouble understanding much of the French class, partly caused by the volume, partly by the language barrier.
> (Jane, Spring/Summer 1998)

> I can't say. I only understood fragments of sentences and it was hard to listen to the fast-paced French and try to put fragments into complete thoughts.
> (Lucy, Spring/Summer 1999)

> On alcohol, I only understood parts of the answer.
> (Anonymous, Spring/Summer 1999)

However, this was not the case for all the students, as we see in the following quotes. Sophia's comment also points to another possible benefit to be derived from communication mediated by the videoconference. For her, the distance created by the medium allowed her to forget the nervousness she would feel during direct contact with a more competent speaker:

Once I got over my nervousness, I found that I was able to keep up with enough of the conversation to know what they were saying. In a way, speaking with French people seemed easier over video instead of in person because I stopped worrying about what my reaction should be and what theirs might be.
(Sophia, post-videoconference (1) questionnaire, Spring/Summer 1998)

It was good to hear the French students and how they speak. It was very fast and it's hard to take it all in, but I mostly understood everything.
(Sam, post-videoconference (1) questionnaire, Spring/Summer 1999)

Very good. My question was answered clearly and all the parts of the question were addressed. The French was very understandable for me.
(Chris, post-videoconference questionnaire, Autumn 1999)

Even when the students found it difficult to understand during the videoconference, they were motivated enough to watch the recordings until they did understand, or to listen to other spoken French in order to improve, as we see from the example of Leila (Section 4.8.4.4) and in the extracts below:

For me it was hard to understand the spoken French, because the volume wasn't very loud, they spoke fast and because I was so caught up in the heat of the moment, but I hope by watching the video, the words will become more evident. Now I know what to expect in the future so listening to their French will be an easier task. This was a great experience for me personally and I am looking forward to the next one.
(Lucy, post-videoconference (1) questionnaire, Spring/Summer 1997)

Overall, the videoconference increased my interest in learning the language. Also I learned to listen carefully to spoken French from native speakers. My level of motivation has increased and I have a more positive outlook about the cultural differences. I think that the teleconferencing should continue to play an important role because it teaches individuals who are trying to learn the language how to react and listen to native speakers of French.
(Anonymous, post-videoconference (1) questionnaire, Spring/Summer 1998)

I thought this experience was extremely exciting. Before the hour began I was pretty nervous but once it got started it went by so fast and I felt more comfortable. I learned a lot, mostly that there's much, much more to French that I need to learn if I'm going to be able to understand anyone! [...] I feel very fortunate to be able to be a part of this. I came back from the hour very excited and told my roommates about the experience. They thought it was really neat and were really impressed (I didn't bother mentioning that it was hard to understand them!)
(Caitlin, post-videoconference (1) questionnaire, Spring/Summer 1998)

The teleconference has motivated me to practice my oral French more. I felt that if they asked me a question in return to the question I asked I would freeze and not know what to say [...]. I also believe that this type of activity helps the students gain confidence in speaking French.
(Cassie, post-videoconference (1) questionnaire, Spring/Summer 1998)

Moreover, encouragingly, some students understood far more during the second videoconference, except during the Spring/Summer 1999 session when there were technical problems, which led to sound loss and distortion (Section 4.9). It is clear from our findings that such courses should provide at least two videoconferences if this possible, although some students thought there should be three or more and some recommended one videoconference per week.

The students from the 1998 class seemed to find the second videoconference particularly beneficial, as we can see from the following quotes:

> I enjoyed the second videoconference very, very much. This time it was casual, more relaxed. The first time I was so nervous about messing up that I couldn't concentrate on what they were saying. But, this time when the Indian girl answered me, I could understand many of the words she said and I understood her point.
> (Jane, post- videoconference (2) questionnaire, Spring/Summer 1998)

> I didn't speak which was totally my fault, but somehow I got more out of it than the first. I understood more language, not all, but instead of getting words I comprehended sentences. It was much more enjoyable since I did understand.
> (Lucy, post- videoconference (2) questionnaire, Spring/Summer 1998)

> I enjoyed the second one more than the first. We tore down a lot of barriers that had been built by our cultural differences. And unlike the first teleconference, I was able to understand most of the answers to the French questions.
> (Sophia, post- videoconference (2) questionnaire, Spring/Summer 1998)

> I felt that the second videoconference was very productive. We were much less stiff and uncomfortable I learned that if you want to be heard- - you "gotta" speak up. I also learned that my French comprehension really isn't very bad - - it has gotten better since this class. I've also learned that it's OK to mess up.
> (Joanne, post- videoconference questionnaire (2), Spring/Summer 1998)

Even if the French students had a relatively high level of proficiency in English, some of them also admitted to having some problems of comprehension. For instance, in the Autumn 1999 videoconference it was obvious that Charles had not understood all of Maureen's answer:

> **Maureen:** Do you understand what I'm trying to say?
> **Charles:** Yes ((gesture meaning so so- laughter from group)) I'm about to! ((laughter))
> (Extract from videoconference An Axe to grind, Section 4.9.2)

Some French students also confided to their e-mail pals that they had had some

comprehension difficulties:

> Tue 13 May 1997
> Ne sois pas desolee pour la videoconference: ce n'est pas evident de tout
> comprendre a la premiere ecoute; nous n'avons pas etudie la cassette de cette
> conference en classe (d'ailleurs je n'y vais plus depuis lors), et je t'avoue que moi
> non plus je n'avais pas tout compris.
> (Frédéric, e-mail 40)

> Sun 12 Dec 1999
> [...] Merci de ta reponse de ma question du videoconference. Je l'ai compris. Je
> pense que le videoconference etait tres intelligent et j'ai appris beaucoup. Pour la
> plupart, j'ai compris les etudiants francais, mais vous parlez un peu vite, donc
> c'etait un peu difficile. Est-ce que tu as compris beaucoup? [...]
> (Chris, e-mail 1999)

> Mon 13 Dec 1999
> [...] During the videoconference I didn't have to talk very much, so I tried to listen
> as carefully as possible. I didn't understand everything because some of American
> students speak quickly too. I felt also that some French students speak really
> quickly and that it would be hard for you to understand clearly.
> (Jean-Loup, reply, 1999)

This realization that they should accommodate their speech to the foreign group was

another benefit gained from the videoconferences, particularly for the French students. As

Thiébaut pointed out in an informal interview (1998), if the American students had had little

contact with native French speakers, many of the French students had never attempted to

speak French to a foreigner. This awareness of themselves as strangers or other and of their

own subject position (Section 1.6.1.2 and Section 1.6.2.4) was expressed by some of the

students as follows:

> **What advice would you give students about to take part in a videoconference
> like the ones you were involved in?**
> The only thing I would "advise" would be to prepare one's "speech" in advance. I
> think it is important when the English- speaking students have just begun to learn
> French. In this way, your sentences are shorter, better made and, as a consequence,
> more understandable. Of course, it is far more interesting if people speak
> spontaneously. But, it is possible only if listeners have a good command of your
> language. That was the problem with the videoconferences I attended: there was
> interactivity only when we were speaking English.
> (Etienne A., post-course questionnaire, Spring/Summer 1999)

> Maybe I should have used a simpler language and spoken slowly. Because I think
> that the American students did not understand what I was staying.
> (Lise, post-video questionnaire, Spring/Summer 1999)

Some of the students made an effort to do this (Section 4.9) but they were in a minority and single-voiced discourse was more common. This points to the need for more consciousness-raising of this aspect of communication in future projects, although we should bear in mind that the exchange remained positive for the majority of the students even when there were differences in language levels:

> I learned that even though my French is not up to par, we were still able to communicate easily. This removed some of my anxieties about learning French.
> (Sophia, post- course questionnaire, Spring/Summer 1998)

4.8.4.4 Contact with native speaker peers

As we saw in Section 3.2.3.1, many of the American students, particularly those from Midwest University had never seen a French person. As Solange put it:

> Students who elected to study French had generally had very little access to authentic French-speaking environments. This included the ones who were planning to go on to become language teachers. Their vision of what French would do for them is more related to American stereotypes of the French than to anything contemporary or real about France or the Francophone world. [...] French is perceived as an elite language, one that is linked to lifestyles of lotus-eaters, pristine landscapes, good taste and the like. In textbooks, French and France are portrayed as an object of refined consumption by privileged tourists. The students' motivation is therefore linked to all such images and not at all to the idea of interacting in French with French people about anything personal. I think this is important for your analysis-- most of my students had never before laid eyes on a French person of any kind, much less a young one. The problems they had in coping with this situation are related to their impoverished histories of language and culture learning in a setting where there simply is no access to representatives of European cultures. It is also related to the inadequacies of American foreign language teaching approaches, especially for French, where the spoken language is routinely set aside in favor of teaching students to speak a sanitized version of the written standard.
> (Solange, e-mail April 2002)

For the Midwest University students in particular, the first contact with modern French allowed by the videoconferences and e-mail correspondence was found to be highly valuable by many of the students:

- **An exciting opportunity to taste REAL French**
- **I cannot say enough about the videoconferences. They were the most helpful and interesting. I am very pleased to have learned a <u>more modern</u> French, which is more applicable in France. It seems that in the**

past than an old, more formal French has been taught. This is definitely not as up-to-date or applicable. This was the BEST part of the class! I learned the idiosyncrasies, witnessed non-verbal communication, learned some slang ...obviously it was also an insight into their opinions, ideas and culture...   This was a fabulous new forum for expanding my understanding of the French language and culture.

- The videoconference was an excellent learning experience for someone who has very little contact with native speakers, especially ones my own age.
- When I left the teleconference, I thought of about a hundred more questions I wanted to ask them, because we were barely able to scratch the surface in an hour. I think it's very useful to be able to communicate as nearly face–to-face as one can get on separate continents because I know I don't have much opportunity to talk with native speakers, especially of my own age and I learned a lot from the experience. I only wish we could have talked longer because I think we could have talked for hours about cultural differences, similarities and misconceptions.
- After attending the teleconference I feel much more excited about this class. Being able to talk to those French students is great because it is an experience that you can only get in France- talking to a group of college kids whose first language is French.
- I think that talking with peers in France is a wonderful opportunity to learn more about the French people, because you can read about their culture but it's not the same as discussing with a native speaker.
- I think that the teleconferencing should continue to play an important role because it teaches individuals who are trying to learn the language how to react and listen to native speakers of French. For instance, those who can't afford a trip to France or Canada gain some on hand experience with language and this step is a vital part of the learning process.
- I learned that native speakers speak differently from what the books teach.
- I learned that there is a great difference between spoken and written French.
- It made everything more realistic.

Many of these comments, along with those quoted previously, also highlight the

students' appreciation of having contact with native speaker peers without "having to leave

their own country", or as a way of providing an experience they could not have for financial

or practical reasons. This feedback supports the argument for attempting to create a virtual

"third place" which allows access to dialogue with the other (Section 1.7). This technology-

mediated dialogue can help students to appropriate their own "third place" as *languaculture*

learners. Videoconferencing between two remote peer groups not only increases motivation

but also extends the notion of the language classroom as a kind of protected halfway

environment before direct experience of the foreign culture, and as one American student in

the 1998 class put it:

> I prefer to communicate with a native French speaker face-to-face, but the videoconference is helpful for the meantime.
> (Anonymous, post- videoconference questionnaire, Spring/Summer 1998)

However, although they found it exciting, for many of the students, particularly the

Americans, the videoconference itself is also a "nerve-racking experience":

- **At first I was terrified of actually talking to an entire group of native speakers who were thinking God-knows what about Americans, but once the teleconference began I realized that they really weren't that different from American students and that was much less intimidating.**
- **At first I was quite nervous but once the teleconference started I relaxed a little; it always seems that the American class is uptight and the French class is relaxed and laughing.**
- **I was so excited and relieved after we had the teleconference. I was so afraid before it, because I thought the French students would be critical of my French. I was very timid to practice my French because I didn't know if I could speak well enough.**
- **The Americans seemed much more at ease speaking with people they didn't know for the first time.**

Having built up a keyboard relationship helped to dispel these feelings of anxiety, as

well as contributing to making the videoconference more meaningful for the students.

However, the relationship could also add to feelings of inadequacy, as with the case of Leila,

who was going to watch the recording of the videoconference in class the following day:

> Wed 7 May 1997
> [..] Tomorrow I'll see you and me on the videoconference. You being cute and intelligent and me not understanding you and looking stupid ..... but it was fun anyways....
> (Leila, e-mail 38)

Tue 13 May 1997

[..] It's very frustrating watching the videotape of us talking now because I understand everything you say so perfectly and I wasn't responding correctly at all. Of course now that I watch without cameras and photographers in my face I have the perfect thing to say but I can't go back to change it.

(Leila, e-mail 39)

The positive effects of the videoconference also include increased motivation to communicate in other ways. After the first videoconference, several students tried harder to get in contact with their existing partner but also began writing to a different partner. For instance, after the first 1997 videoconference, one of the American students wrote to four of the French students as well as her keyboard pal, the "dark-haired Isabelle".

Thursday 3 April 1997

I am Katrina, the red-haired lady in the front row. I wanted to say that I had a great time today and I would love to get to know you a little better, so write me if you like. Thanks, Katrina.

She received the following replies:

Thurs 3 April 1997

Hi Katrina,

First of all, I had such a great time either (sic). I am the dark-haired Isabelle. The teleconference was very interesting. I wish it had lasted more than just one hour. As you may have noticed, we've got different reactions towards events, friends, films and so on. Actually during our lessons we asked questions to each other without looking to the answers written in Evidences Invisibles. Most of the things written about the French are true. Anyway, I think we can talk about it through e-mail. What do you think about it?[…]

I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Isabelle

Thurs 3 April 1997

Sure!! We all liked the videoconference, only it was too short. [..] Last week, I typed in a page in English on the Web, describing my last English exam. It is very technical, but if you're interested and if you'd like to correct my mistakes you can also see it on […]

Thanks for writing

Bye Bruno

Mon 7 April 1997

Hi Katrina

I am glad you wrote to me last Thursday. As you may know, my name is Nadia and I am Adam's "E-mail Friend". I've also enjoyed the teleconference a lot, and I would love to correspond with you also. Unfortunately, I'm completely overbooked this week, but I promise I will try to write a longer message soon. Have a nice time until then… Nadia.

Mon 7 April 1997
Hi Katrina
Thanx for writing to me. I also did enjoy the tele-conference the other day. And you seem to be a charming girl. Hope their (sic) will be another conference soon. I would be glad if you sent me your ideas for a comic book. But you must know that I don't have the American comics way of drawing. It looks like Tintin rather than Superman. [...] By the way, what type of art are you studying? Tell me more about you. This would be great.
See you soon
Olivier

Fri 18 April 1997
Sorry for answering you so late ... Do you still remember me? I was the blond-haired lady on the right. I liked talking to all of you during the teleconference as well: at the beginning it was hard to communicate (in the same way we would have to do if we had really met each other, I mean), but after a few minutes, I thought it was good fun asking and answering you.
Thank for your mail and see you (during the next teleconference)
Isabelle

After this enthusiastic response, Katrina wrote several e-mails to different students and continued sharing ideas for producing a book of cartoons with Olivier, although Isabelle remained her main keyboard pal. As we will see later, Katrina was extremely motivated, both to make contact with the French students and to improve her French and was an able student.

Some of the students focused on the more personal side of the exchange. For instance, at his graduation ceremony three years later, Alexis (1998) told me that he had written to Kelly for a long time after the videoconference.

She wasn't my keyboard pal but we got on well in the videoconference – she was cool.

This correspondence was completely unknown to the teachers at the time. Such examples show how students appropriate the possibilities afforded by access to different media in various ways, many of them reaching beyond the conventional classroom.

4.8.4.5 From text-based realities to participation

Kinginger (2000b) points out the fact that students who are used to the conventions of lessons can interpret texts, such as e-mails, as "text-based realities" (Section 4.5.2), while

nevertheless attending to the propositional content of the letter and with no apparent

detriment to the friendship built up by the exchange. Predictably, many of the students

initially see the partnership as an academic exercise, where the main aim is to practice the

language. As we see below in the examples taken from the Michelle/ Will dyad (1997), the

task is interpreted as an exercise to "pratiquer ton français" or "pratique ma francaise". These

examples are echoed in other students' e-mails, for example:

> Je sais que vous voudrez exercer votre l'anglais, mais voudriez-vous me
> commenter votres lettres. Mon pere est un professeur d'anglais au lycée, donc si
> vous avez des questions......

When writing to Jean-Loup (Autumn 1999), Chris pinpoints the difference between

comprehension of the propositional contents and correction of errors as an academic exercise:

> Wed 17 Nov 1999
> [..] Si vous voulez corriger mes emails, je serais contente, mais est-ce que vous ne
> les comprenez pas ou est-ce que vous voulez m'aider? Parce que si vous ne
> comprenez pas, je suis desolee.

In Jean-Loup 's reply, which we quote later in this section, he reassures Chris by saying

that he does understand. The corrections he had made were not the type of clarification

moves that would be found in the "real world" but rather an attention to grammatical forms.

Nadia also makes the same point in one of her first e-mails to John:

> Mon 10 Feb 1997
> My friend Isabelle, who corresponds with one of you, has sent a message where
> she explained the French mistakes of her correspondant's Mail: would you like me
> to do that? I really don't mind ....but don't worry: I understood your Mail very
> well!

Nadia is referring to the correspondence between Katrina and Isabelle (1997) where, at

Isabelle's suggestion, the students systematically corrected each other's e-mails:

> February 6 1997
> In order to improve our level in language I think it would be nice to send back our
> message with a correction. What do you think about that? I hope you mind if I
> correct your mistakes but I think it can only help you [..].
> Isabelle

Katrina returned Isabelle's following mail with corrections added in brackets, beginning as follows:

> February 6 1997
> Isabelle wrote:
> Dear Katrina,
> Thanks for your message. I was so glad to hear from you. (Correction: *Thanks for the message. I was very glad to hear from you*) I hope everything is going well for you. As far as I'm concerned, I am preparing my language exams. (Correction: *I hope everything is going well for you. I have been preparing for my language exams*)

Although this correction is carried out with the best intentions, it is difficult to see whether it could provide any help in the learning process, given the lack of explanation or indeed logic in some of the corrections. This inappropriate help underlines one of the problems of peer-to-peer scaffolding. Although Katrina is happy to take on the role of more competent peer, like many of the students, she does not always possess the skills necessary to provide appropriate help.

Other students who corrected work were very organised and encouraging and provided appropriate corrections, although no explanation was given, as shown in the examples below, taken from the correspondence between Maureen and Charles (Autumn 1999):

> Tout d'abord, un petit corrigé pour ma correspondante preferree (sic):
> **1. tu as dit.** 2. correction:
> **1. 'il vraiment adore les autos**
> 2.......adore vraiment ....
> **1. il joue du guitare, du basse**
> 2. ....de la guitare et de la basse
> (5 more corrections)
> I hope this will help you to improve your language, which is already very good. If you have any suggestions to tell me about my English, please do tell me. I shan't correct you all the time for it takes a long time to type, but I'll do as well as I can. Hope to learn more about you pretty soon.

Corrections with no explanation also appear at the end of all Xavier's e-mails to Sue, as the following examples illustrate:

> 11 nov. 1999
> If you don't mind I can correct a few mistakes you made:
> **"Je n'ai jamais vu" the Matrix" mais j'ai entendu que c'est un bon film."** je n'ai jamais vu "the Matrix" mais j'ai entendu dire que c'etait un bon film.
> "Eddie Murphy est tres humeureuse."-Eddy Murphy est tres drole.

"C'est une fete celebre par tout l'universite."- c'est une fete celebre pour toute l'universite

22 nov 1999
[..] I correct a few mistakes you wrote:
"J'ai beaucoup de travail en mes cours cette semaine" - j'ai beaucoup de travail pour mes cours cette semaine
"Mes amis rendre visitent et nous avons un bon weekend" - mes amis m'ont rendu visite et nous avons passe un bon week end.
"Mon projet finale dans ma classe de francais est une comparaison culturelle"
mon projet final de ma classe de francais est la comparaison culturelle

On the other hand, some students did try to give explanations and also showed proof of having integrated their key-buddy's corrections. For example Nicolas (1998) returned his American keyboard buddy's e-mail with both corrections and explanations, although he recognised that he had incomplete knowledge of the rules:

On Sun, 22 Feb 1998, Caitlin wrote:
Nicolas
Salut! Ça va? Merci pour la lettre en allemand. Je ne suis pas aussi advancé que moi en allemand. Avancée
toi
Mais j'ai compris assez. **Je vais écrire de ma vie quotidienne.**
j'en ai compris assez parler de' but not 'écrire de'
Comme aujourd'hui. Je suis reveillé à 7h30.
Réveillée because you're a girl! But the rules about the verbs 'se' something are complicated. Even I don't know them very good. [..]

How was my Sunday? I got up (notice that I've acknowledged your correction) [...]

The correspondence between Will and Michelle (1997) also shows a serious attempt made by the French student to help his American peer with her French, although there is no evidence of this effort being reciprocal. Will was not actually in the English class involved in the project but had been recruited to write to a partner, as there were fewer French students than American ones. As Michelle stated in the post-course questionnaire, "the exchange of e-mail started off strong but then as both of us got busy it occurred less and less". This dyad chose to write partly in their own language and partly in the target language in order to model correct forms, as stated in one of Michelle's first e-mails.

Mon 27 Jan
Je besoin a pratique ma francaise. Mais quelquefois je voudrais ecriver en anglais pour vous.

Will pasted his reply, which was in French, into Michelle's original message, attending simply to the propositional content, apart from a request to Michelle to use the *tu* form rather than the *vous* form when writing to him (see below for further analysis of this point). Rather than correcting her mistakes unprompted, he asked Michelle if she wished him to do so:

Tue 28 Jan 1997
[...] Tu ecris pour pratiquer le francais. Veux-tu que je corrige tes fautes? C'est facile: je recopie ton texte en francais parfait, et tu pourras voir ou tu fais des fautes. Dis-moi si tu veux que je fasse comme ca.

Michelle accepts Will's offer of help, although she seems to be rather upset by this suggestion, as her reply illustrates:

Thu 30 Jan 1997
[...] Honestly, is my French in need of MAJOR improvement? You can be honest. I hope that you can help me. Well, I know you are busy, as well as I. Good luck on your test this week. Hope to "read" from you soon.

Will replies to this frankly, but tactfully suggests that French is a more difficult language to learn than English, that he understands what Michelle means and that his English may also be in need of improvement:

Mon 3 Feb 1997
[...] Il y a beaucoup de fautes mais le francais EST une langue difficile, par rapport a l'anglais : problemes de genre (feminin/masculin), mais ca, ce n'est pas grave, et des problemes de traduction directe de l'anglais. Globalement, on comprend tres bien ce que tu dis. Je te demanderai la meme chose plus tard: quand tu auras lu quelques lettres de moi en anglais ...
A bientôt
Will

Subsequently, he begins to correct Michelle's mistakes, both in her e-mails and, as an apology for not writing back quickly, her essays on the web page. He does this thoroughly, with explanations and encouragement, moving with apparent ease from corrections to comments on the contents of Michelle's message and providing information of his own.

On Tue 18 Feb 1997, Crawley Michelle A wrote:

Will,
Desole. J'ai un examen en francais dernier semain. Je pense que je n'ai pas bien fait. Le sujet etait l'histoire de France. J'ai appendu (?) de Charlemagne et Lous XII et Francois I. Il etait difficile pour moi.

Sun 9 Mar 1997
Salut, Michelle.
Je suis desole pour mon retard. J'ai eu beaucoup de travail, puis une semaine de vacances… j'espere que le resulat de ton examen sera bon, quand meme. Tu sais, je ne connais pas beaucoup l'histoire de France. Je n'aimais pas ca au lycée. Je ne sais pas si j'aurais reussi mieux que toi …
petites corrections importantes: j'ai appris, j'ai ecrit.

J'ai regarde le film neuf mois encore. J'ai compris plus et plus. J'ai besoin d'ecrive un papier maintenant. Je voudrais envoyer une copie pour toi (???)

C'est d'accord, bien sur. J'espere que ce n'est pas trop tard. Envoiesmoi [sic] les copies de ce que tu veux corriger: je le ferai avec plaisir.

Je serais à l'Europe!!!!!! Je serais apres je recevoir mon diplôme en Mai!! Je voudrais (will be there) je pense, Mai 17. Je suis heureuse. C'est tentatif.

Ou vas-tu? Paris? Rome? Londres?
Petite correction encore: je serai la-bas après avoir recu mon diplome en mai!! Je serai la-bas (je viendrais? C'est ce que tu as voulu dire?)
[…..] J'ai corrige tes plus grosses fautes : c'est peut-etre enervant. Si tu veux pas que je corrige, dis-le.

Will's corrections are handled with sensitivity. He draws attention to the fact that Michelle is working on foreign history and that he also might have had difficulties with the subject, even if it was about his own country: "Tu sais, je ne connais pas beaucoup l'histoire de France. Je n'aimais pas ca au lycée. Je ne sais pas si j'aurais reussi mieux que toi." His corrections are usually "petites", although he does slip up at the end by talking of "tes plus grosses fautes". He again asks for confirmation of Michelle's wish for her e-mails to be corrected: "c'est peut-etre enervant. Si tu veux pas que je corrige, dis-le."

Michelle evidently does appreciate this help, as she sends Will her essay on the film Neuf Mois for correction. Will replies by e-mail with an extensive analysis, this time in English:

Michelle
Excuse me for being late. I'm really sorry. […] so to get your forgiveness, I have read your text about Neuf Mois. I find something very surprising in your text:

every verb is at the imparfait (almost). It's strange. In France, when we talk about a movie, we do like if the movie was still there. Each moment of the movie is told with the present. In fact, you used the present in the third sentence, and after that you used the imparfait. I think it would be better with the present everywhere.
"dans les premiers mois…
s'agissait
mangeait but if you put the present it's not important.
"ils sont reste avec un ami" but it's not very used : we say "ils ont passé le weekend chez un ami" or rather "ils sont alles a la campagne pour le weekend chez un ami de Samuel", as you want. [several other corrections]
Good text. After having transformed the past tenses to present, it looks like a text written by a French who makes some writing mistakes.

Will gives Michelle advice on lexical and grammatical use, ending with the supreme compliment: "it looks like a text written by a French who makes some writing mistakes."

Many other students also offer to help with correcting students' work as well as correcting their e-mails, as the following examples illustrate[47]:

Si tu voudrais mon assistance en corrigant ta composition pour la grammaire, je serais content de t'aider.

Tu as de la chance de ne pas avoir assez travaille à faire que moi dans ta classe. Je te demanderai peut-être ton assistance pour ma composition finale sur la comparaison de cultures américaines et anglaise, s'il te plaît. Dis-moi si je puisse de l'assistance de toi, avec n'importe quoi.

The seriousness with which many of the students read and corrected their keyboard pal's e-mails point to significant changes in their epistemic roles, where students are seriously engaging with the other in an attempt to understand and be understood.

Although the purely academic aspect of these exchanges is clearly important, the focus on text-based realities shifts quickly to a concern for relationship building and participation. For instance, there are many examples in the data where it can be observed that the students are extremely supportive of each other and non-judgemental. This is a striking contrast to the initial reactions of some of the French students, who were very quick to ridicule French mistakes in the Life Histories before the partners had been chosen (Section 4.8.1.1).

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[47] See also Section 4.8.2.6

The increased intimacy afforded by an e-mail partnership seems to encourage a nurturing role on both sides, with complimentary comments, both about language levels and work on the web pages and in essays. This tendency is illustrated in the following extracts:

Extracts from e-mails from American students

Si tu as le temps de corriger mes e-mails, je serais contente parce que j'ai toujours besoin d'aide. ... si tu le désires, je serais contente de corriger aussi tes e-mails, mais tu ne fais pas beaucoup de fautes, donc ce ne serait pas difficile.

En réalité, tu écris en anglais très bien. C'est moi qui devrais te demander pardon pour mon français--je fait habituellement beaucoup d'erreurs dans mes compositions!

OK, hope that helps you out. Your English is really good though.

Good luck on your English exam. From what I can tell you'll do wonderfully --- you're very good.

Extracts from e-mails from French students

I received your mail yesterday but I didn't have time to write since then.
Firstly, I want to say to you that your french is pretty good and that my
englich mustn't be so.

First of all, I'd like to thank you for your mail, written in a rather good French.

My friend, Guillaume, who wrote so many e-mails to Lily, ☺ gave me the address of your webpage. We both loved it. Your texts in French about yourselves are very interesting and your pictures are high quality! [...] Your French is very good as I saw on the webpage.

I also saw your webpage. Je trouve que tu parles très bien le français.

I've seen your photos and they're very nice. I've seen also that you have a new introduction page. Keep up the good work!

I received your two mails. We also received your photos of your University. They are wonderful – it must have taken a lot of time!

The gradual integration of correct forms, or what are perceived to be correct forms, mediated by the relationship between two peers, is particularly significant if we look at the students' development as *languaculture* learners from a situated learning perspective. As we saw in Section 1.3.3.3, this view sees knowledge as socially distributed, where expertise in a given community is transferred from an expert or more capable peer to a novice or a newcomer. The novice appropriates and internalises these skills and gradually assumes more

responsibility, thus moving from being a legitimate peripheral participant (LPP) to a full member of a given community (Lave and Wenger 1991; Hutchins 1995). This is based on Vygotskyan theory (Vygotsky 1982, 1978), where development can be expressed as progression from object-regulation to other-regulation, where the learning process is mediated by an expert. The individual then progresses from this dialogical interaction to self-regulation or social interaction (Section 1.3.3.2).

This correspondence between Will and Michelle provides an example of learning mediated by an expert peer who is committed to providing both help and encouragement. Michelle responds positively to this attempt to integrate her into a community of French speakers. Although she admits to her lack of confidence in her abilities to express herself in French: "Honestly, is my French in need of MAJOR improvement?" in the same e-mail she is delighted to see that she has understood Will's French:

> I am very happy to say that I understood your letter en francais!! This is exciting for me because the last letter I got from someone there was very difficult for me to understand.

Michelle perseveres in her attempts to write in French, although at this stage self-regulation seems beyond her Zone of Proximal Development. It is difficult to gauge to what extent correct forms are integrated into Michelle's personal usage, as the correspondence did not continue very long after this exchange. However, in her answer to the questionnaire she states that her written French is much improved and that she has mastered the past tense, although not the future tense. She also feels confident enough to go to Europe after her graduation.

This dyad also demonstrates one aspect of this transfer of expertise, which can be observed being gradually integrated into the American students' personal use. This takes place when the French students persistently ask their keyboard buddy to use the *tu* form when addressing them (Kinginger 2000a). According to Silverstein, expanding the work of Peirce and Jakobson (Peirce 1940; Jakobson 1960, 1970; Silverstein 1985,1993), meaning is not

only produced by conventional relationships between signs and signified, for example between the word *table* and the object it denotes, but also by connections between a situation and other situations. Communication not only uses symbols for beliefs, feelings and so on but also "points to or connects to something in the context" (Duranti ibid: 38). These connections are known as *indexes* and their properties *indexicality*. The socially differentiated second-person pronouns in languages such as French (T/V), index the social coordinates of solidarity/power, equality/inequality (Brown and Gilman 1960).

As Scollon and Scollon (1995) point out, however, communication is fundamentally ambiguous and, although conversational inferences made by members of the same group are usually successful, there are often more problems when participants in a conversation are from different groups, with different assumptions. Sensitivity to these metamessages (Bateson 1972) can be encouraged in a pedagogy of *languaculture* and, indeed, the ability to understand the differing social distance or solidarity encoded in the T/V distinction is one of Citron's recommendations for acquiring an *ethno-lingually relative perspective* (Section 2.5.6).

While this ability is difficult to teach explicitly in the classroom, partnerships between two culturally different student groups can provide an opportunity for the integration of appropriate indexical signs. The use of the *tu* form to index solidarity is explicitly referred to in several of the e-mail exchanges and is clearly felt to be highly significant by the French students. As we saw in Section 4.5.2, in France it is generally important for school pupils and, to a lesser extent students, to be part of a cohesive group, often united against the teacher. Most of the students in the study seem to extend this in-group to include the American students, particularly when they have one-to-one contact with them via e-mail. As many of them consider that fellow students should be addressed with the *tu* form, they also extend this to the American group.

Michelle begins her first e-mails by using the *vous* form, and this is immediately

commented on by Will:

> Mon 27 Jan 1997
> [...] J'ai amie votre message hier. Je voudrai a envoyer courrier electronique avec
> vous.

> Tue 28 Jan 1997
> [...] J'ai 21 ans, aussi, donc TU dois me dire "TU". Je sais qu'en anglais, c'est la
> meme chose, "TU" et VOUS (you), mais en francais il y a une difference. Et je
> prefere quand on me dit "TU".

In Michelle's reply, which is in English, she explains her difficulties with the *tu* form,

which pinpoints the value of corresponding with a group of native speaker peers:

> Thu 30 Jan 1997
> [...] I will try and remember to use the "tu" form when I write to you. It is easier
> sometimes for me to use the "vous" though because we address our teacher with
> the "vous" form.

Will pastes the following answer next to this passage:

> Mon 3 Feb 1997
> [...] Pour la pronounciation, c'est facile: c'est presque comme pour la troisieme
> personne: tu as, il a, tu dis, il dit, tu fais, il fait, tu bouge (sic) il bouge, tu ....facile.

In her reply, Michelle integrates the use of *tu*: "je voudrais envoyer une copie pour toi",

"j'ai vu toi webpage", although her attempt at the use of an imperative is based on the *vous*

form: "Avez un bon semaine". Will's answer once more specifically refers to the use of the

tutoiement:

> [...] Une derniere : avoir a l'imperatif : "ayez", mais la on dirait plutot "passez une
> bonne semaine" et comme je voudrais que tu me tutoies, tu dois dire: "passe une
> bonne semaine".

Michelle's final e-mail to Will is written in English but concludes with the phrase:

> Ecrive-moi s'il tu plait!!!

There are many similar examples in the data, including the following from the Jean-

Loup and Chris dyad (Autumn 1999). As we saw above, Chris wished to clarify whether

Jean-Loup was responding to her e-mails as "text-based reality" or whether there was a

genuine comprehension problem. She also specifically stated her intention not to use her

dictionary when writing her e-mails, in order to put herself in the situation she would soon

find herself on her visit to France, but also admits that she still needs help, thus showing her

progression from object-regulation to other-regulation. She addresses Jean-Loup using the

vous form in her first two messages, until he suggests that they use the *tutoiement*:

> Wed 17 Nov 1999
> [..] Quand je vous ecris, je n'utilise pas un dictionnaire parce que je ne le verrai pas
> quand je parle aux personnes francais a Paris cet ete, mais j'espere que vous
> comprenez la plupart de mes emails. [..] je dois partir maintenant parce que j'ai
> une classe! Je vous ecrirai plus ce soir!!
> Au revoir Chris

> Wed 17 Nov 1999
>
> [...] There's one other thing, you can say "tu" instead of "vous" in your letters.
> And I understand everything you write.

With the first remark, which mirrors the kind of exchange that takes place between two

French speakers, Jean-Loup positions himself and his partner more as equals than as part of a

teacher/ pupil relationship. Chris replies in kind, explaining that she had chosen to use the

vouvoiement, as she understood that it was the correct way to address someone one does not

know. Jean-Loup does not pick up this statement but Chris tries to use the *tu* form for the rest

of their correspondence, first mixing the two forms and then using the form correctly:

> Thu 18 Nov 1999
> Si tu as le temps de corriger mes emails, je serai contente parce que j'ai besoin
> d'aide toujours.J'ai pense que je peux utiliser " tu" dans mes emails mais je ne t'ai
> pas connu avant cela, donc je ne veux pas t'offender. [..] Ecrivez-moi si tu as le
> temps.

> Mon 6 Dec 1999
> [..] je tu a ecris un email par mon autre nom….. J'espere que tu l'as recu. Je dois
> faire mon devoir mais ecris-moi!!

Some American students specifically ask their e-mail partner which form to use, as we

can observe in the following example. Karma has chosen the "tu" form but wants to check

with her partner that this is acceptable:

> Wed 12 Feb 1997
> Une autre question? Je dois utilize " tu" ou " vous" pour ecrire avec tu (ou vous)?
> Quelle est la chose propre a faire?
> Je dois partir maintenant. S'il te plait, ecris a moi. Je te promis que je ecrirai plus
> souvent.

Au revoir
Karma, la femme qui n'ecrit pas ☺

Other partnerships move naturally into using the *tu* form without any specific request

from the French student to do so, for example the dyad Guillaume/ Lily (1997). Lily uses

vous for the first six e-mails, with Guillaume consistently replying in English and not

referring to this. However, after the first videoconference, Lily moves naturally into the *tu*

form:

> Mon 27 Jan 1997
> Bonjour, Guillaume,
> J'ai recevu votre lettre et elle etait tres interessante. Votre webpage est interessant
> aussi. [..] A la fois prochaine je vous disez de mes voyages a France.
>
> Mon 3 Mar 1997
> Bonjour, Guillaume,
> Est-ce que vous aviez les bons vacances? Je vous envie – j'aimerais les vacances.
> Ou etes-vous alle? [..]
> Je vous ecrirai encore une fois bientôt.
>
> Sun 6 Apr 1997
> Le video-conference etait si merveilleux et amusement, j'ai desirer de te telephoner
> et continuer la conversation. Je voudrais avoir un videoconference chaque semaine
> – donc nous deviendrions plus personnel et casuel. Tu etais tres amusant avec ton
> t-shirt. [..] Je doit partir. Je t'ecrirai bientôt!

The opposite situation occurs in the correspondence between Leila and Frédéric which

we analyse at length in Section 4.8.4.2 and below. Although, as we discuss later, Leila is

reluctant to use French at the beginning of the correspondence, when she does so, she

addresses Frédéric with the *tu* form. However, during the videoconference she uses the *vous*

form in her question. Frédéric corrects this at the time by heavily stressing his own use of *tu*

(Section 4.9.11) and also gives a succinct explanation in his following e-mail:

> When people know each other as we do, they usually use 'tu' in their sentences.
> (Young children use it for everybody, because they learn only later that they have
> to say 'vous' for grown-ups like their teachers for example)
> (Frédéric, e-mail 29)

References to indexicality are also found in the American students' comments, even if they are not so frequent. For instance Xavier L. (Autumn 1999) began his first three e-mails to Sue, who started her messages appropriately with "Salut! Comment vas-tu?" with both "Hi!" and "How do you?" until he received the following advice:

Wed 8 Dec 1999
[…] aussi j'ai pensé que tu me dirais des expressions commun en France et je te dirais des expressions commun ici dans les Etat-Unis. Par example: On ne dit pas 'How do you do?' une exception est dans une situation formel. Au lieu, on dit 'Hey, what's up?' ou 'How are you?' ou 'What's going on?'.

Xavier's subsequent messages all began appropriately with "Hi! How are you?" and he also thanked Sue for providing the correction.

Valentin and Paul also gave each other the following advice:

14/11/99
[…] In French e-mails, we finish with "A+" (for "à plus tard" or "à plus)
A+ Valentin

16/11/99
[…] Merci pour le suggestion de "A+" Aux États-Unis, nous terminons habituellement nos messages comme nous faisons dans les autres situations sociales: i.e. "see you" ou "later" ou "take it easy" ou terminer sans quelque chose, seulement ton nom.Take care, Paul.

Valentin's suggestion was taken up in the following and all further e-mails. Paul also added some more advice:

17/11/99
[…] Quand écrivant les e-mails aux amis, quelques personnes aiment utiliser "les contractions" comma ça: "wat r u guyz up2? Don't 4get 2nite" (What are you guys up to/doing?) ou plus de "street talk" comme: "waz up, yo?? tony'n da'house...watz go'n on 2nite, dawg" (what's up? This is Tony [here]. What are you planning to do tonight?) A+ Paul

In the only e-mail she wrote in English, Lily also included a similar lesson:

Thu 6 Feb 1997
[..] New greetings for today:
What's up? pronounced : whuzup? and raise your pitch a great deal on the 'up' part.
or, a light variation:
What's up with you? pronounced whuzup whichew? With the 'chew' slightly longer than the rest of the syllables
What's going on? pronounced: whas goin on? again the last syllable is longer and 'whichew' is an optional ending to this phrase as well.

> Well, I hope I've been entertaining and not simply foolish. Have a good rest of the week.
> Lily

The entertainment value mentioned by Lily proves to be a motivating factor for both student groups and reflects the pleasure of poaching on other people's territory that Kramsch highlights in her description of the "third place" (Section 1.6.2.4). The "fun" element in the class will also be analysed in Section 4.9.16. The focus on indexicality often led naturally to a discussion on the T/V system in the French class. Students were thus encouraged to reflect on their own *languaculture* in a context relevant to their lives, with the virtual presence of a group of outsiders providing a natural incentive for reflection on their personal language use (Section 1.5.2). This aspect of the course was appreciated by many of the students, for instance Flore, who made the following observations in an informal interview after the course :

> It is very interesting to ask yourself questions about your own language and I think this kind of reflection should be integrated into language lessons. The *tutoiement* is very difficult for me because I'm used to the *vouvoiement* and now everyone in the office where I'm working uses *tu*. For me the *vouvoiement* shows that there is a more hierarchical system in France, whereas in America everyone slaps your back and then you never see them again.
> (Flore, post-course interview 2000)

The discussion on T/V forms and greetings also led Etienne H. to ask the question:

> Who and when do usually you kiss?
> (Appendix XVIII, Page 2)

4.8.4.6 *Les langues sont plein de mots qu'on ne trouve pas dans les dictionnaires*

The appropriation of modern vocabulary was also seen by the students to be an extremely positive aspect of the exchanges. For instance, Katrina and Isabelle apparently took great pleasure in providing each other with slang words and giving detailed advice on sociopragmatic use:

> Thu 06 Feb. 1997
> Salut Isabelle! Je veux apprendre les mots français que les personnes jeunes utilise. Alors je te vex parler a moi comme a tes amis et moi je le fait aussi en anglais. Toi

tu le fait en français, d'accord? [..] Here is a slang term I really like ... 'Yikes' When you see something really strange or someone says something really weird you say 'Yikes'. It can also be used if you are walking and a car almost hits you. 'Yikes'. It's kind of like 'oh my God'. It's basically an exclamation of surprise. It is an appropriate word to say in front of parents for example. Mabe like 'Zut' or 'Mon dieu'. I hope you enjoy this word and I also hope you don't know it already. I would love to get a similar word in your language. J'ecrirai demain, d'accord, alors est que tu veux exchanger les mots? Je te dis les mots anglais et tu me dis les mots français? Les langues sont plein de mots qu'on ne trouve pas dans les dictionnaires ...si tu veux, nous faisons ca a bientot. Katrina

Thurs 3 Apr 1997
[..] Furthermore I will tell you a common and fashioned French phrase: 'c'est chaud' (it's hot); you use this phrase when you find something rather difficult (homework, a test) or when you think you won't have the time to do what you will have to do anyway, (you are too busy). You say 'ça va être chaud!' But be careful don't use this phrase about people because when a boy says that une fille est chaude it means that she is the kind of girl who enjoys attracting a lot of boys!!! (she is pretty but she wants to seduce every guy) lastly, when somebody tells you 'ce film est chaud', it means that there is a lot of sex in it. So, be careful of the use of this fashioned phrase. You should only use the first sense of this phrase.

This phrase was used in Katrina's reply the following day:

Fri 4 Apr 1997
salut!
Je pense qu'il y a beaucoup des differences, mais pas mal. je les trouve tres interessants. Est-ce qu'il y a moins des accents sur l'apparition en France? Je pense oui. Quand on est dans le lycee, l'apparition est tres important ici. Les vetements chere, une voiture etc. C'est stupid et c'est chaud >- c'est bien? Moi, je n'avais rien des vetement popular ou une voiture, alors je n'avais pas les amis popular.

Many of the students in the project enjoyed both appropriating and teaching each other authentic peer group discourse, providing access to an aspect of the language which is not generally covered in an academic context. As one student in the Autumn 1999 group put it:

There is a greater satisfaction in using complicated phrases, idioms, plays-on-words in a foreign language than in my first language.
(Wayne, cultural awareness questionnaire, Autumn 1999)

In the previous extract, Katrina also asks for confirmation for her use of the phrase from Isabelle, showing a move towards other-regulation or Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP). This aspect of the e-mail correspondence is analysed in further detail in the following section.

4.8.4.7 Other-mediation, a story of participation

A gradual move to the LPP or other-regulation can be illustrated using examples from the long correspondence between Frédéric and Leila, which we have already analysed from the point of view of hyperpersonal engagement (Section 4.8.4.2) As with the relationship between Oliver and Kirsten, analysed by Thorne (2003), Leila's development and growing confidence as a *languaculture* learner appears to be mediated by her close relationship with Frédéric.

At the beginning of the correspondence, Leila either writes in English or includes a very small amount of French. She reports that she has some confidence in her French writing skills because, as she puts it in one of her early messages:

> Fri 25 April 1997
> […] I think that I may take a summer class over break because then by the end of next semester I will move up to a junior level ahead of everyone else. I received a lot of extra credits last semester because I tested very high on the language placement test and skipped French 101, 102 and 201.
> (Leila, e-mail 28)

However, she appears to have problems with unprepared writing, explaining that she does not write very much in French because she does not have time, or finds it too difficult, or does not have her dictionary with her:

> Wed 22 Jan 1997
> I am not sure if I should write in English or French so I chose English for this first time.
> (Leila, e-mail 2)
>
> Tue 28 Jan 1997
> Dear Leila,
> First I'd like to say that you can write in French or English, as you like. […]
> (Frédéric, e-mail 3)
>
> Tue 28 Jan 1997
> I'll write in English this once more time because I don't have much time. […]
> (Leila e-mail 4)
>
> Fri 25 April 1997
> […] I'm really sorry there's no French in this but I promise that the next letter will have at least 10 French sentences in it.
> (Leila, e-mail 28)

> Wed 30 Apr 1997
> Thank-you for helping me with my vocabulary. I usually don't have my dictionary with me when I e-mail which is why so much of my letters is in English.
> (Leila e-mail 34)

After Solange has asked her to use more French in her e-mails, Leila makes an effort:

> Tue 18 Mar 1997
> Cher Frederic
> Bonjour! C'est necessaire que j'ecris en francais parce que ma prof me dit. Ou-es tu? Tu es trop occupe comme moi, probably (je ne sais pas le mot). Mes vacances commencent vendredi et je n'ecris pas jusqu'a (je pense que c'est le mot) le deuxieme avril et je suis agite! Ecris-moi s'il vous plait. Je voudrais entendre de toi (je sais c'est tres la grammaire mauvaise) avant je laisse pour mes vacances.
> Gros bisous
> Leila ☺
> (Leila, e-mail 24)

However, she often slips back into English or code-switches in mid-sentence:

> Tue 13 May 1997
> […] I'm sorry none of this is in French. My entire next letter will be in French. Promise. […] Il faut que je dors. (j'ai dis quelquechose en francais!)
> (Leila, e-mail 39)

When Frédéric writes a paragraph in French to encourage her to make an effort "cette fois-ci je vais t'imposer quelques efforts linguistiques"(Frédéric, e-mail 11), she includes a paragraph in French, but the main part of the letter is written in English. However, Leila's reply to this e-mail also marks the beginning of her increasing confidence in her ability at least to understand French, along with an awareness of the variability of language. She also considers the possibility that Frédéric is modifying his use of language to accommodate her level as a language learner, although she retains the view that spoken French is not "proper French". This new awareness is also illustrated in Leila's comments after participating in the second videoconference, which are analysed in Section 4.9.11.

> Fri 7 Feb 1997
> […] I have understood everything you have written in French just about which amazes me. I thought I would have a hard time because even though I've read numerous stories, it's still more proper French and most people use more slang in conversation settings. Although you're probably doing that for my benefit also, but that's okay.
> (Leila, e-mail 12B)

Frédéric only writes once more in French, again taking on a teacher's role in order to encourage Leila, rather than for his own convenience.

> Tue 13 May 1997
> [...] Tu me promets une lettre en Francais pour la prochaine fois: que dirais-tu d'un peu d'entrainamant (sic)? Voila quelques mots de Français pour te rememorer le sens de cette langue.
> (Frédéric, e-mail 40)

As we saw in Section 4.8.1.1, the majority of the French students preferred to write in English, but the delight felt by Leila when she did understand Frédéric's message does suggest that a certain amount of modelling of the foreign language by their French peers could be beneficial for both sides, even if, for the moment very few of the French students share this view.

As Leila gains confidence, she adopts various strategies to compensate for the gaps in her French, explaining this explicitly to Frédéric.

> Wed 5 Feb 1997
> Here's my plan. I will now attempt to write in French (without accents – sorry!) and what I absolutely am having too much trouble translating, then I'll convert to English. I'll apologize ahead of time if I confuse you. Here goes:
> Ma (roommate) et moi avons parle et je pense que nous sommes bien maintenant. Je l'aime mais elle me fait tres fache! c'est tres difficile d'habiter avec quelq'un. L'annee prochaine je pense que je vais habiter avec mon petit ami (je pense que c'est le mot) [two further paragraphs in French]
> That's enough, back to English.
> (Leila, e-mail 8)

She also constantly asks for help with vocabulary and structures and keeps up a running commentary on her use of the language. In fact, both students create a kind of scaffolding dialogue of comments and questions about their language use throughout the correspondence, as the following examples show (bold type added):

> Sun 2 Feb 1997
> J'ai alle a la maison ce week-end. Mon petit ami a mal a le (knee) de joue au basketball. Je sens tres mal pour lui. **(I'm sorry I know that was probably very bad grammar. It's hard sometimes because the French say some things so differently).** Ma (roommate) et moi sont d'accord avec l'autre maintenant. Je l'haie quelquefois et je sens tres mal. Je suis le president de mon etage ici a l'universite et je viens de un (meeting). J'etais tres sommeil.

I can't do any more French right now [half a page in English]
(Leila, e-mail 6)

Fri 7 Feb 1997
[…] Je veut te dire que je suis tres heureuse que je te recois me ecrire. Je te trouve un intelligent homme et tres interessant. Aussi dans ta lettre deuxieme tu dis que tu as (almost) vingt-et-un ----quand est ton anniversaire ? Mon anniversaire est le vingt-quatre de mai. J'aurai dix-neuf ans. Comment est-ce que tes examens vont ? **(Je suis desolee—je pense qui est mauvais la grammaire.)**
(Leila, e-mail 12B)

Sun 27 Apr 1997
Cher Frédéric,
Bonjour! Je suis tres heureuse que tu m'ecrit vite. **(I know that's the wrong word).** Aujoud'hui, je suis malade. Je travaille de neuf heures du matin jusqu'a cinq **heures et demi ce soir. Je suis tres fatiguee aussi. Hier, je conduis a The Lake of the Ozarks** voir mon petit ami. Nous avons mange et avons vu un film et nous avons joue (mini golf). Il etait fache a moi parce que j'ai gagne le match. Il est tres (competitive even) avec moi. **Mes mots en anglais sont dans les (parentheses). Ha, ha ..c'est m'amusantes.** Now for a little English. [...]—
(Leila, e-mail 30)

Both students constantly encourage and support each other, as we saw in Section 4.8.4.2. Frédéric also asks for information, as well as providing it and shows that he is not completely sure of himself, by questioning his own vocabulary. Frédéric's relative ease with the foreign language means that these questions are not frequent. However, they give Leila an opportunity to also play the role of more capable peer, although she does not always reply to Frédéric's questions. For instance, she does not refer to the question asked in the first example and her comments are sometimes vague. This is illustrated in e-mail 19, where she answers Frédéric's query about the use of the word sunbathing. However, by the end of the correspondence she is giving detailed explanations, as we see in the final example.

Thu 03 Apr 1997
[…..] Thanks to the fact that my father works for the "**Forces Francaises Stationnees en Allemagne**" we have access to the US barracks, shops and sport centers. […..] after the final exams we thought we had deserved such holidays so we went by car to Blanes and settled in a camp **(some doubts about the word: a place you can fix a "tente" (?) and leave the car......)**
(Frédéric, e-mail 26)

Mon 03 Mar 1997
My face is as pale as when I lived because Paris isn't well-known for sunbathing **(proper word?)** but at least I had some fresh air.
(Frédéric, e-mail 18)

Tue 4 Mar 1997
Cher Frederic,
        Welcome back! I hope you had a wonderful vacation. My spring break is coming up soon. […] You used the proper word in your last letter. I don't remember what it was but it was correct.
(Leila, e-mail 19)

Tue 13 May 1997
[…..] I decided to become a fighter pilot in the army ; but the army didn't agree because of my **athmus (?)** they said it was a pity, for I was in a better shape than some real pilots, but it wasn't possible for a pilot to have breath problems…..
(same problem, I'm not allowed to dive with oxygen bottles **(words?)**)
(Frédéric, e-mail 40)

Wed 14 May 1997
[…..] Vocabulary: athmus: I assume that you are referring to asthma, which I understand. Our military has restrictions about asthma too. The rest of your vocabulary was correct (oxygen tanks---- as you would use for scuba diving?)
(Leila, e-mail 41)

Sometimes direct questions are asked, as in the example below:

Mon 17 Feb 1997
[…..] How was your Valentine's day **(how do you say that in French?)**
(Leila, e-mail 15)

Sun 2 Feb 1997
What is 'Gros bisous'?
(Leila, e-mail 6)

Wed 5 Feb 1997
Gros bisous means 'Big kisses' in a friendly way. Roommate is "co-locataire" in French, that is to say someone who rents (or hire? I don't know the proper word) something with another. […] Gros bisous, then. A bientôt
(Frédéric, e-mail 8)

As we see above, Frédéric provides the French terms in his reply, although he does not explain the cultural differences behind the terms roommate/co-locataire (Section 2.3). In her answer, Leila immediately integrates both terms and thanks Frédéric for his help. She seems to particularly like the expression "gros bisous" which she uses constantly, although she still needs reassurance about the spelling.

Wed 5 Feb 1997
Ma co-locataire et moi sont tres agreables! J'haie se facher avec elle. More later. Good luck on any remaining exams you may have. Thank-you for sending that letter back to me. I'm sure my professor appreciates it also. And thank you for helping me with my French, now I know some new words!
 Gros bisous,
 Leila ☺
(Leila, e-mail 10)

Thu 13 Feb 1997
[.....]
Gros bisous,
Leila ☺ (I'm quite attached to that phrase now)
(Leila, e-mail 13)

Mon 17 Feb 1997
[.....]
Gros bisous (Am I spelling that right?)
Leila ☺
(Leila, e-mail 15)

Tue 18 Feb 1997
Yes, you're spelling right when you write Gros bisous. About Valentine's Day, we also say and do it that way in France.
(Frédéric, e-mail 16)

This peer-to-peer scaffolding seems to be more appreciated by Leila than unsolicited corrections, as the following example illustrates:

Wed 5 Mar 1997
Dear Leila,
You know what, I can see you! Do you remember, "Bonjour, je m'appelle Leila . J'habite a Jefferson ....."?
You've guessed: I've just found your school's web page. I noticed you said "je suis le president": thanks to your so tasty picture, I assume you're a girl, so let's say "la presidente", huh? (I'm joking: take it easy. Tell me if you're upset at my criticism. Anyway, I surely make loads of mistakes when I write to you.) . [...]
Could you explain the phrase "to have a minor", please?
(And a somophore (sic) as well: I'm sorry to be so bad cultured.) . [...]
(Frédéric, e-mail 20)

Fri 7 Mar 1997
Cher Frederic
Ha! Ha! So I made a few mistakes—I noticed them myself but I turned in my summary late so it was much shorter than everyone else's and I still have to make a bunch of corrections but I haven't had time. But, since I am a girl and all....
Such a terrible picture. It seems really blurry. We were standing outside and it was about 20 degrees—je n'etait pas hereuse. [...]
(Leila, e-mail 21)

However, although Leila seems to be slightly upset and defensive about these corrections, Frédéric has tried to soften the blow by saying that he is joking. He has also positioned himself as a learner when he asks for an explanation of the terms "to have a minor" and "a sophomore", apologizing for being "bad cultured". In her previous letter, Leila

has explained that she is going to validate her French module, assuming that Frédéric will understand the American terms:

> Tue 4 Mar 1997
> I only have one more French class to go before I have a minor. I'm pretty excited about that –I'll only be a sophomore.
> (Leila, e-mail 19)

Leila takes up the challenge and explains the terms in detail, although, as she herself suggests, parts of the answer are not very clear:

> Okay, now for your explanations—There are four levels to high school and college: freshman, sophomore, junior and senior—in that order. So a sophomore is the second level of schooling. As for a minor—in college you have to declare a major and sometimes a minor. My major is marketing which will be what my studies will focus on and what my degree will be. A minor is the second field you studied to qualify for the next subject that you're most qualified in once you've graduated (Did that make sense?) I hope so. [...]
> Gros bisous
> Leila ☺
> (Leila, e-mail 21)

Frédéric has already integrated the word freshman into his own use and also begins echoing Leila's voice (Section 1.6.2.3) with the use of "huh?" :

> Sun 16 Feb 1997
> Dear Leila,
>   It's been a long time, huh? [...] I wanted to warn you that we, I mean the freshmen, are on holiday on Thursday of this week. I go to Paris, and I won't have any access to Internet any more. So, I'll stop writing to you for nearly two weeks, I'm sorry.
> (Frédéric, e-mail 14)

The need to ask Leila for explanations of American terms which are relevant to the educational system probably encourages him to clarify his own vocabulary. For instance, in e-mail 29, he explains the term "binôme", used in schools to describe a student partnership, where the work for an assignment is shared:

> Sun. 27 Apr 1997
> Leila,
> [...] I haven't many contacts with the other students here in the school: but there is one of them who is my "binome", that's to say we do houseworks together, and nearly all the marks we get are the same (in order to learn to work another way that alone, which we did until this year).
> (Frédéric, e-mail 29)

Although this explanation is also incomplete, it shows the beginning of an awareness that the social organisation of the two cultures is different. This awareness is one of the essential elements for the development of an intercultural stance (Section 1.5.6).

The lack of explanation of sociocultural norms, either because the students do not consider them relevant or are not aware of their existence, can lead to misunderstandings, as the following extracts illustrate. For example, in e-mail 5, Frédéric simply translates "Grande Ecole" as "high school", which is obviously incorrect, although the terms are similar. Indeed, Frédéric's reasons for not staying in Paris must seem incomprehensible to an outsider to the French education system:

> Thu 30 Jan 1997
> Dear Leila,
>   [...] I intended to share a flat with my girlfriend in Paris this year, but I didn't get a high school in Paris but in Brest (because of my rank in the ending test of "Ecole Preparatoire").
> (Frédéric, e-mail 5)

Later on in the year, in e-mail 31, Frédéric expresses doubts about his translation of "ecoles préparatoires", as shown by his question "words?" which is added in brackets. Leila uses the correct expression in French in her reply, but clearly is assimilating the French system to that of American boarding schools or prep schools, thereby misunderstanding the differing social realities encoded in the translation. Again, given the similarity of the terms, this is an easy enough mistake but unfortunately Frédéric does not provide any further explanation in his reply:

> Mon 28 Apr 1997
> [...] It's even worse here in the school (that's why I have so few friends here) because they come from preparatory school **(words?)** they think they are better than the people who don't: they are very proud of themselves ....for example when Clementine comes here, some of them look at her alternatively with two eyes:
> - as she had nothing to do among them
> -or they insist on her as though they had never seen any girl before
> (you have to know that preparatory school are a very closed world, where many students only work, all day long, never go out ......so they're cut off the real world; of course, not all of them, but maybe a majority!)
> (Frédéric, e-mail 31)

Mon 28 Apr 1997
Cher Frederic
Bonjour!
[...] Je suis tres fache a ma co-locataire. Elle est mauvais. C'est tres bizarre que tu connais beaucoup de personnes de les ecoles preparatoires (Is that the right word?). Dans les Etats-Unis, les enfants qui sont tres riches aller a (boarding schools or prep schools) [...]
(Leila, e-mail 32)

This misunderstanding led us to stress the importance of explaining certain key aspects of each education system to the foreign group in subsequent classes. Once they were aware of the differences, the students were able to give a clear idea of the differing social realities present in some specific areas (Section 4.9.15) rather than "plugging in" to those existing in their own culture (Section 2.2.3). This example also shows the importance of building on pedagogical experience in order to improve current practice.

Nevertheless, if the understanding over the " écoles préparatoires" probably was never clarified for Leila, the dyad explained other sociocultural differences in great detail, as we see in the following examples:

Sun 2 Feb 1997
[...] I had an idea to tell you that you might not even have in your country. During my last two years in high school (and even now) I was a Big Sister. It's an organization when adult volunteers are paired with a child that is considered to be disadvantaged somehow. The child might be from a bad part of town, their parents might be divorced, or anything like that. The adult (Big Brother or Sister) just spends time with them once a week and gives them the attention they might not be receiving in their everyday life. It's a really wonderful organisation and now I'll have a little sister that I will love for the rest of my life. [...]
(Leila, e-mail 6)

Here Leila is beginning to engage with the possibility of difference, although she is still not sure about this, referring to the practice of being a big Sister or Brother as something "you might not have in your country".

Tue 13 May 1997
[...] About weddings: that's a topic we often speak about with Clementine, and we do agree with each other: as soon as it is possible, we'll do it. It means as soon as we can live on our own, earning enough money to be totally independent of our parents. (You have to know that in France, "children" are raised, and then helped by their parents until very late: from 16 to 30 years old!) Personally, my parents give me 2000 francs to live, which correspond to about 350-400 $. They also pay for

my studies (but it's much cheaper than in the USA as you know). That enables us to be totally devoted to our studies. In theory .....[...]
(Frédéric, e-mail 40)

Wed 14 May 1997
[...] I can't believe French parents support their children that long! Not me! My parents pay my car insurance and they support me when I'm living in their house which isn't very often. My mom also does my laundry just because I'm afraid I'll ruin my clothes. [...]
(Leila, e-mail 41)

These extracts provide both personal and cultural information, illustrating the benefit of explanations which are relevant to the students' lives. The information given here also echoes the more academic observations made in "Les Evidences Invisibles", where Carroll (1987) compares differing parental attitudes in the two cultures (Section 3.3.3). She concludes that in France tend to be very strict with young children but to allow young adults a great deal of freedom, while continuing to provide for them materially:

> Quand l'enfant atteint l'adolescence (et l'âge exact importe peu, disons que cela représente la période entre l'enfance et l'âge adulte) la situation semble inversée. Pour l'enfant français, le prix de ce long apprentissage, de ces années de bonne conduite, c'est la liberté de "faire ce qu'il veut", c'est-à- dire de sortir tard le soir, de "s'amuser", de prendre une cuite peut-être, d'avoir des expériences sexuelles, de voyager etc. Même si les parents continuent leur rôle d'éducateurs et de critiques, ils lui reconnaissent, au fond, le droit de "n'en faire qu'à sa tête" ou tout au moins se résignent ("Il faut bien que jeunesse se passe.... ") Qu'il continue à être nourri, logé, blanchi par ses parents ne porte en rien atteinte à son "indépendance" : dans ce sens, je suis indépendant(e) si je sais ce que je veux, et je fais ce que je veux quelles que soient les apparences extérieures.

(Carroll, 1987: 83)

On the other hand, American children are brought up with relatively few constraints

and are expected to prove themselves as adolescents or young adults:

> L'adolescent américain insiste davantage sur les signes extérieurs de son indépendance. Le premier signe sera économique : très tôt, il va montrer qu'il peut gagner de l'argent et "pourvoir à ses propres besoins", c'est-à-dire se payer tout ce qu'il considérerait "enfantin" d'obtenir de ses parents (disques, chaîne hi-fi, équipement de sport, moto etc. Cela est souvent interprété par des Français comme une preuve irréfutable du "matérialisme si connu des américains." En fait, ce que le jeune Américain est en train de faire, c'est au contraire de prouver qu'il est capable de se prendre en charge, de montrer à ses parents qu'il sait tirer profit des chances qu'ils se sont efforcés (jusqu'au sacrifice) de lui donner.

(Carroll, 1987: 84)

As we also show in Sections 4.9.14, 4.9.15 and 4.9.16, the discussions between partners and during the whole-class videoconferences, allow the students from both groups to compare their own experiences with their academic readings, either to endorse them or to provide a more modern or different generational perspective.

This particular correspondence also played its part in destroying negative stereotypes as in the following exchange:

> Wed. 5 Feb 1997
> [...] Je suis ravi de voir que tous les Americains ne justifient pas le stereotype que nous en faisons parfois en France: regarder la television 24 heures sur 24, en mangeant du pop-corn et des hambugers, avec un petit Coca pour faire passer tout ca. Don't be upset: I'm sure there are as many such people in France as in the USA. This idea only comes from the fact that 'you' sent us McDonald.
> (Frédéric, e-mail 11)

> Fri. 7 Feb 1997
> Salut Frédéric
> I am so pleased to be part of this project if nothing more than the stereotype of Americans was disproven in at least one French mind ☺ I tend not to believe in stereotypes myself. Most Americans do though. There are a lot of Americans who have no interest at all with other cultures and think the United States is the most important country in the world. You limit yourself as a person so much by doing that. It is essential to keep an open mind in everything that you do. Most Americans think that the French are rude and snobby. They eat bread all the time and drink wine at very meal. It's silly to think such things because every person is unique.
> (Leila, e-mail 12)

Later in the above message Frédéric also wrote:

> [...] Writing to you is probably the best way to practice my English, and above all it's both interesting and funny. I learn a lot about civilisation particularities of your country through your letters and I realise that we aren't, as you said before, so intellectually different. That breaks the last prejudicies I had and I would enjoy going to the USA sooner than I firstly intended. I only hope a lot of people there are like you very pleasant and open-minded. Thank you for everything.
> (Frédéric, e-mail 11)

This point of view was also expressed by Karma in the post-course questionnaire:

> Restrictions imposed by writing BUT writing is a nice way to communicate ideas and helps one partner to explore the other without preconceived ideas based on stereotypes and generalizations.
> (Karma, Spring/Summer 1997 questionnaire)

The above e-mails, which come quite early in the correspondence, reflect the opportunities for encouraging "empathy and receptivity to culturally different others" (Hall

2002) provided by the project on which this thesis is based. Other examples can be taken from student essays, for instance in the following extract, where a French student reflects on stereotypes and decides that the study of remakes and contact with a foreign peer group can help to explain differences, even though he remains relatively pessimistic about the understanding possible between representatives of different cultures.

> Why do Americans laugh when watching American remakes of French films whereas these appear to be incredibly boring to French? These are a few questions among many others that we cannot avoid to ask to oneself while reading e-mail of our partners from East University.
>
> Actually what make us so different, up to the extent that we do not seem to have anything in common? Raymonde Carroll tries to give a hand to the unachievable task of explanation of cultural misunderstandings. She makes a cultural analysis on relationships between French and Americans sorting out recurrent points which could explain cultural misunderstandings.
>
> What is more, beyond all those funny examples that everyone have to feed the argument- "These funny Americans, fat and loving base-ball", "Those rude French and Europeans with their funny cars" ....the striking point that even though the two of us, France and America, are considered as Western countries with all that implies, we do not have a natural understanding of each other. Consequently one should not be surprised by many conflicts in the world and by the fact that we cannot solve all of them. How to interfere, as Western people, in conflicts taking place in Middle East in Africa or even in Asia? Our attempt to solve others problem via the UNO and other organizations is- in a pessimistic point of view- to fail...
>
> Am I too pessimistic or have I expressed loudly what everyone think without saying it? I hope being wrong. Non-western countries are to have more influence, in the future, over the world.
>
> By way of conclusion, after having experienced some meetings and discussions, I began to understand why do Americans laugh while watching "Three Men and a Coffin" [sic] and moreover why do I laugh while watching "Trois Hommes et un Couffin".
> (Essay 19, Appendix XXIV)

Evidence of decentring, after several visits to the USA, is also shown in the following extract from a student essay (Essay 25, Appendix XXIV). This student begins with common stereotypes from both sides of the Atlantic.

> Why do French people often think that Americans are stupid, big and just watch TV all day long? Moreover, why when you talk with American people, do they think that France is only Paris and wine?

He then explains that his American hosts become more "open-minded" after contact with him. This change is not one-sided, however. Indeed, he describes himself as being "narrow-minded" but changing his perspective after discussion with his American hosts.

> When I was in the United States, during three consecutive stays in a family who live near New York, the first thing they asked me was "How far is your town from Paris?" But, day after day, they started to be more open-minded and we had a great time.
>
> I must admit that I was also narrow-minded, but I discovered the American way of life during this journey, and by some aspects it is like we think it is, but by many aspects it is totally different. American people really try to understand you and your culture if you want to make some efforts.

He is also more optimistic about the outcomes of dialogue between cultural groups and explains the recourse to negative stereotypes by a lack of knowledge about the history and habits of the respective countries.

> Indeed, we have a great discussion on the death sentence. The parents were convinced that it was a good thing but they listen to me when I told them that we abolished it, and they really tried to understand the cultural reasons, even though they think death sentence was necessary to punish killers of children, for example.
>
> Besides, to take the example of the recent debate on the American election system, I think a lot of French people do not understand because they do not know anything about the history of the USA. In fact, Americans do not want the constitution changed because for them it is a symbol of the independence. They had to fight against English people who were like their cousins, and the constitution is the result of this war so they want to see it conserved. [.....]
>
> To conclude, I think that cultural misunderstandings are essentially due to the fact that people do not know the history, the habit of the others and due to the fact that they do not want to open their mind to another culture. Maybe I am an optimist but I think that by discussing and meeting people who have another culture, we could improve the comprehension between people.
> (Extract from Essay 25, Appendix XXIV)

As we also show in Sections 4.8.4.2 and 4.9.11, the correspondence between Frédéric and Leila plays a crucial role, both in Leila's motivation and in her confidence in her ability to express herself in French. Mediated by her emotional relationship with Frédéric and through the scaffolding dialogue which the students set up between them, Leila's use of the French language moves gradually from an object-regulated dependence on the dictionary and a refusal to take the risk of writing without help, to other-regulation.

During the exchange, we can also observe what Attinasi and Friedrich, basing their analysis on dialogues between ethnographers and the people from the community under study, call "memorable" or "life-changing dialogues". These catalysts of change are opposed to more repetitive, banal dialogues and elicit a:

> fundamental realignment and reevaluation of psychological values in the minds of the interlocutors.
>
> (Attinasi and Friederich, 1995, cited in Kramsch 1993 : 28-29)

For Kramsch, this dialogic experience is an essential step towards the "third place" which is created between two or more cultures. Leila is becoming more and more culturally aware through her correspondence with Frédéric. After the first videoconference, Leila seems to suddenly see herself as "other", or a "stranger to herself" (Section 1.6), with the realisation that she may be difficult to understand, both when she speaks French and English and that English may be difficult for those who have learned it as a foreign language:

> Mon 28 Apr 1997
> [...] Est-ce que tu trouves que mon anglais est difficile pour tu comprends? (That was very bad). Je ne te demande jamais avant.
> Now for a little bit of English. I'm trying to write more in French. I don't know if it's easier to understand my English or my French. It's pretty questionable.
> (Leila, e-mail 32)

> Wed 30 Apr 1997
> [...] I never realized we may be speaking too fast for you to understand. English seems so much easier to me, but it would since it's the language I've spoken my entire life.
> (Leila, e-mail 35)

> Wed 14 May 1997
> Cher Frederic,
> Une lettre en francais ....Tres difficile. Je pense que la langue de francais est plus difficile que la langue d'anglais mais c'est naturelle.
> (Leila, e-mail 41)

She also includes a similar comment in the post-videoconference questionnaire:

> I enjoyed it a lot. I learned that we also speak English that is too fast and not pronunciated (sic) well enough for them (the French) to understand.

A distinct move from the assumption that terms which appear similar are unproblematic, to a consciousness of difference can also be observed. Although Leila is already superficially aware that Frédéric may pronounce his name differently from the way she pronounces it, she has not really integrated this at a deeper level until she is preparing for the"face to face" contact of the videoconference.

> Sun 2 Feb 1997
> Bonjour Frederic,
> Did I ever tell you you have a very easy name??? My friend in my French class is writing to a guy named Bruno. Of course you probably pronounce the name Frederic different than we do here. [...]
> (Leila, e-mail 6)

> Tue 13 May 1997
> [...] By the way, did you know that in my mind I pronounced your name wrong until the day before the videoconference? Silly me, I'm just pronouncing it the American way, not thinking anything about it until the day before the conference. I was reading my question in French and your name stuck out and it hit me that you probably didn't pronounce it that way so I started to pronounce it the French way. Good thing I caught myself. I would have felt terrible pronouncing it wrong the first time we speak face to face. [...]
> (Leila, e-mail 39)

By the end of the correspondence, both students appear to have acquired a more *ethno-lingually relative perspective* (Section 2.5.6). Leila also shows a tentative move towards self-regulation Her final message, on May the 14th, includes the following paragraphs in French. Although she still uses the bilingual approach, for instance "il est dans le "airforce" and she is still dependent on Frédéric's approval: " Aren't you proud of me? That was a lot of French?", she is beginning to write whole sentences without the need for comments from Frédéric.

> Wed 14 May 1997
> Cher Frederic,
> Une lettre en francais ....Tres difficile. Je pense que la langue de francais est plus difficile que la langue d'anglais mais c'est naturelle. Je suis tres heureuse que tu es retourne ...... tu as beaucoup des vacances! Mais maintenant c'est moi....j'aurai trois mois des vacances et c'est l'ete!
> Je ne sais pas si mon ex-petit ami epousera cette fille me faire jalouse ..mais il est bizarre.

Je sais comment dire "Je t'aime" dans neuf langues (English, French, Spanish, Italian, German, Swiss-German, Russian and Polish). Seulement c'est huit langues. Bien sur tu parles en francais.......tres bien aussi. Demain, mon jour derniere de travail a Walgreens! Merci Dieu.
Mon ami que je te dis etait dans le "navy" ......je mentis. Il est dans le "airforce". Il etudie des avions..etc. Je ne pense pas qu'il va voler les avions. Je ne sais pas que tu as voulu etre dans le "air force". Ta vie, je ne trouve pas ennuyeux. Au contraire, je la trouve tres interessante!
La langue de francais a beaucoup de regles. En anglais ce n'est importante pas!
Tu ne crois pas les temps que j'ai pris ecrire cette lettre en francais. C'est longue aussi.
English now!!!!!!!!!
Aren't you proud of me? That was a lot of French!

Leila's French expression is still of limited accuracy and by some standards her achievement is minimal. However, the benefits in terms of confidence in herself as a learner and potential speaker of French, along with her language and cultural awareness are huge.

4.9 Axe to Grind – positioning

4.9.1 Introduction

L'"américanisation" du monde:
Les films, les séries télévisées, les chansons, mais aussi les produits américains se diffusent partout. Par-dessus les cultures et les traditions nationales, une culture et un mode de vie en provenance des Etats-Unis deviennent communs aux habitants de la planète.

Les Etats-Unis ont exporté plus de télévision que leur concurrent immédiat, La Grande-Bretagne. Au sein du marché européen, les cent premières chaînes de télévision importent des Etats-Unis 69% des programmes de fiction diffusées. Par ailleurs, les sociétés américaines accaparent, selon les pays, de 80 à 90% du marché mondial de la vidéo. Le cinéma connaît un succès mondial. Les films américains représentent 6 à 7% de la production mondiale mais occupent 50% du temps de projection.
(Extracts from French Secondary School History Book 1997)

Feelings of empathy, such as those experienced by Leila and Frédéric are not the only type of interaction which takes place between the students. As Kramsch (1993) points out, a dialogic pedagogy fosters both compliance and rebellion and a search for the third place takes place along the cultural faultlines.

In this section, we will discuss Sequence 5 of the montage, 'An Axe to grind'. This is the longest extract, chosen in order to illustrate both the differences in American and French communication styles and to pinpoint problems of reaching intersubjectivity (Habermas 1984; Dunn and Lantolf 1998). Coding the videoconferences highlighted the fact that the most controversy appeared in the final videoconference of the study, in December 1999. Many reasons can be found to account for this. Firstly, the group was much bigger than usual and this made communication more formal and rigid. Secondly, issues like globalisation and McDonaldization were becoming a major preoccupation in France. Finally, unlike the other three groups, many of the French group had had little or no contact with other countries, with some notable exceptions like Jérémy, who had lived in New York, Marc who was half American and Valentin, who was half Japanese (see also Section 4.4.1). Both Valentin and Jérémy were surprised by the attitudes expressed during the conference. Jérémy and Barbara-Jean discussed the issues raised at great length after the videoconference (See Appendix XIX). Valentin's view is shown in this extract from an e-mail exchange between Valentin and Paul:

> 7.12.99
> Hi,
> I enjoyed the videoconference too. I was surprised by how students from both sides were "defending" their country (for example, when someone talked about exportations)

> 7.12.99
> Salut Val,
> Je suis d'accord, j'ai aussi pensé que les tensions croissaient pendant le visioconférence et que quelques personnes devenaient assez défensive!

4.9.2 L'exception culturelle

In the first of these extracts, from the December 1999 conference, Charles asks a question about "l'exception culturelle", which Bouzet defines as follows in an article

in the newspaper *Libération:*

> Qu'est-ce que "l'exception culturelle"? La défense de "l'exception culturelle" évoque un ensemble de principes que la France est arrivée à faire triompher lors des précédentes négociations du Gatt sur la libéralisation du commerce international: en gros, il s'agissait de préserver le droit d'avoir des quotas contre l'envahissement des programmes américains.
>
> (Bouzet, 1999: *Libération*)

Charles' prior texts come from television and press coverage, across the political board.

In a later article in *Libération*, Forcari explains that the term is now "diversité culturelle"

where:

> on met en avant la nécessité de protéger la variété des cultures nationales face au laminoir d'Hollywood.

This term is preferred by President Chirac, for whom it represents:

> (....) le refus de l'uniforme, du standardisé, du préformaté, de l'ersatz culturel mondial.
>
> (Forcari *Libération* 17 November 1999)

As we have seen, the "keyboard buddy thing" was very important to Charles, but it does

not stop him asking what, from an American perspective, could be construed as an offensive

question:

Sequence 5, 15 L'exception culturelle (a)

Charles: As an American citizen, can you explain to us why US films and their big stars have flooded the whole world. Do you see the extent of the domination of your culture over ours? There is currently a movement organised by French film directors to protect the French identity and to enhance 'l'exception culturelle', to protect the 7th Art from American blockbusters. So, Maureen, what do you think?
Solange: I'm not sure that Maureen is prepared to answer this question...
((laughter))
Charles: But she's my penfriend!
((laughter))
Maureen: OK, don't get offended, Charles, ((dazzling smile- laughter from group)) but I think if people want to see American films, I think it's the viewers'choice. If they're popular, it's because people are making them popular, and, as for French directors trying to protect your culture, I think that's insecure. I think they feel threatened. If they weren't so unsure about their culture, I don't think they'd put so many blocks on it. Do you understand what I'm trying to say?
Charles: Yes ((gesture meaning so so- laughter from group)) I'm about to!
((laughter))

The point is then taken up by Lauren, who draws on personal experience, during a study abroad period in Paris. She observes that French people do go to see American films and frequent their restaurants. She highlights two interesting aspects of French culture; firstly, the reliance on Government policy to protect citizens' interests and secondly, a certain ambivalent attitude towards popular culture. For instance, there was huge public support to attempt to save more intellectual television programmes such as 'Apostrophes'or 'Bouillon de Culture', but viewing figures were minimal compared to those of reality shows, such as 'Loft story'. Her response reflects the American prior text of reliance on the individual to protect his or her own interests. These opposing views show the two different modernist reactions to the demise of religious control from the 16th century onwards, as Lemoine (*Libération,* June 2002) points out:

> Un des enjeux majeurs de la France depuis plusieurs siècles, c'est que le poids de ces deux conceptions de la modernité n'y est pas le même que dans les pays anglo-saxons. Ceux-ci sont avant tout définis par une conception de type B (la régulation atomisée entre les individus, débouchant sur le modèle du marché), tandis que la France a été très marquée par la conception A (la place centrale de la vertu publique, débouchant sur un rôle dominant de l'Etat).

(Lemoine, *Libération:* June 2002)

Sequence 5, 15 L'exception culturelle (b)

Lauren: On the topic, I agree with Maureen and I know that, … we studied abroad, we studied abroad in Paris a few years ago and I noticed there's a lot of American influence there, that's really true. I remember Titanic was playing at that time, and Good Will Hunting was showing and McDonald's and a lot of American restaurants were there, but I also noticed that the majority of people seeing those movies were French, and so, with all due respect, like Maureen was saying, if XXXX then don't watch them. American music is on the radio, the films are in the theatres but it's the French people listening to the radio and filling those movie theatres that are promoting other films and music and restaurants to come over, so it's really in your hands, rather than a government issue, I think.
Charles: (looking crestfallen) OK, thank-you.

Again, the strong relationship with his keyboard buddy helps Charles to cope with the answer he receives. Maureen smiles and says "Don't get offended, Charles", whereas Lauren makes her point somewhat coldly. When he does not hear from Maureen after the

videoconference, he starts to wonder about his question:

> Unfortunately I'm afraid Maureen disliked one of my interventions and we have stopped communicating since then ... let's see what may happen!

> (Charles post-videoconference questionnaire, December 1999)

The point is obviously very important to Charles, who also mentions it in an essay written about the film Les Diaboliques (Clouzot 1955) and its American remake. The exchange during the videoconference has clearly given him food for thought and he shows signs of decentring, questioning his position which was hitherto taken for granted, legitimised by public opinion and press coverage:

> I truly enjoyed building a comparison between those two films, even if my argumentation was a bit biased (you may have noticed it) for it illustrates a long-lived debate between American blockbusters (my pen friend would tell me "if you don't like 'em, don't watch 'em!"...) and the French "cinema d'auteur"; I tried to express my opinion through this analysis.
> (Charles: Essay: Remaking the Remake January 2000)

This exchange also highlights one aspect of the French communication style when talking to people they see as friends. As Hall and Hall (1990) put it:

> In conversations with friends the French can become quite heated and even dogmatic or combative. They challenge and confront and relish playing the devil's advocate. This stance eventually leads to a revelation of their true feelings and can bring a sharing of innermost convictions if the friendship is long-lasting.

> (Hall and Hall, 1990:104)

Andrée (discussion May 2000) expressed the differences as follows:

> The problem is not their point of view, which is usually quite valid, but it's the way they ask the question which is rude. The American students are rude back if they feel they are being got at, but they don't start out to prove that they are superior. Some of the French students *know* they are right and they are backed up by a system where they have succeeded. They don't think there is another way to do things, or, rather, they do, but it's the wrong way. It's interesting, because some groups like the last one (1999-2000) don't really want to talk but they did seem to listen. When they wrote essays they were very good. They were really good at analysing things and they did seem to change, to realize that they weren't the centre of the world. They are very young, after all!
> (Andrée, June 2001)

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According to Stewart and Bennett (1995), the American communication style, on the

other hand, reflects a concern with the responses of others:

They try to anticipate the effects of words and acts on others, envisioning the desired responses and gearing their actions accordingly.[...] To Americans the other person is seen as a set of responses that are more or less satisfying. The characteristic way of seeing others largely as responses to themselves is reflected in the American emphasis on techniques of personal communication and in the great value they place on being liked.

(Stewart and Bennett, 1995:102)

Stewart and Bennett (ibid) also observe that Americans do not usually initiate

aggressive action since:

they do not believe in starting a fight. It is important for Americans to be able to say, 'They started then of course, 'but we'll finish it'.

(Stewart and Bennett, 1995:102)

4.9.3 World Police

This reaction is quite clear in the following exchange, which was immediately

afterwards in the December 1999 videoconference (Sequence 5, 16 The World Police) when

Guillaume asks a question phrased in a somewhat tactless way:

Guillaume F.: French people often blame Americans for trying to export their culture abroad and considering themselves as the world police. Do Americans really think they have to rule the world?

Here the prior texts backing up the French question are numerous. "Les Etats-Unis,

gendarmes du monde?" was a headline in the newspaper *Le Monde* (*Le Monde* 30 July 1998)

which was reproduced in a much utilized school History book, along with other newspaper

extracts about Americanization, as shown above.

Tariq: I'm not willing to pay my taxes to support, you know, an Operation Eisenhower in Africa. American people don't want to be the World Police, we don't wanna pay for our military to go and fix up some other people's mistakes around the world. American soldiers don't wanna be the World Police and the American government doesn't wanna be the World Police. Americans are perceived to be the World Police because we are the only remaining superpower around the world after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990-1991. Now I'm not willing to go, I don't know, to the South of France and make sure that people don't

kill each other there, I think that's something that belongs to the French, you know (XXX) I'm not saying, you know, for example, if the Basques stop their moratorium on violence, I don't think the Americans are going to be over there if anything happens. We're not the World Police. ((Big smile, laughter)) As for ruling the world! I don't know, what we call here in our culture Soft Power or Hard Power. Soft Power is when you have the choice of getting another point of view rather than Hard Power, when you can't get another point of view; that's because there's an American tank sitting in the middle of the street (XXX) and that's not the case. So, again, I don't think we want to become the World Police, and we are looking forward to Europe to consolidate and become a full partner so, you know, we won't have to deal with, you know, Bosnia, we'll just let the European people deal with Bosnia and we can deal with this part of the world. So, again, being the World Superpower is not fun and I hope you guys get your act together ((laughter))

Guillaume was genuinely surprised at this answer, having had no idea that such a point of view could exist. He commented succinctly in the post-videoconference questionnaire:

I learned that Americans no longer want to be the World Police.

However, in class, he also intimated to Andrée that he was slightly at a loss during the videoconference, as he was not only surprised at the opinion expressed but at the articulate and informed way Tariq put his point of view across. His negative expectations of the American group were thus partly modified by his contact with American students during the videoconference. A further insight into Guillaume's attitudes can also be gained on reading his reply to one of his keyboard buddy, Lucinda's, e-mails. Many of the French students are inhibited if they feel they have not produced an excellent contribution to the discussion and this reluctance to participate can be construed as arrogance, when it could in fact be timidity (see also Section 4.5.3).

Tue, 30 Nov 1999
Je vais être à la visioconfèrence mercredi. En classe, nous avons déjà plusieurs questions à vous demander et je pense que vous avez fait la même chose.
Well, we are also supposed to do so but yet I have no idea, maybe I'll ask about your description of the University campus. I haven't read it yet but I can't ask you questions like "so don't you think the French version, is better?" or "what part did you like /dislike?" I am trying to find more interesting questions, but I can't, I'm lacking of imagination, so you can also expect to be asked silly questions. [.....]
Guillaume

4.9.4 A series of monologues

Some students express a forceful argument but in a less polemical way and the partner student replies on the same level. This can be seen in Extract 17, Cultural Products? This interaction seems to be an example of what one French student termed "a series of monologues":

> I was a bit disappointed by the first part of the videoconference. I had expected that there would be more a dialogue than a series of monologues. The second part was in my opinion really better from that point of view. That's the only negative aspect I find. Otherwise it was globally entertaining and very interesting.
> (Etienne A., post videcoference questionnaire Spring 1999)

Other students had also expressed disappointment at the lack of spontaneous interaction during the videoconferences:

> It was funny and interesting since we could see each other and speak to each other. It's much less impersonal than e-mail. Nevertheless I was a bit disappointed at the beginning. I think questions and answers should have been more spontaneous and not really prepared and almost read (for some of us)
> (Karine, post-videoconference questionnaire, Spring 1999)

> I don't like people asking questions and others just answering them. I would prefer to have a subject and everybody to speak about it.
> (Anonymous French student, Autumn 1999)

> Jean-Yves said that he thought the conference too formal and question and answer. I know that it is impossible to have an organized discussion with two large groups of people with a three second delay in only one hour ...but if we knew each other well before the conference (via e-mail) it would (might) make us more at ease.
> (Joanne, post-videoconference questionnaire, Spring 1998)

> The prepared questions were necessary but sometimes it didn't give the opportunity to keep speaking about a certain topic that was interesting, or speak about any topic that was related that could have come up.
> (Mary, post-videoconference questionnaire, Autumn 1999)

In spite of this, as we have seen, the majority of the participants accepted the need for some kind of prepared questions. The questionnaire (Appendix IV) which I gave to the 1998 and 1999 groups after feedback from the previous students suggesting that more spontaneous interaction was necessary, was answered by 40 out of 49 of the American students and 28 out of 40 of the French students. Of these, only two French students and one

American found the prepared questions "unnecessary". Of the remaining 65 students, 57 students found the prepared questions either necessary and/or positive, 2 found them necessary but frustrating and 6 found them liberating. The same three students chose "unprepared discussion" for the organisation of the videoconferences, while the rest of the French students were equally divided between "prepared questions and more spontaneous turn-taking" (13 students) and "partly prepared questions and turn-taking and partly discussion" (13 students). For the American students, the choice was divided between "prepared questions and turn-taking" (9 students), "prepared questions and more spontaneous turn-taking" (11 students) and "partly prepared questions and turn-taking and partly discussion" (19 students). In each case, when we had a second videoconference we tried to integrate more spontaneous turn-taking and discussion, but as we see elsewhere, technical and linguistic difficulties do not always make this possible.

In the example we have chosen here, again from the December 1999 videoconference, it would seem at first sight that there is little interaction. However, on closer observation, we find that, first Mathieu is asked to reformulate his question in a genuine wish for comprehension. He responds well to this, although Barbara-Jean is still at a loss and is saved by Solange, who selects Annette to reply to the question. She replies at length in what could be perceived as a monologue. However, her answer clearly engages in a positive way with her peer's question. She first reformulates it as she understands it, tries to put both her own and the general point of view in the United States as she understands it, without being over-critical of Europeans, thus recontextualising his question from a different perspective. She apologises both to the French student for "not answering the question well for you" and to the American teacher for what she obviously considers an unsatisfactory performance. Although the discussion does not develop further, the French student has the satisfaction of being taken seriously by a native speaker peer. Clearly, even when questions are planned, students

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participating seriously in a videoconference can still be exposed to richer or at least more authentic interaction than in the classroom.

> **Sequence 5, 17, Cultural Products?**
> **Mathieu:** I wanted to know, as the World Trade Organisation Conference has just begun in Seattle, what do you think of the (sic) Europe's fight for cultural identity?
> **Barbara-Jean:** (smiles) Um, I'm not sure I understand exactly what you're talking about, I don't know if you could maybe clarify....
> **Mathieu:** Because the United States want to, they consider that cultural products like movies or TV programmes are just a product like a computer and Europe wants to protect their cultural industry and the United States want the Europeans to stop that, er they want to stop this.
> **Solange:** Annette's going to take this question.
> **Annette:** OK, erm, I 'm not quite sure that I know what you're saying. I think what you're trying to tell me is that Europe wants, erm, to treat products, cultural American products like movies and television, as something that's there to protect the culture; whereas America wants these products to be looked at as just that, just as a product, like a computer, so that they can be traded freely and that by doing it. (...) I think I'd have to agree, erm, I think most Americans really chafe at the idea of a ban on something that's cultural, something that's kind of an expression of our culture. It's like, like saying, well, you can't, you can't express your American culture, we're, we're not gonna let you do that. I think people, people really don't like that. Um, I'm sorry (looks at teacher) I don't think I'm answering the question very well for you but I don't, America doesn't see, I don't think we recognise a fight for identity by banning cultural products. I don't think they think that's a good idea, I think they see that as, you know insecurity, American products dominating your economy. You know they hear a phrase like 'American products are just gonna take over' and that's why you're trying to ban them.... (To teacher) Sorry, that wasn't very good.

This less polemical attitude is shown in the next two examples (5,18 Bans on French imports and 5,19 Weapons Legislation). Thomas is asked a question about the banning of French products in the USA after the French ban on importing American beef with hormones. He speaks in a light-hearted amusing tone, in order reduce the impact of his message, makes the audience laugh and then explains that trade barriers are bad for both countries. Similarly, Annette explains the differing views on gun legislation and the second amendment, where some people are adamant about keeping their guns while others would like to see them banned, before expressing her own personal view.

4.9.5 Students' choices

One of the problems involved when students create their own agenda is the risk of arguments becoming polarized, as in the example with "The World Police". If our aim is to

encourage empathy, perhaps discussions of topics where a large amount of dissension is likely should be avoided. However, as we saw in Chapter 1, the search for a third place involves a constant balancing of two points of view, through multiple layers of meaning. Kramsch (1993) points out that there are two kinds of potential dialogue in the language classroom, that of instructional discourse where forms are practiced and the status quo is maintained and that of an emotional and intellectual exchange which could question the status quo. Following Attinasi and Friederich, she stresses that this second form of dialogue is:

> [..] motivated by ambivalent feelings of both empathy and antipathy. Like all human relations, any dialogue is always potentially, headed toward harmony or order, or toward disorder or chaos. It draws its intensity from the delicate balance it maintains between the two. [..]The language classroom should therefore be viewed as the privileged site of cross-cultural field work in which the participants are informants and ethnographers.

> (Kramsch, 1993: 29)

This view is also expressed by Dunn and Lantolf (1998) in their discussion of Habermas' view of incommensurabilities. As they explain, for Habermas rationality is not found in the monologic speech of logical thought and syllogistic reasoning typical of scientific discourse, but in intersubjective, dialogic communication which aims at attaining mutual understanding in a cooperative way:

> In contesting and defending validity claims in communicative action, interlocutors come to reflect upon and potentially reinterpret, their own view of things.[..] hence, peaceful coexistence is not about ignoring, dismissing, or even tolerating perspectives that differ from our own either in the everyday world or the world of scientific cultures. It is about nothing less than active and intense *dialogic* engagement with these different discourses and world views.

> (Dunn and Lantolf, 1998: 42-43)

4.9.6 Le Front National

Several American students asked questions about the position of Le Front National in France (Sequence 5, 22). In the first extract, Jean-Yves explicates two aspects of the historical context, first explaining the French fear of losing their identity:

> Il faut savoir qu'en France, il y a une partie historique qui est très importante par rapport aux Etats-Unis je pense. Il y a un héritage. Depuis très très longtemps la France a eu besoin de lutter pour défendre son sol. Et donc il y a une peur ancrée dans la population; une peur de perdre son identité.

He then describes the tensions between the French and Arab populations, both as a result of colonisation and because of the French ban on the Islamic veil or scarf in state schools, which stems from the specifically French attitude to outward signs of religion in the "Ecole Laïque" (Starkey 2000; Starkey 2001).

> Ensuite, à propos de ce problème-là, on peut parler de .....je sais pas si vous êtes au courant, mais il y a eu un problème dans l'école française, à propos du tchador des femmes musulmanes, et en fait c'est très spécifique de l'école française, dont la caractéristique est d'être laïque, c'est-à-dire pas de religion à l'école. Donc ce serait plutôt cet aspect-là et non pas le racisme envers les populations arabes qui peut expliquer les tensions.

Finally, he explains the common view that voting for Le Front National can be seen as a protest vote, rather than a racist one:

> Et après, la question pour le Front National, il faut savoir que le vote pour le Front National, ce n'est pas uniquement un vote de racisme ou d'exclusion, mais il y a également une partie qui est explicable par le rejet des autres partis, et c'est un vote de refus de la politique en soi, ce n'est pas un vote d'adhésion. Voilà, je ne sais pas si j'ai répondu à la question....

On receiving the question, Jean-Yves was outraged at what he saw as criticism of his country. He also completely denied any possibility that the Front National contained any racist elements. He expressed this in a vehement way while the members of the class who were not of French origin remained silent. However, when he answered the question during the videoconference, he had worked through this and was able to give a detailed response, even when he had to repeat most of his answer due to technical problems. His second answer also included a personal note, where he condemned the racism of the Front National's policies.

> Bien qu'évidemment les idées du Front National soient tout à fait condamnables, et la majorité des Français les rejettent. Il faut savoir que ce n'est pas un vote dans un but de racisme et d'exclusion uniquement. C'est ce qui explique peut-être les gros scores du Front National. Voilà.

Andry, who was from Madagascar, also felt able to add a spontaneous comment about the fact that racism is unfortunately universal, something he had not done in class.

> **Andry:** Est-ce que je pourrais ajouter quelque chose ? Donc en fait, je dirais que je pense qu'il n'y a pas vraiment de problème particulier à la France vis à vis des Arabes. Je pense que c'est un problème qui existe à peu près dans tous les pays du monde, c'est-à-dire qu'il y aura toujours une partie de la population qui sera disons rejetée, c'est-à-dire que je crois savoir qu'il y a à peu près le même problème vis à vis des Arabes, enfin le problème qu'il y a vis à vis des Arabes en France, je crois que c'est à peu près le même vis à vis des Mexicains aux Etats-Unis, il y a le même problème vis à vis des Indiens en Angleterre, il y a le même problème des Indiens à Madagascar, donc je pense que dans tous les pays du monde il y a exactement ce genre de problème et il se trouve qu'en France, la population visée c'est particulièrement les Arabes. Je pense qu'on peut le voir comme ça.

As we also see in Section 4.9.11, Jean-Yves projects a very different image of himself during the videoconferences than that shown in class. This was an unexpected outcome of the research process: the observation that students who are given wider opportunities to interact can show facets of their personalities which are not always evident within the confines of the classroom.

A similar question is also answered by Grégory L. and Karine in the May 1998 videoconference (Sequences 20 and 21). Grégory is more frivolous about the subject, in joking about Greek immigrants and pointing at Alexis, a Greek student in the class, but he attempts to give both the point of view of the French people who are afraid for their jobs and the immigrant population often condemned to living in "Cités", a term which he explains. He also condemns the Front National as racist and suggests a solution for the problems of illegal immigrants: adopting quotas as they do in the United States.

> Bon, de plus on a les réactions bizarres des hommes politiques: normalement, en France, on a 0% d'immigration mais on remarque qu'il y a énormément d'immigrants illégaux qui rentrent en France et qui ne sont pas rejetés aux frontières, même quand on les découvre. C'est un peu une mauvaise solution parce que les immigrants illégaux sont, donc, assez privés de leurs droits dès qu'ils sont en France ; ils se font, par exemple, exploiter par des entreprises donc, en étant très peu payés, ou autrement se font renvoyer du jour au lendemain. Donc, peut-être ce qu'il faudrait, ça serait d'autoriser l'immigration mais mettre des quotas comme les Etats-Unis. Voilà.

Karine gives more details about the organisation of the actual political parties, explaining that the Front National gained more support during the last French elections but are now suffering from problems with their leadership. She also condemns their racist attitudes and attributes the fact that these ideas have spread to problems of unemployment and a dissatisfaction with other politicians.

> Donc, c'est-à-dire qu'un certain nombre d'idées se sont répandues au sein de la société française, notamment en ce qui concerne les étrangers, par rapport au problèmes du chômage. Donc le Front National, donc, développe l'idée que les étrangers sont la seule cause du chômage et si on renvoie les étrangers dans leur pays, tous les Français pourront retrouver un emploi, ou quasiment. Donc, en fait, il développe une solution plutôt de facilité mais qui ne semble pas efficace; mais ces solutions peuvent séduire les Français qui sont de plus en plus déçus par tous les hommes politiques.

Karine also explores another aspect of the Front National's policies, namely a refusal to trade with foreign companies. She analyses the argument from an economic point of view: the economy will collapse if foreign companies retaliate.

> Il développe également une thèse, donc, concernant les frontières, donc, il faudrait fermer les frontières de la France, c'est-à-dire que chacune des entreprises françaises achète uniquement dans le pays, de manière à (créer) faire fonctionner l'économie française, mais ça semble assez peu réaliste parce que les entreprises étrangères achètent également dans le pays et font vivre l'économie.

These extracts highlight several cultural differences between the two groups. To a certain extent, all three French students position themselves as objective providers of factual information about their culture. They give historical and political information and explore several of the issues involved in the problem of the "Front National". They have thus supplied a great deal of cultural information and shown that they are capable of adopting a critical stance towards their own culture. In so doing, they adopt a French academic style, which illustrates the ease with which students trained in the French "Grandes Ecoles" system can analyse and synthesise an argument (Section 4.2).

The use of the students' mother tongue has the advantage of allowing them to produce a more sophisticated and articulate answer than when speaking English. However, it has the

disadvantage of making the message even more difficult to follow for the partner group. Indeed, much of the French spoken in the videoconferences seems to be beyond the American students' Zone of Proximal Development. As we have seen, Solange deals with this by studying the recordings afterwards in class and many of the students report increased understanding during the second videoconference (Section 4.8.4.3).

These extracts also raise the question of whether the French students should try to adapt their style to accommodate the American students. This would clearly alleviate comprehension difficulties but the students would no longer be gaining access to authentic French academic speech. As Thiébaut (interview 1998) put it:

> We have learned to present our arguments in a particular way so that they are easy to follow. We try to use well-constructed sentences, formal language and general ideas about the subject. We could speak more slowly and with simpler language but it is difficult. Should we change our style to suit the American students or do they want to hear the authentic French style?

A further point is the political nature of the discussion, based on questions asked by the American students. Although the students seem at ease during the videoconferences, as we have seen, the way the subject is addressed can be unacceptable to some students. For many French people it is inappropriate to discuss politics in class, as Thiébaut (interview 1998) explains:

> Jean-Yves reacted badly to the question about the Front National but that's his personality, he can't bear to be criticized! I agree that it could be a vote because people are not satisfied with the other parties but in France talking about politics isn't really acceptable in school. It isn't a taboo subject here, but the teacher is still seen as someone who teaches right and wrong and could unfairly influence students. Our parents could be shocked, even if we are adults, because a teacher who talks about politics is probably an extremist.

4.9.7 Ridicule!

The difference in communication style is very clear in the following two extracts: "Ridicule!" and "It seems so evident!" In the first extract, Jean-Louis, does not spare the American student's feelings when he dismisses her nation's reaction to Clinton's extra-

marital affair with Monica Levinsky as "ridicule!" He says this with no animosity, however, reformulating his formal language "il a été demis de ses fonctions' as "il a été renvoyé" and even hesitates before adding the second "ridicule".

> **Kelly:** Aux Etat-Unis nous avons une tendance à évaluer le caractère des hommes publiques selon les actions de leur vie privée. Pour être un bon président, par exemple, il est important de montrer un bon caractère et des valeurs familiales - d'où le scandale du Président Clinton. Quelle est l'opinion publique en France concernant ce scandale?
> **Jean-Louis:** En fait, en France, on trouve ça un peu ridicule, qu'un président soit mis en accusation, soit gêné par quelque chose qui ne regarde que sa vie privée. On avait eu un président, il y a quelques années, qui avait eu des relations extra-conjugales - c'était François Mitterand. C'est pas pour ça qu'il a été démis de ses fonctions, qu'il a été renvoyé. Personnellement je pense que si tout le monde se comportait - avait les mêmes exigences concernant sa vie privée et celle des hommes politiques - il n'y aura pas de scandale. Donc, je trouve ça un peu ridicule, c'est tout. Fini!

Kelly apparently was not offended by his reply, as we can see in her answer to the questionnaire:

> The answer to my question showed that they are not unduly impressed by the attitudes to the Clinton scandal.
> (Kelly, questionnaire, May 1999)

In Sequence 5, 25, 'It seems so evident!' Flore transposes this French style into English. Again she means no offence when criticizing the treatment of women in the American remake *9 months* and she finds an ally in Patricia who, although she finds the film funny, agrees with Flore's statement:

> It's kinda difficult to explain, it seems so evident, er. ((laughter from the French class)) . No, I'm not … I'm just saying that sometimes it's just obvious, I mean, well [..] I suppose what shocked me most in True Lies was the way women are described. Well, they're just here to be like, you know, like a flower, it's pretty, it's a bit silly but that's all. Well if the Americans laugh at it and the French do too, that's fine, but I don't!
> (Flore Sequence 5, 24)

However, the group does see the potential for offence in Flore's insistence; they laugh at the second "it seems so evident" and Alexis tells her to calm down. This example illustrates the possibility of miscommunication when native norms are transposed onto

foreign speech. This is clearly possible even when the speaker is highly proficient as in

Flore's case, even if she does not qualify as a "fluent fool" (Bennett 1997). This extract also

shows the need for further exploration of areas of agreement or dissension, which go beyond

national, cultural boundaries.

4.9.8 La cuisine américaine

> Je ne mangerai jamais l'escargot ou les jambes d'une grenouille.
> (Sue, e-mail to Xavier 1999)
>
> We have many aspects of our lives in common but there are still those "little
> differences" as Vincent Vega, alias John Travolta says in <u>Pulp Fiction</u>. He explains
> his friend Samuel Lee Jackson that what amazed him were those "little
> differences". He explains about French people eating French fries with
> mayonnaise-, which is most of the time wrong, German people do. He also
> explains that it is possible to buy beer in McDonald's in Paris, which would be
> unbelievable in the USA where drinking beer in a public place is not allowed
> under 21 years old.
>> Another difference that we often forget about is illustrated that way:
> - "How do they call the quarter-pounder-with-cheese in France?" asks Travolta
>   to Jackson.
> - "They don't call it quarter-pounder-with-cheese?"
> - "They got the metric system! They call it Royale-with-cheese!"
> - "Royal Cheese" answers Jackson, giving the correct way of saying it, after a
>   mistake of Travolta.
> The last and emblematic subject is the Big Mac, that we call "le Big Mac'. A few
> days ago I read in McDonald's in Paris the equivalent of: "We are American, but
> we are made in France. "McDonald's have even become "MacDo pour les intimes",
> which show that even a worldwide product such asMcDonald's has to adapt to be
> appreciated in France.
> (Essay on cultural differences ENST Bretagne student 1999)

The final extracts in this long sequence centre around the discussion of American food.

In the first extract, Jack is clearly expecting a negative view by the amused way he asks his

question. When Andry answers, he gives his opinion frankly, while trying not to offend by

adding that he perhaps does not have enough experience to judge adequately: "enfin j'ai peut-

être une mauvaise vision de la cuisine américaine, hein?" He does generalize about American

food, however, saying that the food on offer is either from fast food restaurants, like

McDonald's which cannot really be counted as "cuisine" or at least not "<u>bonne</u> cuisine" or

Mexican food, hamburgers, steaks and sandwiches. This kind of food, he concludes is "pas

très évolué".

Sequence 5, 25. La Cuisine Américaine

Jack: Quelle est votre impression de la cuisine américaine? -comme il y a beaucoup de restaurants américains en France maintenant.

Andry: Alors, je vais vous répondre franchement, sans vouloir... Déjà les restaurants américains qu'on voit en France, ce sera principalement des restaurants du type "McDonald's", donc je sais pas si on peut vraiment considérer ça comme étant de la cuisine, dans la mesure où... Enfin déjà je sais pas si on peut considérer ça comme de la bonne cuisine, ou alors d'autre part, il y aura les restaurants plus distingués du genre " Hard Rock Café", et du même type, les "Tex Mex", en général... et là l'impression que j'aurais ce serait plutôt qu'il y a une dominante de cuisine mexicaine, c'est-à-dire que globalement, même ayant été aux Etats-Unis, la cuisine américaine pour moi, ça s'est restreint à des steacks, des frites... enfin j'ai peut-être une mauvaise vision de la cuisine américaine, hein ? ... ou des sandwichs, c'est-à-dire que quand on va dans un restaurant américain, ce sera "hamburger" ou "sanawich", "Chicken Club Sandwich"... c'est souvent ce qu'on trouvera en fait. Donc, c'est pas très évolué.

Jack was not surprised by this answer as his comment in the post-conference

questionnaire shows:

The answer to the question I asked during the videoconference was much like I had anticipated, French, in general, find American food rather dull.
(Jack, post-videoconference questionnaire, 1998)

In the second extract, from the April 1999 videoconference, Jean-Louis asks the

following question:

Are there any typical US dishes? Or do you eat fast food all the time?

Jean-Louis' question is put into perspective by several replies, which explain that

students do not have cooking facilities on the campus. Kelly also points out that many

Americans are very health conscious and that she is a vegetarian. The American answers lead

Jean-Louis to reconsider his views, which had been extreme, based on what he had seen on

television and in films. In fact his original question, which he had been encouraged to

modify, was:

Do Americans really eat rubbish all the time?

Stereotypes about food are shown on both sides of the Atlantic in the following extracts from the e-mail correspondence between Sue and Xavier, from the Autumn 1999 group. Sue admits to not liking French food, which she seems to equate uniquely with snails and frogs' legs, in spite of a visit to France. For Xavier, this opinion is unthinkable. In his first reply he is slightly more circumspect, suggesting that Sue has not tasted real French food which is possibly the case. However, in his second reply, he tells Sue outright that she is wrong, it is impossible to dislike French food, due to the variety available. He used to like hamburgers when he was younger but now finds them boring. This appears to mean to Xavier that this type of food is intrinsically boring, even though Sue has told him that she eats only hamburgers, chicken and chips. Xavier does not condemn all American food, he informs Sue that " in America you have some 'specialities'", but he refuses to allow Sue to have an opinion. On the other hand, Sue's reluctance to try new food may also imply a certain ethnocentricity.

> Wed, 03 Nov 1999
> Xavier,
> [...] Le norriture francais est ok mais je prefere la nourriture americain. J'aime les hamburgers et frites et je le mange toujours. Je ne mangerai jamais l'escargot ou les jambes d'une grenouille. Je deteste les poisson. Je mange les viandes de poulet et hamburger et c'est tout. J'aime plus McDonalds que un repas elegant.

> Thu, 11 Nov 1999
> Hi, how do you do?
> [...] Finally you don't seem to like french food, I am sure you have never really tried it because I am sure you would change opinion. French food is very tasty and great!

> Wed, 17 Nov 1999
> Subject: Re: salut!
> Xavier,
> [...] O.k., je n'aime pas la nourriture francais alors qu'est-ce que tu penses de la nourriture americain?

> Mon, 22 Nov 1999
> Subject: hi from France
> hi Sue,
> [...] About French food, I noticed that you didn't like French food but I think that you are wrong because there are so many different types of food that there is always one you like. Americain food is totally different, when I was 12, I used to like hamburgers ... but you get bored of that type of

food. In America you have some "specialities", when I went in Florida or in the Connecticut, restaurants served lobsters or T-bones it was great and I liked them, the T-bone seemed to me enormous compared to the one in France!

Xavier's amazement that anyone can have such a different attitude to his is similar to Grégory's reaction during the May 1998 videoconference, when he realizes that many of the American students have a rushed snack at lunchtime rather than a "proper meal."

Grégory: Do you watch TV when you have lunch?
American students: Yes.
Solange: Well you have to know what lunch is: lunch lasts about 10 minutes!
Grégory: (very surprised tone) So you don't have time to talk with others when you have lunch?
Julie: Well it depends on the time you have to eat. If you only have 30 minutes, then usually you don't have a conversation with somebody. You just eat your food and go back to work.

As we also see in Section 4.9.14, Grégory tended to assume that researchers like Carroll over exaggerated the differences between cultures and found it difficult to take an intercultural stance. As Wylie and Brière point out, attitudes to meal times are considered to be a highly important part of early socialisation in France:

D'une façon générale, tout ce qui se rapporte à la bouche (alimentation, parole) est vu comme important dans l'éducation des enfants en France. Très tôt- dès que l'enfant peut être assis avec une assiette devant lui – les parents cherchent à lui inculquer le sens de limites à respecter, l'idée que manger s'ordonne selon des règles qui restreignent sa liberté mais qui l'intègrent à la société : on ne mange pas ce qu'on veut mais ce qui est dans l'assiette; seuls les gens qui font la cuisine ont accès au réfrigérateur; on ne commence à manger ni avant, ni après les autres ; on mange chaque plat l'un après l'autre suivant un ordre précis, toujours le même (hors-d'œuvre, viande ou poisson, légumes, salade, fromage, dessert; on doit manger en quantité modérée de mets formant un repas equilibré; on ne mange jamais entre les repas ; on ne mange jamais ailleurs qu'à table [..]

(Wylie and Brière, 1995: 85)

Although these habits are changing in some families, the importance of meals as a social occasion where the whole family communicates is clearly deeply ingrained in some students' view of the world and they find it difficult to see that a different social organisation is possible.

A more general discussion of a similar topic is carried out between Barbara-Jean and

Jérémy from the same group. Jérémy is also very proud of the variety of French food

products, explaining that this stems from the fact that France has a longer history than that of

the United States. This attitude to time is identified as one of those acquired through

secondary socialisation in French schools by Wylie and Brière:

> Aux yeux des Français, une implication importante du concept de "civilisation" c'est que celle-ci demande du temps. La civilisation leur apparaît comme le produit d'une lente maturation sur de nombreux siècles: il n'y a pas de raccourci, de *fast track* pour l'atteindre. […] On ne peut pas construire une civilisation rapidement, pas plus que la mer ne peut polir les galets d'une plage rapidement. Le temps seul donne la maturité, la perfection.

(Wylie and Brière, 1995: 45)

Barbara-Jean partially agrees with Jérémy, but also adds a different perspective to the

discussion, namely that there is a variety of dishes brought to the United States by the diverse

ethnic groups who have emigrated there. For Jérémy this is not American cooking, but

remains the property of those groups, who are not "really" American.

> **Jérémy**: It is said that in France their is a wine for each "canton" (about 5 villages) and a cheese for each village. It is a bit exagerated, but it is not entirely false (I know a place where each village has it's wine, and all of them are very famous wines) Not only is their a lot of regionall products, but their are loads of them
> **Barbara-Jean**: Hmmm-- nous n'avons rien comme ça aux États-Unis. Il y a des cuisines régionales, mais ceux sont pour les grands régions (New England, West Coast, etc.)
> **Jérémy**: Yes but an american state, is as large as France...I don't think America could have as many different products as France, since America was created a very short time ago. (compared to europeans countries)
> **Barbara-Jean**: Oui, mais en même temps, les États-Unis est un pays peuplé par les immigrés, donc nous avons beaucoup de la tradition et la cuisine ethnique. Par exemple, la famille de ma mère est italienne (mes arrières-grands-parents sont venus de l'Italie) et nous mangeons toujours la cuisine italienne chez ma grand-mère et souvent chez nous. Peut-être la cuisine ici n'est pas déterminé par région mais par origine de famille.
> **Jérémy**: Maybe, but this isn't American, cooking... its Italian/Irish/English/ etc cooking...
> **Barbara-Jean**: C'est vrai. Nous n'avons pas beaucoup de cuisine qui est vraiment américaine, sauf peut-être des hot dogs, mais je ne les considère pas comme cuisine!

Here the two students have moved away from the stereotypes of good French cooking

versus bad American cooking to explore historical and geographical reasons for the

differences in the two countries' food. They show admiration for each other's opinions and are non-confrontational. Barbara-Jean can take a critical attitude towards her own culture without losing face. This kind of discussion was also observed during the correspondence between Leila and Frédéric, when they both decided that contact with a peer from the target culture had started to rid them of certain stereotypes, some of them to do with food, as we saw in Section 4.8.4.8:

> Wed. 5 Feb 1997
> [...] Je suis ravi de voir que tous les Americains ne justifient pas le stereotype que nous en faisons parfois en France: regarder la television 24 heures sur 24, en mangeant du pop-corn et des hambugers, avec un petit Coca pour faire passer tout ca. Don't be upset: I'm sure there are as many such people in France as in the USA. This idea only comes from the fact that 'you' sent us McDonald.
> (Frédéric, e-mail 11).

> Fri. 7 Feb 1997
> Salut Frédéric
> I am so pleased to be part of this project if nothing more than the stereotype of Americans was disproven in at least one French mind ☺ I tend not to believe in stereotypes myself.[...] Most Americans think that the French are rude and snobby. They eat bread all the time and drink wine at very meal. It's silly to think such things because every person is unique.
> (Leila, e-mail 12)

4.9.9 False understandings

The positive feelings towards the foreign peer group experienced on both sides of the Atlantic, where each side as seen as an "expert" on their own culture, can lead on many occasions to a kind of false understanding. For instance, in the April 1997 conference (Sequence 6, 27, Les Femmes de Ménage) when Katie said she understood why French people didn't show people round their homes as she had recently done so and had then been burgled by the "guest". Instead of explaining that the reason was rather that casual friendships are far rarer in French society, Frédéric agrees and explains in great detail how most French people are afraid to employ a cleaner because they are worried about having their things stolen, much to the amusement of the rest of his French peers.

In Sequence 6, 28 'Le role de la critique dans les deux pays', Alexis replies that criticism is important in both cultures, but shows by his answer that he actually espouses the "French view", as expressed by Carroll (1987), where she explains that public criticism is seen as an acceptable part of both primary and secondary socialisation in France, whereas in the United States:

> tout comme le parent, le prof ne se permettra pas de critiquer en public le travail d'un(e) étudiant(e), mais lui donnera les moyens de trouver en lui (elle) et de développer ce en quoi il (elle) excellera. Un prof qui fera en classe des commentaires cassants, méprisants ou même moqueurs sur chaque devoir qu'il rend, comme c'est possible dans le système français, serait jugé malade, détraqué et en tout cas inhabile à enseigner.
>
> (Carroll, 1987: 89)

Francesca, who, unlike Alexis has read the chapter, is slightly disappointed by his answer, as she mentions in the post videoconference questionnaire:

> I learned that the French also feel hurt if their professor critiques their work. (I didn't get the answer I expected but I should have phrased it differently and asked why, not: Do you agree?)
> (Francesca questionnaire 1999)

Alexis' reply points to a need for serious preparation for the videoconferences, something which Isabelle realises when she cannot back up her statement about intercultural marriages (Sequence 6, 29):

> [..] et pour les mariages interculturels .. euh, je sais pas du tout si on en a beaucoup par rapport à votre pays. Je sais pas également à quel point est-ce qu'on peut dire qu'il y'en a beaucoup. On tout cas il y'en a pas mal!

Although she later said that the group's laughter had made her feel better, Isabelle admitted that she wished she had prepared her answer:

> Pas quelquechose de super-construit mais quand même de plus réflechi!
> (Isabelle, A, interview June 1997)

In Sequence 6, 30 Frédéric once again shows his wish to please his American partner by stating that Americans and French people share exactly the same sense of humour where:

> [...] de mon point de vue en tout cas, je trouve pas qu'il y ait beaucoup de différences, dans les films, que j'ai vus, entre l'humour français et l'humour américain, parce que, pratiquement, je pense à chaque fois dans les films où il y'avait un instant ou un moment qui était drôle, nous sommes à chaque fois réceptifs à cet (XXX) à cet instant-là, et nous rions de bon cœur, donc je pense qu'on rit aux mêmes endroits, quoi.

Leila had initially come to the same conclusion, as we see in the following extracts from her e-mails, but, as she gained a more *ethno-linguistically relative* perspective she recognised that, although she and Frédéric did seem to share the same sense of humour, there were some fundamental differences between the two cultures, at least in mainstream humour.

> Tue 28 Jan 1997
> Dear Frederic,
> I'll write in English this once more time because I don't have much time. Your humor is perfect. I really don't think there is much difference between our cultures in things like that.
> (Leila, e-mail 4)

> Tues 25 Feb 1997
> Cher Frederic
> [...] Dans ma classe de francaise nous regardons "Trois Hommes et un Couffin" et "Three Men and a Baby". J'aime le film francais. Different senses of humor between the two cultures oftentimes. C'est tres interessant!
> (Leila, e-mail 17)

This example shows the importance of both class discussion and peer to peer exchange in helping the students find their "third place". Several of the students indeed reflected on differences in the humour shown in certain French films and their remakes. For instance, two of the students in Leila's class analysed the differences in the treatment of the character of the doctor in the films Neuf Mois/Nine Months, where the black doctor, played by Pascal Légitimus, has become a Russian doctor, played by Robin Williams. The first student does not go beyond a description of the doctor in the French film, whereas the second looks at the differences in racial attitudes behind the changes. However, if this reflection had been accompanied by a discussion with their keyboard pal or during the videoconferences, the

French students could have also explained that Légitimus is a well-known French comic actor. For many French viewers, the character is simply ridiculous and does not represent a minority group. This point of view is expressed in the third extract, taken from an essay written by one of the French students in the Autumn 1999 group.[48]

> Il est important de comprendre pourquoi la scène est amusante pour les français et pourquoi le directeur américain ne l'a pas traduit exactement de français en anglais. A mon avis, le clé [sic] pour cette scène est le docteur et la construction du personnage.
>
> Dans le film français, le docteur est un homme noir ridicule. Presque toutes les choses qu'il fait, dit et porte montrent qu'il est ni expérimenté, ni normal. Il est d'un pays d'Afrique, qui est, probablement, francophone et peu développé, et le docteur lui-même est assez excentrique. Il demande à Samuel comment il va, il n'utilise pas de technologie et il fait une grande erreur quand il donne la date de conception pour les singes au lieu des femmes. Il essaye d'être professionnel, mais il fait des erreurs continuellement. Il y a de comédie "slapstick", ou physique quelquefois où le docteur a fait lui-même l'idiot. Le docteur aime les autres cultures et il adopte des vêtements et des phrases américains ou espagnols. Particulièrement, les bottes de cow-boy sont amusantes car elles sont peu approprié [sic] pour un docteur, et cela montre une admiration pour la culture et la mode américaine. Il sait à peine maîtriser ses émotions et actions. Bien sûr, toutes ces choses bizarres font que le docteur ne paraît pas fiable, voilà une raison pour laquelle il est amusant [.....]
> (Essay 20, Lily, 1997)

> Une grande différence entre le film américain et le film français est que le docteur du film américain est russe et le docteur du film français est africain. La société américaine et la société française regardent les deux cultures différemment. Aux-Etats-Unis, les stéréotypes des Ruses se sont formés pendant les guerres mondiales et la guerre froide. Alors, les américains se moquent des russes, et c'est acceptable. Les russes ne sont pas les amis, et c'est acceptable. Les russes ne sont pas les amis des américains. Dans le film, le docteur a dit qu'en Russie, il avait travaillé seulement avec des singes et des rats. Cette phrase se moque de l'économie russe.
>
> La relation entre les Américains blancs et les Américains africains a été très influencé par l'esclavage. L'esclavage est honteux pour la culture américaine. Aux Etats-Unis, encore il y une hostilité entre les blancs et les noirs. Un example [sic] est l'assaut de Rodney King par les policiers de Los Angeles en 1994 et les émeutes suivants[sic]. La société cherche un compromis dans la lutte contre le racisme, pour vivre en paix, mais il y a beaucoup de difficultés. Alors quand les blancs se moquent des noirs, ce n'est pas acceptable
> (Essay 21, Karma, 1997, Appendix XXIV)

> [...] The attitude to black people can also be noticed. In the French film, the gynaecologist is black but it doesn't disturb the French audience. He is funny but we don't laugh at him because he is black. In the American film, the

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[48] This view is debatable. Légitimus was born in France, of a Guadaloupean father and an Armenian mother, but he does report having been a victim of racial discrimination: "J'ai passé les vingt premières années de ma vie à prouver que j'étais normal, foncé mais français, ce qui est anormal." Interview on his film "Antilles sur Seine" (2000).

gynaecologist is a Russian. This shows the caution that the Americans have with their attitude to black people, and also that they prefer laughing at Russian people. (Extract from essay, Julie, 1999)

We can assume that a part of the modifications have been made so as not to shock the American audience and some have been introduced because the watchers don't expect the same from a film in the United States and in France. For instance, the scene of the first visit to the gynaecologist was modified in order not to offend the black community, whereas the scene of the rush in the car has been added because American people like such a type of comic attitude. (Extract from essay, male French student, 1999)

The phenomenon of overgeneralisation, observed in the Leila/Frédéric exchange above, appears on the other side in the April 1999 videoconference. This takes place during a discussion on the relative disrespect for authority generally shown in French society. (Sequence Six, 32) For the French side, the point was made all the more forcibly for being expressed by an extremely serious, quiet student but the American student answering him, apparently a rather wild young woman, felt it necessary to give anecdotal evidence of the many misdemeanours committed by herself and her friends, and concluded that both societies were exactly the same. This can also be observed in Patricia's answer to Karine's question on punctuality, where Patricia misinterprets Karine's question to mean going to an informal party, whereas Karine clearly means a more formal situation.[49] This type of overgeneralisation stemming from the notion of a global youth culture was also observed in other discussions during the videoconferences (Section 4.9.14) and in some of the questionnaires and e-mail messages, which are discussed in Sections 4.8.1.1 and 4.8. 4.2.

4.9.10 A quite too usual question

This wish to please and endorse each other's opinions can create misunderstandings, which promote learning. For example in Sequence Seven, 33, "A quite too usual question", from the May 1998 conference, one French student who had not prepared his questions asked

a question selected by the teachers which he deemed unworthy. He tries, successfully, to create a feeling of solidarity in the partner group, by dissociating himself from the teacher's question:

> **Grégory:** So first, I'd like to apologize because the question I'm going to ask you is, well according to me, quite too usual, (looks at teacher) so well, I'm also convinced that you're probably fed up with being asked this question. What's the importance of TV in your everyday life?

Interpreting this as modesty on his behalf Jane, replies, reassuring him about "his" question:

> **Jane:** I think your question is great; I'm not offended at all. I think it's a very, very intelligent question.

This lead to long turns by three other American students and their teacher and Grégory.The French student first positions himself as someone who does not watch television. His answer to Molly's question 'Do you watch television? ' is repeated with amazement. He does have a televison in his room, it seems, but only uses it for videogames. Gradually Grégory admits to also liking several sitcoms but again shows amazement that people could eat their lunch quickly and not talk to their friends, as we saw in Section 4.9.8.

> **Grégory:** Do I watch a lot of television?
> **Molly:** Yeah.
> **Grégory:** You know, I live in a very small apartment very small... I mean only 12 square meters. I've got a very small television but I only use it to play some video games. Well I play video games very scarcely. I mean I don't watch TV very often, definitely not. What I prefer is probably films. It's true that I do feel that news and soap operas are definitely boring. That's my opinion.

After the videoconference, Grégory later reflected on the sociological significance of television and agreed that the question was not as "quite too usual" as all that

A long discussion this time involving the whole group also develops around the subject of television in the 1997 videoconference. This time the misunderstanding is based on the

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[49] The sound in these extracts is very poor, due to technical problems on the American side. During the conference we could understand the gist of most of the answers but it is impossible to reproduce the script from the recordings.

fact that the French students believe that the Americans have seen the French sitcom 'Hélène et les Garçons', a low budget programme aimed at an audience of pre-adolescents, which had briefly been shown on American television. The Americans had only seen one extract in class and were under the mistaken impression that the French students liked the programme. They are careful not to offend but gradually the group realizes that they all agree and a friendly exchange ensues.

4.9.11 C'est la langue!

As we have already seen, much of the linguistic exchange in French was beyond the ZPD of the majority of the American students. In spite of the valid criticism of the prepared questions as presented in Section 4.9.4, they did allow the students to take the floor in French. However, unfortunately they could rarely understand the answers immediately, although, as we saw in Section 4.8.4.3, their comprehension tended to improve after the first videoconference.

In Sequence 8, we see some examples of students trying to negotiate meaning with their keyboard pals. We have already seen Leila's reaction to the first exchange in Section 4.8.4.4. Frédéric tries to attempt learner to learner scaffolding but the exchange is clearly beyond Leila's ZPD and she can only reply:

"C'est la langue!"

Leila: Mon correspondant, Frédéric, s'excuse souvent de ses plaisanteries. Quand je les comprends, je les trouve amusantes, mais souvent je ne comprends pas. Est-ce que vous trouvez une différence entre le sens de l'humour français et américain, par example dans les films ou les livres?
Frédéric: ((smiles and waves)) A propos des plaisanteries que tu ((others laugh)) que tu ne comprends pas, j'aimerais que tu précises en fait euh. Quels types de plaisanteries tu ne comprends pas?
Leila: Ooh uh la langue?
Frédéric: C'est à cause du français?
Leila: Oui.
Frédéric: Ou est-ce que c'est à cause du sens. ... (no response) Est-ce que c'est parce que: parce que j'utilise mal le- la langue anglaise? ou est-ce que c'est parce que euh ce que je dis n'est pas drôle aux Etats-Unis?
((laughter))
S: Maintenant tu t'appliques.

S: Non, tu n'es pas drôle.
Leila: C'est la langue.
((laughter))
Frédéric: Alors y a pas de malentendu? non? ((no response from Leila)) c'est pas grave.

However, as we have seen, she studies the video recordings until she does understand.

Leila seems to be motivated both by the relationship she had built up with Frédéric and her

own realisation that her French is poor to learn from an experience which could have proved

devastating. She is also helped by Solange's support, as we see in the following quote:

> Tue April 29 1997
> Today, in my French class, we watched part of the teleconference.... My professor
> commented on the fact that the only person in our class that may have gotten
> some on-hand experience from the conference was me because you asked me
> something in-return to my question. I mentioned how horrible it was at first
> because I didn't understand you, and she said you did a wonderful job because
> you clarified yourself until I did understand you and was able to reply. I agree,
> that's because you are a nice guy and an even better friend.
> (Leila e-mail 33)

Leila shows a growing awareness of the differences between colloquial spoken French

and the more formal spoken French used in the American language classroom, which as

Solange suggests, is based on "a sanitized version of the written standard "(Section 4.8.4.4)

> Wed 30 Apr 1997
> Cher Frédéric,
> [...] Also, you are quite perceptive. My spoken and understood French is very
> lacking. When I'm being spoken to in French (especially by a native) it's very hard
> to understand because they usually speak too fast and don't pronunciate (sic).
> They also use some slang, which we don't use in French class. I am so grateful that
> you understood my position and took the time to speak slowly until I understood
> you. The thing that helped me the most was that you said the world "drole" and
> then I figured out what you were saying. But then I felt terrible because I thought
> that you believed that I didn't think you were funny. I was trying to say it was a
> language barrier (but I usually understand you anyways) but all I could say was
> "C'est la langue!"
> (Leila, e-mail 35)

In Sequence 8, 37, Jean-Yves also asks for clarification from his keyboard pal, with

slightly more immediate success:

> **Joanne:** Quand vous avez quelqu'un chez vous, dans quelles pièces êtes-vous le
> plus à l'aise ? Avec un ami ? un voisin ? un facteur ? et pourquoi ?

Jean-Yves: Donc, on en a un peu discuté et on en a conclu qu'en France, la différence entre un ami et un voisin, c'est que le voisin on le laisse juste dans le salon (in the lounge) alors que l'ami, on se permet de le faire rentrer dans toutes les pièces, dans les chambres, la cuisine... et on a pas de problème. Et le facteur, ça nous a un peu surpris comme question, parce qu'en France, les facteurs, souvent ils restent dehors. Sauf si c'est dans les petits villages comme ça où on connaît bien le facteur, à ce moment-là, on peut lui offrir un verre mais bon, en général le facteur ça rentre pas dans la maison. On a été intrigué par cette question, pourquoi le facteur d'ailleurs ?
Joanne: Pourquoi le facteur ?... Je sais pas, je sais pas.
Solange: Parce qu'il rentre chez vous ?
Joanne: Non, non ; c'était pour plaisanter
Jean-Yves: OK, on avait bien compris comme ça alors. Si, si c'était très drôle. Voilà, je sais pas si j'ai répondu à la question
Joanne: Oui, oui
Jean-Yves: OK, voilà

In both this extract and the one quoted in Section 4.9.6, Jean-Yves successfully explains his point of view to his American partner and shows a very positive attitude. This is in contrast to his attitude in the classroom, which was often abrasive and antagonistic, both towards his peers and the teachers. In certain situations, Jean-Yves remained somewhat ethnocentric, as I point out in Section 4.9.13. Nevertheless, I modified my view of him on observing the tapes of the videoconferences, particularly when doing so with outsiders from the class. This highlights another unexpected outcome of the research project; by acting as a reflective practitioner and taking a critical distance from our practice, we could attempt to improve our relationship with the small minority of students both Andrée and I found uncooperative.

The final extract in this sequence centres on a misunderstanding arising from a mistake in the written question. Nadia asks her partner for clarification but it is clearly too difficult for her. Others in the French class try to help her, until Elizabeth intervenes to explain:

Nadia: xxx un petit peu sur euh bon j'ai pas tellement bien compris, de- à propos du Grand Meaulnes parce que le le le Grand Meaulnes c'est pas un professeur, euh dans le dans le livre? Alors est-ce que c'est peut-être un maître à penser? que tous les autres respectent euh je pense que: enfin dans un groupe d'enfants ya- y en a toujours quelques-uns qui ont un peu plus de: de prise sur les autres, que les autres ont tendance à admirer, peut-être mais:: Oui. dans ce cas là je dirais oui, mais: je sais pas est-ce que c'était ça la question? ((no response))
Nadia: Oui, mais dans le Grand Meaulnes le Grand Meaulnes c'est un élève, c'est pas un maître.
Bruno: Oui, mais c'est un maître... c'est un peu le grand frère.

> **Nadia:** Mais- d'abord un maître comme le Grand Meaulnes ya marqué.
> **Elizabeth:** Comme <u>dans</u> le Grand Meaulnes.
> **Nadia:** Ah, comme <u>dans</u> le Grand Meaulnes. ah j'ai compris! ((points and smiles at the camera)) d'accord. Alors euh:m, oui y a eu pendant longtemps je pense des maîtres qui avaient vraiment beaucoup d'autorité sur leurs élèves, je pense que ce temps-là est un peu révolu parce que comme disait Guillaume, maintenant on ((xxx)) un peu plus vers une éducation, on laisse plus de part à l'initiative des enfants eux-mêmes, euh essayer de développer leur imagination et cetera, euh avec donc une éducation moins stricte que ce qu'il y avait avant. Voilà. C'est un livre qui est quand même assez vieux, de ce point de vue-là.

Once Nadia has understood, she gives a contemporary view of the book which can add to the American student's understanding of the subject. However, it has taken rather a long time to achieve this result. The biggest problem here is that the teacher tries to stand back but eventually needs to clarify the question as it is difficult for the American student to do so in French. Although Nadia, helped by Bruno, tries her best to understand the question and takes it seriously, she is thinking out loud in her attempt to find a suitable answer and this makes her very difficult to follow. It would have appeared less natural if she had planned at least part of her answer in advance, but it would perhaps have made her French more accessible to the American students, a point which Etienne A. from the Spring/Summer 1999 group made in Section 4.8.4.3.

4.9.12 Negotiation from misunderstanding -scaffolding

Study of the recordings show many instances of both groups of students trying to make sense and helping others to make sense of cultural phenomena embedded in the use of language, as well as providing lexical assistance. Scaffolded performances can also be observed as students take on the "significant and serious epistemic roles" which Nystrand, Breen and many others find lacking in the responsive roles of the traditional classroom (Chapter 1). Problems with the new mediational means during sound loss were cleverly turned into lexical scaffolding by one American student, Karma, who was trying to explain how Mélanie Pilou, a naughty little girl in a French children's book lost her voice as a

punishment. This coincided with sound loss on the video so Karma yells and worries about losing her voice, just like the little girl. Although one of the teachers repeats "she loses her voice" the student does not understand until Karma finds a synonym and also signs "mute" whereupon the French student reformulates, showing his comprehension and is congratulated warmly by Karma: "You're really smart!" This "You're really smart" is also echoed by Steve when Karma answers his question, one of many examples of intertextual references observed in the videoconferences.

> **Isabelle**: I also sent you a review of 'Les Malheurs de Sophie' Sophie is a little girl who's got all the defaults (sic) a child can have and her mother gives her, well some hard punishment. I didn't read Mélanie Pilou, who's a girl who received kein er (('kein!' from one of the French students)), er, no punishments. So how does this compare, how does Les Malheurs de Sophie compare with Mélanie Pilou?
> **Karma**: I read Mélanie Pilou and she gets, she, her Mother said she always interferes with everything, that everybody does. You know she always wants to know what everybody's doing. She takes the biggest piece of cake and that kind of thing! ((laughter))
> But in the end she just starts screaming because she's upset, she's like Wah! and she goes mute. So she punishes herself.
> **One of the French students**: Ah, d'accord, j'avais pas compris Oh O.K I hadn't understood.
> **Karma**: And then she becomes a good girl, I don't know why.
> One of the French students: We didn't hear you.
> **Elizabeth**: We really can't hear you! We can hear half of what you are saying but not the other half.
> **Karma**: Oh, I'm sorry. In the end of the book she yells very loudly, like I'm doing now and she loses her voice, which I hope I don't.
> **Elizabeth**: ((to French class)). She loses her voice.
> **Karma**: She goes mute. (with gesture)
> **One of the French students**: Ah! OK, she can't speak any more.
> **Karma**: You're really smart! ((Laughter and applause))

4.9.13 Misunderstanding leading to consensus- agreeing to disagree

Agreeing to disagree (Sequence 9, Extract 40) shows an example of misunderstanding leading to consensus or what Zarate (2001: 39) describes as the acceptance of a non-negotiable conflict. Here negotiation of meaning in a broad sense takes place, where students are negotiating contexts of shared understanding or intersubjectivity (Rommetveit 1974; Habermas 1984; Lantolf 2000).

It is followed by what could be termed resistance followed by revelation. This extract is taken from the second conference for the class of 1998, where only a small group was present, and centres round prepared questions based on observation of cultural differences in French films and their American remakes, in this case 'Trois Hommes et un Couffin'(Serreau 1985) and 'Three men and a Baby' (Nimoy 1987). The students are discussing a scene early in the films, where two of the three men are attempting to put a disposable napkin on baby Marie/Mary (Appendix X). They first explore differences in communication styles when talking to friends, first with reference to the films. The discussion begins with a slight misunderstanding by the French students, who do not pick up the fact that Joanne is saying that she now understands the situation in the French film, after an explanation by Solange about why the French friends are speaking to each other in such a seemingly hostile way. They react only to the second part of Joanne's comments, adding more reasons for the angry impression given by the French friends in the film – it is quite normal to shout at your friends.

It appears that Nivedita and Andry are experts on interpreting and contextualizing the French scene but in their wish to explain them to the American student, do not really engage with the point she is making. Joanne perseveres, however and gradually a consensus is reached: "OK, OK, all right." – "I agree, I agree."

> **Andrée**: The second part, Andry /Elizabeth Second part
> **Andry**: What do you think about the way Pierre speaks to Michel during the nappy changing scene ?
> **Elizabeth**: Diaper.
> **US student**: Thank-you
> **Joanne**: Solange kind of explained that scene for us, because she was telling us the reason that they talk to each other that way is because they have a certain level of friendship and they're allowed to talk to each other that way. But it did have to be explained to us, because, you know, you just, I don't know, we didn't understand the relationship between the conversation they have and the expression of their friendship, the level of their friendship.
> **Andry**: They're friends, and it's a situation where they're really nervous. It's something they hadn't done before, so they're really nervous, and it's normal that when you're nervous, you ..... He's not angry at his friend, but he's just nervous, so he expresses his nervousness, [his nervousness, right] his nervousness that way. I think, but I mean ....

Joanne: Right. When Americans first watch it, it looks like a very angry scene. And that's why I said it had to be explained to us by Solange, cause it looks sort of angry, and like they're really yelling at each other and so on...

Andry: But they're not really angry I mean, they're angry but I mean 10 minutes later they won't be angry anymore. It's [Right] just for the moment.

Joanne: (to American teacher) It's the same in the English version , isn't it ?
(to Andry) It's the same in the English version I think

Nivedita: No... I don't think it is the same. You can't really say that they are angry, because it's perhaps a French way of reacting. As Andry has said, it's just because they have never done it before. And they don't know how to react, so a way of expelling their nervousness is just to yell at each other. It was not the same in the English version. They were much more calm and all that. So...... that was...

Joanne: Well, they appear to be more, they appear to be more calm, but in one scene, erm, I think--- what's his name? [Michael] The one with the curly hair... Michael says "God damn", "God damn it Peter! ", that's getting mad! I wasn't saying that they were angry in the French version, I was saying that when you first watch it as an American, it appears to be an angry scene. [Aha] That's why it had to be explained to us by Solange. [OK, OK, all right]

Nivedita: .....but it's not the same level in fact. In the French version and in the American version, it's not the ... I think the feeling is perhaps all the same but the way the characters express it is different from ....

Joanne: Oh I agree, I agree. / Nivedita: All right.

What is acceptable or unacceptable to them personally is then discussed by several

students, notably by Jean-Yves[50], who had had limited involvement with the course and his

keyboard pal and seems possibly to be one of the people who are:

> unskilled at submitting to themselves to the reflective or challenging scrutiny that leads to revision of character and positionings.

(Harré and Gillett 1994: 127)

He explains his own position quite clearly, dismissing Andrée's attempts to help him

with vocabulary, but seems incredulous that others can treat their friends differently. His way

is 'easier, much easier'. When Joanne suggests that friends should agree to disagree and just

drop the subject, he clearly cannot. Here, rightly or wrongly, Elizabeth speeds up the process

by joking and he gets the point, taking it in good part and even playfully hitting her while he

'agrees'. Although this exposure to discursive diversity and competing meanings will

probably not stop Jean-Yves from shouting at his friends and indeed why should it, it could

---

[50] I somewhat modified my attitude to Jean-Yves after studying the recordings of the videoconferences, as I described in Section 4.9.11.

perhaps help him to see that other voices exist and other stories are possible. As Harré and

Gillet put it:

> If individuals are affirmed and exposed in non-threatening ways to the alternatives presented by different constructions, then one would expect them to develop and be comfortable with the skills of discourse.

(Harré and Gillet, 1994:127)

> **Jack**: Is it acceptable to yell at, at a friend in your country?
> ((laughter))
> **Nivedita**: I think so yes.
> **Jean-Yves**: I mean, sometimes between friends, you have to explain your problems, and if you don't agree you, you no ... That doesn't mean that you don't like the person, just that you have some different, strong different points of view.
> **Andry**: You never shout at your friends?
> **Jack**: No, not really, it's pretty unacceptable.
> **Jane**: Unless it's something horrible.
> **Joanne**: My sister however --- I do yell at my sister a lot!
> **Jean-Yves**: It must be difficult to, I mean, pass over a quarrel, a problem between two friends if you can't... when you're used to that point of view you can just forget that you had the discussion, and argument. That's easier, that's much easier.
> **Joanne**: I think that that depends on the level of your friendship, first of all. And second of all, once you get to a certain point in a discussion, and you know that you're not going to agree, you just agree to disagree, [Yeah, of course] and just drop it./ **Jean-Yves**: That's it, yeah, but the difference is .....
> **Elizabeth**: Not Jean-Yves
> ((laughter))
> **Jean-Yves**: ((hits teacher)) --- I agree OK!

4.9.14 Ami, copain, camarade

Differences in views of friendship appear in much of the literature on cross-cultural

differences (Carroll, 1987; Hall and Hall 1990, Stewart and Bennett 1995) and the subject

interested all the different groups. The fact that several different levels of friendship are

encoded in the French terms *copain*, *camarade* and *ami* lead to much fruitful discussion

(Sequence 41, 42, 43) about to what extent language reflects reality. In the first extract, from

the May 1998 videoconference, Grégory gives a detailed explanation of the three levels,

covering the differing degrees of intimacy expected at each level, with *ami* being more

intimate, *copain* more casual and *camarade* associated with a specific activity. He does not

recognise, however, that this may be different in the United States, assuming that this

distinction is universal: " Bon, en France, ça doit être comme chez vous, le niveau le plus

profond, disons, c'est celui d'ami ". As we saw in Section 4.9.10, although Grégory communicated easily with the partner group and was an extremely pleasant member of the group, he interpreted the course as informal socialising with a similar peer group, and was not interested in further investigating cultural differences and similarities.

SEQUENCE 10 Friendship, ami, copain, camarade

41, Ça doit être comme chez vous

Lucy: Pouvez-vous nous expliquer la différence entre un "ami", un "copain" et un "camarade"?
Grégory: Bon, alors en fait, tu as raison; il y a effectivement trois niveaux d'amitié. Le niveau de camarade, le niveau de copain et le niveau d'ami. Bon, en France, ça doit être comme chez vous, le niveau le plus profond, disons, c'est celui d'ami, parce que l'ami c'est quelqu'un avec qui on entretient une relation de complicité. Disons qu'avec un ami, on peut avoir des conversations sérieuses, alors qu'avec un simple camarade, ce sera davantage des relations d'ordre professionnel. Par exemple, on a ce qu'on appelle des "camarades de travail", donc ce sont des gens avec qui on travaille, mais avec qui on aura pas forcément des conversations intéressantes et avec qui on parlera beaucoup. Et après il reste le niveau de copain. Là c'est davantage quelqu'un avec qui on va sortir, on va aller en soirée, mais avec qui on aura pas forcément non plus des conversations très sérieuses. Donc voilà, je sais pas si j'ai été clair...

What is interesting for the partner group, however, is how Grégory illustrates the conventional dictionary-type definitions, or *znachenie*, by examples from his own life and his own, personal meanings or *sensyl* (Vygotsky 1986, see Section 2.5.2 of this thesis). He even points to the *copain* who could become an *ami* who is sitting next to him, thus bringing the definitions to life in a very immediate way.

Jack: Qu'est-ce que vous avez le plus, des amis, des copains ou des camarades ?
Grégory: Bon, je crois qu'il est plutôt difficile d'avoir beaucoup d'amis; c'est généralement des copains ou des camarades qu'on a, et de véritables amis on en a un ou deux, on peut pas en avoir cinquante. Donc, en fait ce que j'ai le plus en fait c'est des copains, voire des camarades d'école. Ici, à droite, c'est un copain qui va peut-être devenir un ami.
Jack: Quand vous avez un ami, est-ce qu'il est votre ami pour la vie ?
Grégory: Généralement oui, une fois qu'on a décidé qu'une personne était notre ami, c'est vrai qu'à moins qu'on se soit vraiment trompé, il devrait rester votre ami pour la vie. Mais on n'est pas à l'abri d'un coup vache de sa part, on n'est pas à l'abri d'être trahi, d'une trahison. Mais généralement, un ami on le garde pour la vie, oui. Moi, par exemple, j'ai un ami que j'ai connu quand j'étais petit, à l'école, donc j'étais... quand j'avais 6-7 ans. C'était un ami, c'était un Belge, il venait de Belgique ; donc on a fait trois ans d'études ensemble et après, par la suite, il a dû repartir en Belgique et donc on s'est plus jamais revu mais pourtant on continue à correspondre par courrier, ou par e-mail. Et je ne le vois plus mais ça reste un ami

avec qui je peux avoir des conversations très sérieuses par e-mail. J't'en prie, you're welcome.

A different aspect of the subject is later explored by other students in the group, where they discuss whether the lack of readily available terminology expresses a social reality. For Samantha, this could mean that friendships are deeper in France than in the United States, whereas Joanne feels that there are similar levels of intimacy and distance, even if they are not semantically differentiated:

SEQUENCE 10, 42 Friendship

Jérôme: I have a second question: for you, what is the definition of a friend?
Samantha: I think that's actually kind of a difficult question. I consider people friends... Like, a friend is more loosely defined here. If I knew someone in my class, I may call her my friend even though we don't call each other after the class or go out together or anything like that, but I wanna ask the question back: I think in France friends are closer, like you know, closer (XXXX) to a friend than a casual acquaintance, is that right?
Jérôme: Well I don't know, I don't know how it is in America but in France, a real friend is someone who's capable of listening to you, capable of helping you if you need help, and with whom you can have fun. Maybe we're closer in.....
Solange: Anyone else want to answer that question? [Yeah]. We have another answer for you.
Joanne: I think that even though we don't have different names for different levels of friendship, we do have different levels of friendship. The difference is, that if we are in a class with someone, and we're talking to someone else we may say: "Hey, that's my friend from French Class", or something like that, but we don't necessarily mean that it's a friend that we're gonna tell our whole personal life to. But there are friends that you just go and hang out with and do stuff with, you know at the movies or skating or whatever, and then there are friends that you would tell your personal secrets to, that you would confide to and expect them to do the same.

This subject is returned to in Sequence 10, 43, from the April 1999 videoconference. Here Lucy distinguishes between "friend" which covers most acquaintances and "best friend", which covers a few close friends.

Antoine: Do you agree with the idea that the word "friend" is defined much more loosely in American than in French? I mean, when, when would you say that a person is your friend, really?
Lucy: Well, I think that there are two categories that we put our first friendship into and, basically, we have "friends" and we have "best friends"; and I think that you grow up, like, having like one or two best friends, you don't have very many best friends, so everybody else falls into the "friend" category. So it could be people, er people, that you work with, people you go to school with. It doesn't take very long to be friends. Like, I'll have class for like two weeks with someone and I'll actually call them my friend because there's no other word to call them.

> Because we don't usually say ["my acquaintance", my classmate] "my comrade".
> ((laughter))
> You can always use the word "buddy".

The explanations provided by Samantha and Lucy echo those found in the cross-cultural literature. For instance, Stewart and Bennett (1995:97) explain that Americans often favour friendly but surface relationships and avoid deep relationships of mutual dependence. Friendships tend to originate around particular, shared activities, and are compartmentalised. The exception to this, according to Stewart and Bennett, is the "best friend", who is often a friend made during high school, but even these long term relationships often exclude mutual dependence. French friendships, on the other hand, are said to be long term, often extending over several generations within a family, and to imply a willingness for personal commitment and support.

Confirmation for this view was also expressed in student essays, which were informed by comparing American remakes with their French originals and by discussion between the two partner groups in e-mails. For instance, a focus on the opening scenes of "Trois Hommes et un Couffin" and its remake, "Three Men and a Baby", showed that the American director had substituted a huge party for the small, intimate dinner party shown in the French film. This decision was seen to reflect the differences in social organisation between the two countries, as the following extracts illustrate.

> At the beginning of the two movies, we can notice some major differences between a fest in France and a fest [party, interference from German] in America. In France, the room where the fest takes place is quite dark and people are listening to jazz music and speaking quietly to each other, whereas the room in the USA is bigger and much lighter, and people are all excited and are speaking loudly. I think that the mood in the French one is much more intimate.
> (Essay 17, French male student, 1999, Appendix XXIV)

> The first difference we can notice is the apartments. Indeed, in the French movie, the apartment is dark, old and there are also old paintings on the walls. In the American one the apartment is very clear, new and has flashy colors. Also at the beginning of the movies, we discover the three men in a party. The French party is very quiet and we can hear jazz in the background.
> (Essay 5, French male student, 1998, Appendix XXIV)

Dans la version américaine les personnages ont une soirée. La soirée a lieu au commencement du film. Les hommes sont très populaires et ils sont beaucoup d'amis dans leur appartement pendant la soirée. Ils parlent avec l'une et les autres et ils boivent beaucoup d'alcool. Les gens parlent très fort et ils disent de bons mots. Les hommes n'ont pas encore reçu le bébé.

 Cependant, le rendez-vous dans le film français a lieu après que les hommes aient trouvé le bébé. Dans la version française, le dîner leur est servi. Il y huit amis peut-être et ils parlent tranquillement. Ils boivent des vins et ils mangent ensemble. Les amis portent des vêtements élégants parce que l'occasion est très spéciale.

 Je ne sais pas pourquoi la scène de la soirée change de la version américaine. Il y a des différences. Pourquoi dans la version américaine, la soirée est-elle au commencement du film? Dans la culture française il y a des soirées comme ça?

 Je ne pense pas que les Américains auraient un grand dîner avec leurs amis comme les Français. Peut-être avec leurs supérieurs.
(Essay 4, American female student, 1997, Appendix XXIV)

The opening sequence of both films is emblematic of the cultural gap between Europe and the US. In the French film, you see a party in a very dark place, where people drink and smoke. This must be too gloomy for an American, and the scene has been totally remade: the American party is a lot of people, a lot of light and guys who look like they just swallowed amphetamines.
(Essay 16, French male student, 1999, Appendix XXIV)

The divergence between the two ways of entertaining then leads some students to reflect on cultural differences in friendship patterns. For the American author of Essay 4, the men are very popular: "Les hommes sont très populaires et ils sont beaucoup d'amis dans leur appartement". In her experience, in the USA, formal dinner parties, such as the one shown in the French film, are reserved for "leurs supérieurs". In Essay 6, the French student provides an answer to her questions:

> Let's focus on a particular movie, which is "Trois Hommes et un Couffin" and its remake, "Three Men and a Baby". There is first a huge difference at the beginning during the party. In America, any party has to be a great one, with many friends invited, a lot of light, whereas, in France we appreciate a lot of parties more intimistic, with few friends, but very close friends without a lot of light.
> (Essay 6, French male student, 1999, Appendix XXIV)

In the following extract, the French author also expresses the view discussed above; the large American party must be made up of people with whom the men have a superficial relationship "it is incredible that such a lot of people can be good friends."

> An American friendship is based on equality and reciprocity between the friends because in general people have one good friend. Their surroundings are the most part made of more or less superficial relationships. In France, people have in general a group of friends in which each one is a friend of another one. This

difference can be seen in comparing the original movie and its remake. In the French films, the party is quite small, a dozen of people. In the American one, the party is a huge one, with nearly all their surroundings [neighbours]; it is incredible that such a lot of people can be good friends.
(Essay 3, French male student, 1998, Appendix XXIV)

Many of the students, like Joanne, also based their views on Carroll's complex analysis of cross-cultural differences in friendship patterns (Carroll, 1988) as we can see in the following extracts.The first extract provides a neat summary of Carroll's view, namely that American friendships may seem superficial to outsiders because they usually only meet the outer circle of casual "friends".

> French people usually think that the Americans have no sense of friendship, or have superficial friendships. But Raymonde Carroll explained that an American person had different levels in his/her relationships, and that the sphere of mere friends and not close friends was probably the one a French person would meet; that's why we probably consider them as superficial friends. Moreover, the word "friend" is used much more loosely by American people than the word "ami" is used by French people. I remember a French cooker who had opened a restaurant in New York saying that relationships were easier in the US because he could say "my friend" to the cabdriver, but I think it's a cultural misunderstanding for the reason mentioned above: the fact that he can call him "my friend" does not mean that they are beginning a relationship.
> (Essay 2, French female student, 1998, Appendix XXIX)

Carroll also points out that the two cultures tend to have differing expectations of their friends, both in what it is acceptable to say to a friend and to what extent one should ask for or offer help. The first point, which was discussed at length in Section 4.9.13, was also referred to in many of the student essays, as we can see from the examples below:

> [....]. Another example can be given when you look at the difference between the conception of friendship in the French and American culture. For a French person, your friend will always give a hand when you're in need. This behaviour is just not the appropriate one in America, as it will undoubtedly be perceived as a violation of your private life. What's more, there's a certain limit which you must not cross when you ask something of an American friend, which is not the case in France: the bond works in such a way that it is possible to bother each other without any offence meant and definitely none taken. The gap between friends and family is much narrower here. What's more, in the American view, friendship is some sort of resource that you can give out. Hence you must be careful not to deplete it. If your friend is not kind to you, it's not worth keeping it as you're hence "losing" friends [....].
> (Essay 1, Vivien and Benoît, December 1999, Appendix XXIV)

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Both points are covered in the following extract, where the student also applies the situation to her personal experience. She agrees that her French friends take it for granted that they should be supportive, but that they also do not mince words when giving their opinion. She then compares this behaviour to that of her American friend, who tells her what she wants to hear:

> What stroke me [sic] in the book was the differences between the ways an American and a French friend have to behave, which Raymonde Carroll explained. She said that if you tell a friend a problem, he/she would react in two opposite ways whether he/she is American or French. An American would wait for you to ask help, because she/ he would consider that offering help could be an insult or an offence meaning that you cannot cope with your own problem alone. It is totally nonsense for French people because we think a friend has to be supportive. Moreover, a French friend will not hesitate to say that you are wrong about something, while an American friend will try to go your way: for instance, my Internet friend always tells me that my English is perfect. A French friend with a better English than mine would probably say that I have things to improve and tell me what. That's why, whenever I am in a bad mood, I try to chat with her. ☺
> (Essay 2, French female student, 1998, Appendix XXIV)

The following examples draw both on Carroll's analysis and observation of the friendships portrayed in the two films (see also Section 4.9.13). The writer of the first essay explains the more conflictual relationship between the three friends by the fact that French friendships tend to be more like an extension of the family. As Carroll puts it:

> According to the French conception, friendships are parallel to family relationships, except that they are bonds we choose and for which we assume full responsibility, perhaps even assuring these bonds priority over kinship ties. They can even serve as substitutes: I can create a "family" of my choosing with my friends.

(Carroll, 1988: 85)

The second author focuses on the fact that, in the French film, it is Pierre and not Jacques, the baby's father, who first takes control of the situation, whereas in the American version it is Jack. He sees this as confirmation that, although American friends do help each other, they would probably be vexed if someone took over completely, implying that they could not do the job themselves. This example is also given by the writer of Essay 5. The final extract takes the example of the baby's mother, Sylvia, who asks the three men for help

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in the American version, whereas she waits for the men to offer in the French one. All three

examples show evidence of mature reflection both on the readings and the examples provided

in the films.

> [....] Other differences can be seen in relationships with friends. Whereas the French tend to think they can help a friend even if he has not asked for it, the Americans will wait until he asks for assistance, even if they seem more respectful to each other. Though the American relationships seem more superficial than the French ones. Maybe the tensions and struggles between French friends can be explained by the fact that they know each other more intimely [intimately] and thus require more from each other. In "Trois hommes et un couffin", the relationship between the protagonists seem much more conflictual, but at the same time deeper than in "Three men and a baby". Such differences between cultures forced Colline Serreau into changing the scenario of her movie and even made her quit the shooting.
> (Essay 13, French male student, 1999, Appendix XXIV)

> But friends do not behave the same way in France and in the USA. In France, a friend is generally a friend forever whatever happens, and it is the person who will shake you up if you have problems or if you are in the wrong way. In a group of friends, when there are problems, like the arrival of the baby in "Trois Hommes et un Couffin", a leader is implicitly chosen to solve the problems, whereas the problem comes from another person of the group. For instance, in the film "Trois Hommes et un Couffin", it is Pierre who seems to be the one in charge of taking care of the baby whereas Jacques is the father. In America, such a situation and such an attitude towards the "owner" of the problem would be impossible. A person has problems, his friends can help him and would certainly help him but he is responsible. This person would feel hurt if he was told: "Let's relax, I take care of everything!" he would think that his friend is not a true friend, that his friend considers that he cannot solve his problems on his own and so on. In the remake "Three Men and a Baby", it is Jack who talks to the nanny and tells her to go. In the French one it is Pierre, not Jacques, who tells the "seconde maman" to go. An American would not have accepted that a friend acts as Pierre did. [...]
> (Essay 3, French male student, 1998, Appendix XXIV)

> Then, in the French movie, the three men try to hire a full-time nurse. Jacques is the one who talks first with Mme Rappon (I am not sure of the name). Afterwards Pierre is going to talk to the nurse. An American would have seen this as Pierre interfering in Jacques' business. But Raymonde Carroll explains that French wait their friends help them [expect their friends to help them] even if they were not asked to: an American wants his friend to help him if he asks him. This is the reason why this scene was changed in the American movie.
> (Essay 5, French male student, 1998, Appendix XXIV)

> Then, at the end, when the mother comes because she is very tired. In the French movie she doesn't ask if the men can keep the baby, she waits until they offer to do so and she accepts, whereas in American it is a bad thing to do something like that, therefore the woman asks for them to take care of the baby.
> (Essay 14, , French female student, 1998, Appendix XXIV)

Further aspects of differing culturally biased behaviour towards friends are also explored in the following extracts from the videoconferences. In the first extract, from the March 1998 videoconference, Andry asks a question after class discussion of a cultural dilemma coined by Stouffer and Toby (1951 in Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1997. 33). This is one of a series of questions designed to measure universal and particularist responses. The question chosen focuses on to what extent a friend, who has broken the law, for example by going over the speed limit, and consequently injuring a pedestrian, has the right to ask you to lie to protect him or her. According to the research carried out by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, North Americans emerge as almost totally universalist with regard to this dilemma, stating that their friend should not expect their protection.This question was of special interest to Andry, who was from Madagascar and was strongly particularist. Cassie' s answer also confirms the research; she would comfort her friend if he or she had not committed a crime but otherwise would contact the police. Andry was very interested to find a similar response to that in the literature from an American peer.

> **Andry**: Well, I have two questions. First: a friend comes to you and tells you that he's done a big mistake. Not necessarily with you but he's made something really bad. How would you react in front of that?
> **Cassie**: I think it all depends on what they've done. If they've committed some hideous crime, I would go to the police and tell them, but if it was something small like they cheated on their girlfriend or boyfriend whatever, I would just listen to them and maybe offer a little bit of advice and hopefully they will learn from the situation. I mean this all depends on what kind of thing that they did, what did they do wrong, so it all depends on what the act is, of the other friend.
> **Andry**: I mean, if it's not something really bad you just try and comfort him, that's it.
> **Cassie**:Yeah, usually we just try to listen to them, be a good friend, a good listener, and offer them a little bit of advice, try not to tell them what to do, but usually they'll come to you and tell you that there's something that they did wrong because they want someone who can listen to them and give them a little bit of advice. I think.

This view was also commented on in student essays, as the following example illustrates.

> American people have a very different attitude towards the law than French people. Indeed, the French often forget to abide by the law- even honest and respectable citizens – although Americans are much more obedient. For instance,

in France, a majority of people would help a friend by not telling the truth if the offence they have witnessed is not too serious, instead of letting their friend take his responsibilities - as many Americans would do.
(Essay 18, French male student, 1999, Appendix XXIV)

Andry's second question is based on his reading of Carroll (1988: 86-87) and again the American students' answers reflect the point of view put forward by the researcher, who states that, for Americans, anyone can have a friend if they make an effort and if they are friendless, it is their fault.

> **Andry**: Thank you. And my other question would be: how do you consider a person who doesn't have any friends?
> **Aimée**: That person is disadvantaged because they're missing out on life's great, great assets, in order to learn not only about yourself, but about the world, you learn through friendships and the XXXXX- that you acqu: e through those friendships and that person, he's just lost...
> **Andry**: But do you think that it's his fault, or do you think that it's the other one's fault? I mean, do you think that he doesn't want to have any friend, or do you think that it's the other people who don't want to speak with him and to be friend with him?
> **Aimée**: Well, I wouldn't necessarily put the blame on him but at the same time it depends on whether this person wants to learn by others, or is he putting himself or herself in a situation to get to know others. If he's not doing that, it is his fault or her fault. He should be responsible for his action.
> **Jack**: We have a saying in our country that says: " To have a friend you must first be a friend." Does that answer your question?

A final example of this subject is taken from the the April 1999 videoconference, where Alexis, again basing his question on insights from Carroll's work, wants to find out about possible taboo subjects between friends. Carroll's analysis suggests that both Americans and French friends view sharing secrets as an important characteristic of friendship and Franscesca agrees with this. She also adds some information about self-disclosure, which again reflects the literature (Stewart and Bennett, 1995. See Sections 4.7.1 and 4.8.1.1).

> **Alexis**: What question would you never dare to ask a friend, even if he or she is a true friend or a "best friend"?
> **Solange**: We have no one who accepted to answer that!
> ((laughter))
> **Francesca**: Hi, I'll answer your question! Hi! All my questions got skipped! I was going to talk about the telephone... Erm, I think that once you have, like you say, a true friend, or what we consider a best friend, than I think there really aren't any questions that you wouldn't ask them, because you feel comfortable enough telling them anything they want to know. Like, even with people who aren't really good friends, I think Americans are pretty open. Like, ((points to student next to

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her)) Jane, when she was pregnant and she said "I'm pregnant" and we're all "Yea!" ((laughter)). I think people ask, I think people ask really personal questions in America; and I think, like, people are OK answering them, like. Erm, I guess things that might not be asked would be things like if you think that something's happening you might not want to ask about it, sometimes. Like if you think a child might be being hit too much by his parents or something, you might not want to ask the parents but you might go ahead and ask the child. I think we ask all questions but it's not all the time of all the people. Does that make sense?
Alexis: Yeah, of course.

4.9.15 Primary and secondary socialisation

Students also exchanged their views on primary and secondary socialisation, often giving a current view not available in the literature. For instance, in Sequence 11, 45, Guillaume gives an informed contemporary perspective which can cast additional light on the information provided by the academic readings. This extract, from the 1997 conference, also illustrates Guillaume's analytical abilities, even though he claims not to have prepared his answer.

> **Lily**: Pour l'auteur du Petit Prince, les grandes personnes sont sévères et sans imagination. Les grandes personnes ont découragé ses dessins et ses rêves quand il était petit. Selon Caroll, les parents américains encouragent les petits à être créateurs. Quelle est l'attitude des parents français à l'heure actuelle?
>
> **Guillaume**: A vrai dire j'ai pas encore trop réfléchi à la question, hier j'étais encore en vacances, alors je vais faire une petite improvisation, mais je pense que la différence entre les parents américains et les parents français est quand même relativement flagrante. Aux Etat-Unis c'est vrai que les parents laissent plus de liberté à leurs enfants, alors que l'éducation en France est plutôt stricte, assez rigide, mais depuis euh soixante-huit les:: parents ont tendance à laisser euh plus cours à l'esprit créatif euh de leurs enfants. mais ça se ressent encore, Isabelle le disait euh toute à l'heure, au niveau des entreprises. Si les Américains réusissent mieux en créant une entreprise, c'est que déjà, petits, ils sont habitués à créer, à faire beaucoup de choses. tandis qu'en France on peut voir que l'échec est un peu associé à l'éducation un peu trop stricte, même si ça se:: si c'est moins rigide en ce moment c'est un peu dû à l'éducation des parents quand même.
> **Lily**: Très bien. Merci.
> **Guillaume**: De rien

In the second extract, from the March 1998 videoconference, Jane provides an American perspective, in answer to Yann's question based on his interpretation of Carroll's work:

> **Yann**: OK. Thank you. I have a second question: do you agree that it is very important for an American child not to be punished in front of his or her friend?

Jane: If two children are at someone's home and they get in a fight ...something happens and one of them needs to be punished, I think it's OK you know, if it happens there, but in America you have to be careful if you do that in public because, if your way of disciplining a child is to spank it or to yell at it or something like that, you can be put in jail if somebody (XXX). So in public, be very careful if you want to punish your child without just saying, you know, "don't do that, don't do that!" You'd have to go somewhere private if you wanted to do more.
((laughter))
Yann: OK, thank you.

The third extract, also from the March 1998 videoconference, shows another example of how many American students tended to give a personal view, as opposed to the more general view expressed by the majority of the French students. Thiébaut's first question is dismissed by Caitlin, who denies any knowledge about child rearing practices in France, although the American students had also studied the Carroll texts.

Thiébaut: Yes I have another two questions on the relation between parents and children. So first of all French adolescents are said to be brought up too strictly. Do you agree with that point of view? And if you do, in what way do you think they are brought up too strictly?
Caitlin: I don't know anything about how French adolescents are brought up, so I can't really answer that question, but I think there should be rules for kids, like I know when I was growing up I had a curfew, at certain times I had to be home like when I went out, and my parents also wanted to know where I was, and if I was gonna be home late I had to call and tell them so they wouldn't worry. So I think it's a lot about respect. So if you are not gonna call your parents are gonna worry if you're late. So I think there should be rules. But nothing too extreme, I don't think... if you are really strict with your kids and then once they are in college they're on their own and they can go kinda wild and they're not used to having rules but once they don't have them [XXX]
((laughter))

Thiébaut noted this in a post-conference interview, also suggesting that certain personal information was not suitable material for a videoconference.

Thiébaut: In the videoconference, I asked a question about what Americans thought of French people's upbringing and the girl said she didn't know anything about it.
Interviewer: Perhaps it would have been better just to ask about American children?
Thiébaut: Not really, because they had information from "Evidences Invisibles" that she could have referred to. The American students talked a lot about their personal experience -when answering the question about the grandmas in " Trois Hommes et Un Couffin" and the remake, Jane told the story of her mother bringing up her brother's kids. It might not be nice for the brother to have his life talked about like that.
(Thiébaut - informal interview, June 1998)

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Views on socialisation are also expressed in some of the student e-mails, for example in the following extract, from an e-mail from Jean-Loup to Chris. As in the correspondence between Jérémy and Barbara-Jean, which we analyse in detail in Section 4.8.2.6, Jean-Loup has thought about Chris' question from the videoconference and provides both general and personal information to complete the discussion. Although he stresses that there are individual differences, Jean-Loup also endorses the "French" view (Section 3.3.3), where "un père reste un père et une mère sera toujours une mère" and "on peut dire que les parents restent assez présents dans notre vie lorsqu'on devient adulte et je pense que cela est normal."

> Sun, 12 Dec 1999 23:08 Jean-Loup
>
> [...] I just remember that you have written a question for the videoconference, so I will try to answer in french to do as if we were on the screen (it won't be oral comprehension but written comprehension):
> La question était: Quelle importance est-ce que la famille, spécifiquement les parents, place dans l'éducation quand vous devenez adulte?
> Je crois que cela dépend beaucoup des familles. En général une fois qu'on a quitté la maison et qu'on ne dépend plus financièrement des parents, on est tout à fait libre. Mais un père reste un père et une mère sera toujours une mère: cela implique que les parents considèrent qu'on est adulte mais il arrive souvent qu'ils donnent des conseils et le cas échéant critiquent le comportement ou la façon de vivre. Par exemple j'ai l'anecdote d'une personne de ma famille qui a donné un coup de pied aux fesses de son fils, alors adulte, car il agissait mal... Lorsqu'on a un enfant les parents interviennent souvent pour juger de la façon dont on éduque l'enfant, ce qui donne parfois lieu à des disputes. En conclusion, on peut dire que les parents restent assez présents dans notre vie lorsqu'on devient adulte et je pense que cela est normal. I hope that my answer is enough for you and if you need more just write. What do you think of the videoconference? Do you learn things? Have you understand every french students talk?
> It is time for me to work a little so I say you bye bye!
> Jean-Loup

Many of the student essays, which we quote below, also deal with differing parental attitudes, again drawing their views from their study of the remakes and Carroll and personal experience. The differing reactions of the two grandmothers in "Trois Hommes et un Couffin" and "Three Men and a Baby", as discussed in Section 3.3.3, provided an interesting example which lead many students to question their own culturally biased assumptions. For instance, during class discussion, one French student had maintained that his grandparents

had very little involvement in caring for him. They "only" looked after him every

Wednesday, when French children do not have school, and during the school holidays; he

was very surprised to discover that this kind of situation was far from the norm in other

cultures.

> After reading Raymonde Carroll's book on cultural misunderstandings, we can
> explain why some scenes in "Trois Hommes et un Couffin" and "Three Men and a
> Baby" are radically different. Firstly, the scene when they have to find somebody
> to take care of the girl. In the French movie, Jacques goes to see his mother hoping
> she would accept. Raymonde Carroll says in, her book that in France it is normal
> for grandparents to take care of their grandchildren and that they are very happy
> to do so. Jacques' mother would have loved to take Marie with her but she has a
> trip planned, therefore she cannot. In the American movie, Jack's mother simply
> refuses to take care of Mary. Raymonde Carroll explains this by saying that
> American parents, when they retire, have the right to rest and don't have to help
> their children. They are big enough to take care of themselves.
> (Essay 5, French male student, 1998, Appendix XXIV)

> Even if it 's only one point among others and this could seem a bit short, I think
> that it clearly reveals cultural misunderstandings that might occur between two
> countries. It is evident that we doesn't [sic] bear the same approach to the family
> as they do. In the United States, children are the true responsibility of their
> parents, and no one would even think to try to unburden them, or have an
> argument about how they raise their children, as they deeply think that this is
> only the parents' choice. On the contrary in France (which is a rather older society)
> everyone feels responsible of the proper education of the newborn, because we
> feel that it is our sworn duty as member of our community.
> (Essay 8, French male student, 1999, Appendix XXIV)

> Raymonde Carroll has been studying the problem, and have noticed differences in
> many fields of investigation, such as children and parents, and relations between
> friends. French point of view on education is for example very different from the
> Americans' one. Whereas in France we are being taught how to behave "nicely"
> and respect the others, the Americans prefer to let the child develop his
> personality at the expense of a respectful behaviour with others. And differences
> do not fade out at the adult age, the way we treat our parents when we are blessed
> with children are different too: French people count on their parents' help,
> whereas the American grandparents' help is not as much requested. This is why in
> "Three men and a baby", the answer of the grandmother is not "I would like to, it's
> a shame I am busy but "You have to manage on your own".
> [...] There is also a detail that appears in "Cultural Misunderstandings" that is the
> relationship between children and their grandparents. In France grand-parents
> often take care of the children. For example, they keep them during summer
> holidays while their parents carry on working. It is not the case in America where
> grand-parents do not have a major role to play in the children education. In the
> film, when the one who has the baby ask his mother to take care of him [sic], she
> refuses because she thinks he is responsible for his own acts. In the French film,
> she would accept but she has planned to go on a trip.
> (Essay 13, French male student, 1999, Appendix XXIV)

There is another difference when the father of the baby wants the grandmother to take care of his daughter. Both of the French and the American grandmothers refuse but not for the same reasons. The French one is to [sic] busy to take the responsibility, she is travelling, she is having a good time now that she is retired. The American one talks to his son and tells him that he has to take responsibility for the baby. This is the way children are raised in America; they have to be responsible and adults.
(Essay 6, French male student, 1999, Appendix XXIV)

The opening sequence of both films is emblematic of the cultural gap. It seems that an American mother wouldn't even help her son in the tricky situation the three men face. In the French film, the scenarist had to send the mother overseas to make sure she doesn't interfere. Compared with the Americans, the French look very childish, as they always try to get someone to take responsibilities.
(Essay 16, French male student, 1999, Appendix XXIV)

For example, in the American movie "Three Men and a Baby", the image of the mother is strongly different from the one in "Trois Hommes et un Couffin". In the first one, the mother looks strict and really unsensitive, she just don't even touch the baby with bare hands! Moreover, she clearly point out that she won't take care of the baby because it is not her responsibility to do so but the one of her son. On the other hand, in the latter, even if for scenario purposes she can't also take care of the baby, she must display a really good excuse as no one doubt of the evident commitment she has towards this baby. Which by the way she is very proud to show to her best friend.
(Essay 9, French male student, 1999, Appendix XXIV)

Occasionally, the students are still unable to understand the differences between the two cultures, as we see in the following extract. Here, although this American student is clearly reflecting on the differences, she still remains bewildered at the French mother's reaction and concludes that, in fact, she must really be conveying the same message as the American mother. While this student is attempting to understand the other's point of view, she is clearly finding it difficult to attain the "perspective shift" necessary to become an intercultural speaker (Byram 1997).

Pourquoi les deux enfants sont arrivés comme du petit paquet? Et pourquoi les deux mères etaient refuser de garder les bébé? La mère Américaine voulait aider son fils à mûrir en le forçant à faire face à ses responsabilités. Quand Jacques disait à sa mère "Mom, I am a screw-up". – "You were a screw-up, now you're a father."
La mère française vraiment je ne comprends pas exactement son avis. Ou elle s'en fout de l'enfant ou elle veut faire que son fils comprenne sa responsabilité. A mon avis la mère française dans un autre mot disait à son fils que pour avoir un enfant il faut attendre l'heure ou le bon moment. Mais pour la mère Américaine vous pouvais faire l'enfant si vous pouvez prends vos responsabilités.
(American female student, 1997, Appendix XXIV)

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The issue of children's behaviour, as discussed by Jane and Yann in Sequence 12 of the videoconference, is also considered in some of the essays. As with most of the previous examples, many of the students agree with the views put forward by Carroll:

> The last point I would like to develop is how children are raised in the two countries. In France we want children to be quiet, well behaved and that they don't disturb you when you are talking to someone else. In America, children are loud and not well behaved; this is how they are stereotyped in France. Raymonde Carroll says that it is true that American parents stop their conversation if their child is asking for something, whereas in France the child would be told to wait until the parents are done. She also says that in America if a child is quiet for a certain amount of time it is because he is ill.
> (Essay 5, French male student, 1998, Appendix XXIV)

However, other students add a more personal interpretation, as in the following essay, where the student partly disagrees with Carroll's analysis of French children's behaviour. This student has reflected on her own experience and compared it with that of her peers. She also suggests that the French children described in the book could have been quiet because they were afraid of Carroll.

> Although there are interesting remarks in Raymonde Carroll's "Cultural Misunderstandings", I must say that I do not comply with her description of how the French raise their children. She says that French children are always very quiet and that they are never allowed to get dirty. Well that certainly is not the memory I have from my childhood. I remember running around all the time, not being able to remain seated for an entire meal when my parents were eating with friends, and sometimes getting very dirty! At first, I thought maybe I had been raised in a very bizarre way, so I asked my friends how they remembered their childhood. They had a childhood much similar to mine than to that described by Carroll. Another thing they told me was that they played a lot with other children, and not only with their brothers and sisters as suggested in the book. However, I must say that the French people I have talked to did play with their brothers and sisters. In terms of playmates this is where the difference between my French and my American friends lay. Most of them even claimed they hated them, and that they were "so stupid". Apart from that I do not believe that American and French children are very different in their relationship with friends and in their way of playing.
> However, I do not believe this to be true when they interact with the "grown up" world. American children or at least the ones I have seen, are not scared of adults, they treat them as their friend and have an almost equal relationship with them. In France, I believe that children are much more afraid of grown-ups. Adults use a different way of speaking when they talk to children than when they talk among themselves. I believe that is why Carroll thought French children were so quiet, maybe they were just scared of her.
> (Essay 23, French female student, 1999, Appendix XXIV)

Other students also questioned or complemented the information provided by the texts studied, for example by suggesting that Carroll's data was based on a restricted sample from the upper classes.

> We all agree about the difference between American and French houses. It is true that the outside is totally different over the Atlantic ocean.
> But there is [sic] many points which are doubtfull:
> - all the examples seem to be taken in the high society, since we can read, "the maid asks him….", "in the sixteenth arondissement in Paris"…So the author can't be really objective since she doesn't search in the other levels.
> - the behaviour in front of guests is different in France since the guests are not the same. We think that before inviting someone in your house, you wait for a certain confident relationship. On the contrary in America they invite someone more easily than in France. But the examples she gives are always linked with high society. […]
>
> Those points are those which shocked us during our first reading of the study. But the main thing for us is the fact that the study is not really objective since it concern only a part of American and French society. We don't know what happens in ghettos……
> (Essay 23, Julie and Jean-Loup, 1999, Appendix XXIV)

Some students also explored further issues, for instance the different attitudes shown by the mother who leaves baby Marie/Mary to be brought up by her father in "Trois Hommes et un Couffin" and "Three Men and a Baby". These views are summed up by the differences in the note left by Sylvia. The French Sylvia wants the father to take control of the situation and does not feel the need to explain herself. The Sylvia in the American version, who, as the American author of the following essay points out, is English in order to distance her anti-social behaviour from "American" behaviour, justifies her action by the fact that she cannot cope with her situation.

> La Sylvia française a écrit, " Très cher Jacques, voici le fruit de nos amours, prends-en bien soin. Je pars pour six mois aux Etats-Unis. C'est une fille, elle s'appelle Marie. Bon courage, Sylvia". Elle n'a pas fait d'excuses, ni d'explications, en effet, le mot a l'air désinvolte. Avant elle partir aux Etats-Unis, elle a habité à Paris, comme les hommes. Je ne sais si cette femme est typique ou pas, ou si cette conduite et ce mot sont justifiés ou outrageux.
> La Sylvia anglaise a écrit, "Dear Jack, here is our baby. I can't handle this now. I don't know where else to turn, some day I hope you can both forgive me. Her name is Mary. Sylvia." Le mot est plein de culpabilité et remords, et elle peux en espérer qu'un jour elle aura le pardon de Jack et Mary. C'est intéressant que la Sylvia dans "Three Men and a Baby" n'est pas américaine ou de New York comme les hommes. Elle est anglaise. Peut-être sa conduite ne semble pas menaçante, et

c'est plus compréhensible parce qu'elle est étrangère. Elle n'est pas américaine, donc sa conduite est plus éloignée de chez nous.

Le metteur en scène américain a dû changer le sens du mot pour plusieurs raisons. La société juge ses membres dans touts les groupes du peuple, mais il y a des petites et grandes différences. Une traduction exacte du mot français en l'anglais paraîtrait choquant aux américains. Sylvia semblerait sans cœur, sans souci et sans culpabilité et elle aurait trop d'audace pour une femme qui abandonnerait sa bébé. Un mot impenitent ne serait pas pardonné, et une mère n'abandonnerait jamais sa bébé, à moins qu'elle n'a pas d'alternative.
(Essay 10, American female student, 1998, Appendix XXIV)

Several students also point out the differing attitudes to gender roles depicted in the two films. In the first example, the American student points out that the French men in the original are depicted as being more competent at childcare than the American "fathers", and concludes that French society has less rigid gender roles than in the United States.

Dans "Trois Hommes et un Couffin" Pierre et Michel ont pensé que le bébé pleurait parce qu'elle avait faim. Dans le remake Peter et Michael ont pensé que le bébé voulait qu'on la porte. Il semble que les hommes français avaient une compréhension ou instinct meilleur des bébés. Les hommes Américaines [sic] n'avaient pas d'instinct paternel. Je pense que la conduite de Peter et Michael était très américaine. Dans l'ensemble, je pense que la société Américaine enseigne aux hommes qu'il n'est pas chic d'être paternel. Aux Etats-Unis il semble que les gens pensent que les bébés sont l'affaire des femmes seulement. Il ne semble pas que c'est un problème en France.
(Essay 11, American female student, 1997, Appendix XXIV)

In the second example, the French author attributes the American version's focus on returning the drugs to the drug dealers as a wish to show the American father as a hero. He also illustrates his point with reference to another pair of films, "La Totale" (Zidi 1991) and "True Lies", (Cameron 1994), where the American father's acts take precedence over his family difficulties.

And above all lots of small elements, the story of the film represents the biggest change between a European film and the American version. The decision to insist on the drug dealers and the meeting between the new fathers and those dealers makes a new image of the father, which corresponds better to the image of the American parents. They must be some examples for their children, and then some heroes, which the film translates correctly. On the other hand, the French film insists more on the difficulty to be a father when we are not prepared to be one.

Another French film, "La Totale", insists on the difficulty to have a family when we are a secret agent, which leads to various funny situations, but the american remake avoids a little these problems into the family to insist on the realisations [actions, achievements] of the father. All these differences come from the vision of the relation between parents and children, and the role of parents towards children.
(Essay 12, French male student, 1999, Appendix XXIV)

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The subject of education was also explored in detail by the students through the various media. As we pointed out in Section 4.8.4.8, often students initially make the assumption that their own system is universal, relying on literal translations or leaving certain vocabulary in the original, with little or no explanation. This can be further illustrated by the following examples, taken from web pages, e-mails or student essays:

> Les **freshmen** sont interdits d'avoir une voiture sur le campus
> Je suis sortie avec tous mes copains de **high school**
> J'ai été acceptée à **la faculté des honours**.
> J'aime beaucoup sortir chaque weekend **aux fraternités** avec mes amis pour danser et quelquefois boire.
> Je suis dans une **"sorority"**
>
> On peut **intégrer une grande école** après les **classes préparatoires**.
> I try to get my **"diplôme d"Ingenieur"**
> When she comes out of **"faculte"**
> In our school, for example, I do believe that being involved in associations, such as the **"Gala"** or the **"Forum"**, is as important as some of the things we learn in class.
> Every year there is this meeting called the **"forum des grandes écoles"**, where former students come to present their new school.[51]

The e-mail exchanges prompted some students to seek clarification when their partner mentioned aspects of their system which were unknown to them:

> Thu 13 Feb 1997
> Hello Courtney
> [...] I'm really happy to be able to talk with u. I find it a great opportunity. I was wondering what you did in your school and what u ment when u say that u are taking "le francais 312". I'd be glad if u told me more about these classes and about your teacher [...]
> Hope to hear from u soon. Ciao
> Cyril
> Thu 6 Mar 1997
> Bonjour Cyril
> [...] En reponse a votre question du "francais 312". La classe est une partie d'une serie. La premiere classe est le francais 101 et alors 102, 201? 202? 204, 311, 312 .....etc. Evidemment je ne suis pas avance meme si je prends "le francais 312"[...].
> Je dois partir. A bientôt!
> Courtney

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[51] See also Section 4.8.4.5, although there appear to be fewer examples in the French students' work, due to their relative ease in the foreign language.

Some students gave spontaneous explanations for these differences, although other literal translations, such as "camarade de chambre" remain.

> Fri, 01 Oct 1999
> Bonjour Valentin,
> Comme étudiant de l'économie et des affaires internationales, je suis beaucoup de cours qui centrent sur les affaires bien que les lettres et spécifiquement, la Français, exigent aussi mon temps et énergie. Ce semestre, je prends la Français 404W, un cours de l'écriture intensifiée pour développer un savoir de la grammaire avancée et des techniques de l'écriture correcte et claire. Cet automne, j'habite avec un camarade de chambre dans un appartement dehors de campus. C'est un endroit commode á vivre, mais après trois ans d'habitant sur le campus, je manque quelques aspects de la résidence universitaire, surtout la proximité á mes classes et la cuisine de la cantine (le Resto-U).

Others are aware of the possible differences and difficulties in translation and provide detailed explanations.

> Mon, 04 Oct 1999 12:49:43 –0400
> Subject: Re: First Contact
> Bonjour Jean-Loup! [...]
> A East University, j'habite dans une appartement avec trois filles qui sont mes meilleures amies. Aussi je participe dans une sororite. Je pense que vous ne l'a pas a son universite, mais elle est un peu comme un club ou nous faisons les services pour la communaute et aussi nous avons les fetes avec les hommes qui participe dans les confreries. C'est la meme chose d'une sororite, mais seulement pour les hommes.
> Hello Chris! [...]
> Our school is a "Grande Ecole" and we're studying telecommunication system, I'm sorry but I have not the specific vocabulary in my mind! At the end of our study, we are "ingenieurs", which seems to be the equivalent of technical managers. Our campus is near Brest but it is probably not as tall as yours since there is approximately 400 or 500 students here. There is also searchers but I don't know how many. I live on the campus like most of the students, each one has his own room (it is quite small!).

> Fri, 10 Dec 1999 19:25:12 - 0500
> [....]
> Salut Sabastien,
> Comment est les fêtes en france? Ici ils ne sont pas conjonctif avec l'université. Je vais en ville aux appartements ou aux fraternities (je ne sais pas si les fraternities exist en France...c'est les maisons grandes où beaucoup des garçons habitent). Aux fêtes il y a la biere (habituellement gratuite) et la musique bruyante. Quelquefois il y a les jeux de boire, est ce que vous jouez les jeux de boire dans France?

Some of the explanations are given after advice from the teacher:

> Thu 4 Feb 1997
> Salut Olivier! Comment ca va? [...] I enjoyed your e-mail! You seem like a nice, intelligent guy. My studies are interesting but they take up quite a bit of time as do my sorority and my work schedule. My professor said that you do not have

sororities in France so I should explain what it is. Sororities (for women) and fraternities (for men) are social organizations here in American colleges. They do many good things such as charity work and get students involved in other activities on campus. They do fun things together as well [...].

A wish to communicate their everyday interests and preoccupations also gives the students an added incentive to explain certain details of their education system. Students are also keen to find similarities between their two systems. This is sometimes the case, as in the next example.

> Sat, 23 Oct 1999
> Hello Chris! [...]
> In France there is a championship between all universities, it is called the FNSU (FNSU= Fédération Nationale du Sport Universitaire) Is there something equal in America? Do you take part in such a championship?

> Tue 16 Nov 1999
> Bonjour Jean-Loup! [...] Aux Etats-Unis nous avons une chose presque comme FNSU mais il est pour chaque sport different. Je ne peux pas participer parce que c'est tres competitif, donc quelq'un doit jouer tres bien si il veut participer [...]. Nous avons regarde le match de football americain, mais malheureusement East University a perdu encore une fois. Je suis triste parce que l'equipe a eu l'occasion de participer dans le "Sugar Bowl". Je pense que c'est comme ton FNSU mais seulement pour le football americain.

However, there remains a tendency to overgeneralise, assuming that there must be a direct equivalent when none really exists (Section 4.9.9), as we can see in the following extracts from the correspondence between Xavier and Sue.

> Wed, 03 Nov 1999 21:15:08 -0500
> Xavier,
> [...] Ce weekend, notre universite ont le "Homecoming." Il y a une grande parade et un match de football americain. C'est une fete celebre par tout l'universite. Est-ce que ton universite a un weekend comme notre "Homecoming?

> Thu, 11 Nov 1999 13:48:06 +0100 (MET)
> Subject: salut!
> [...] This week-end you have the "homecoming", it seems to be very interesting and very funny, in France on our campus we often organize a week end of sports, several "grandes ecoles" come and many matches are organized, there is a great variety of sports: soccer, tennis, volley ball, badminton, etc. At the end of the day we have a party, it's fun. So it's quite similar to your "homecoming".

Ludovic provides a long, detailed explanation of the French education system, which is reproduced in full in Appendix XX. He uses his personal history as an example and explains

the parallel system in France as follows:

This explanation shows a genuine attempt to explain the French system in a clear way. However, as we discussed in Section 4.9.6, Ludovic adopts a French academic style, including such specialized vocabulary as "le bac en poche", "les filières scientifiques" and assumes knowledge: "le célèbre HEC", that his American peer may not have. Nevertheless, the contrast between this rather formal approach and the informal tone adopted by his partner does not appear to jeopardise the correspondence. Wayne does not give concrete details but replies with a thumbnail sketch of the atmosphere on the East University campus. This kind of letter, while not providing a great deal of factual information, gives a positive view of the American university.

Many of the students, particularly the Americans, are very enthusiastic and curious about their peers' culture (see also Section 4.7.1). This enthusiasm can prove infectious, as we can observe in the following exchange between Jean-Loup and Chris.

Tue, 5 Oct 1999 19:53:41
Subject: Answer
Salut Jean-Loup!
Pour repondez a vos questions, a La Sorbonne j'etudierai le grammar et le conversation pour pratiquer mon francais. Je suivrai juste une classe parce que je veux explorer et apprendre tous les choses. J'aime l'art et quand je suis allee a Paris avant, je n'ai pas de temps d'aller au Louvre. Aux Etats-Unis, il n'y a pas beaucoup de chances de voir les films francais au cinema. Nous les voyons dans les classes, mais je ne sais pas ou on peut voir un film francais au cinema? Desolee, mais je n'ai pas vu Star Wars, mais j'ai entendu que ce film est bien. [....] Au sujet de votre culture, je n'ai pas de questions explicitement, mais de quels sortes de choses faites-vous et vos amis pour s'amuser? Est-ce que votre ecole est difficile? De quels sujets etudiez-vous a la Grande Ecole? De quoi est-ce que les francais pensent des americains? Quand je voyagerai a Paris, est-ce que les personnes m'aident avec les choses que je ne comprends pas? Si vous avez des questions pour moi, demandez-moi! Je suis tres contente de parler avec vous ce semestre!

I don't know how I can explain you how works our culture. So, I'd prefer that you ask me questions about specific topics because it is hard to speak about a such big subject. In fact you seem so enthousiastic that I hope I will be able to explain you everything. For instance I have some questions: What sort of subject will you study at La Sorbonne? Can you see some french pictures in cinema? Because here in France we have sometimes more american films than french films. Have you ever been to France before? Where? Did you enjoy it? I never went to America, I just went to England, Greece, and Portugal. I'm sure you want to know more but I must leave you by now.
See you later!
Jean-Loup

In the final extract from the videoconferences in this section, Karine admits to having limited knowledge of the American education system, other than that provided by the soap opera Beverly Hills (see also Section 4.7.1). She has also looked for information on Jane's website, however, and manages to make some kind of comparison, while pointing out that she is in not actually attending a university. She does not explain the two French systems and the American students do not question this. She also focuses on the fact that the high cost of fees in American universities may be discriminatory, although she is careful not to offend, using "peut-être" and "un peu" to qualify her statements.

Karine: Donc, je vais essayer d'y répondre, mais tout d'abord, je tiens à te dire que ça sera assez difficile pour moi, parce que, déjà, je ne suis jamais allée en

Amérique, donc je ne sais pas du tout comment ça se passe et pour moi la seule image que j'ai des universités américaines, c'est plutôt à travers le feuilleton Beverly Hills. [.......] En plus, ici en France, donc, je ne suis pas, je ne suis pas à l'université, donc je ne sais pas non plus exactement comment ça se passe, ou c'est peut-être aussi un peu plus difficile pour moi de les comparer. Je sais qu'en Amérique, donc, le système universitaire est payant, donc c'est peut-être, l'encadrement est peut-être meilleur que dans une université française, peut-être un peu plus sérieux, mais que c'est peut-être aussi un moyen, disons, discriminatoire vis à vis des personnes qui pourraient pas payer les entrées dans certaines universités, et donc je pense dans ce sens un peu moins juste. Donc, en plus, donc, au niveau de l'encadrement, d'ailleurs j'ai lu un peu dans le site de Jane, donc, l'encadrement a l'air quand même assez développé, par exemple, un certain nombre de services pour les étudiants au niveau de l'orientation, les choses comme ça aussi peut être intéressant. Donc pour moi c'est un peu difficile - j'arrive pas vraiment à m'imaginer, en fait. Je ne sais pas si ça répond vraiment à la question qui a été posée.....Voila!

In an informal, post-course interview, Karine stated that her virtual "friendship" with Jane, which included taking an interest in Jane's pregnancy, had not only encouraged her to find out more about the American system, but had also given her the confidence to apply and be accepted for a year's internship in the United States.

As we discussed in Section 4.8.4.1, this interest did not extend to all the participants. Indeed, a minority of students do not appear to show the openness to others essential for the development of intercultural competence (Section 1.5.6). For instance, Xavier C., from the Autumn 1999 group, remained totally indifferent to the news that his keyboard pal had actually been brought up in Brest, the nearest large town to the French school, and had been visiting the area that summer. On the other hand, he fully expected Alicia to show an interest in his taste in rock groups or his enthusiasm for computer games.

> Salut Xavier,
> i live in philadelphia but i was born and raised in france...actually i was raised in Brest ☺ i lived on rue Anatole France and i was jus in Brest this past july...Je suis une française! Hehehe Née à Pontoise près de Paris mais élevée à Brest...I didn't come to the States until 1989...So i've spent half my life in France and half here. So maybe i'd know the french music groups you like, or at least learn of some...My roommate here is french also...or was born and raised there, so she would know some...Oh, I'm vietnamese by the way, well, till later...

> Thu 7 Oct 1999
> Hello Alicia
> Here is Xavier who finally write you back: first, I would like to say that I don't know the street Anatole France: we do not live in Brest, but at about ten kilometres

from this place in a smaller town called Plouzané. So the only street that I know is the main one: la rue de Siam. Concerning the French music groups that I listen to, here's a list: Armens, Blankass, Melville, Miossec, Dolly, M, Mano Negra, les Wampas, I am, Silmarils, Cornu, Renaud, Noir Desir et Telephone...Perhaps, you know one of the last three ones, they are well known here in France for several years. I don't remember if I say it in my last letter, but I enjoy having internet on my own computer: it is really helpfull to obtain all sorts of informations as MP3, games (i'm fond of computer games...)
Bye, Xavier

Not surprisingly, this correspondence did not develop far after the first few exchanges, even though Alicia did not appear to take offence and tried hard to find some common ground.

Subject: Salut...
Date: Mon, 25 Oct 1999 23:39:25
Bonjour,
Il y a longtemps que j'ai écris...Mais il y avait juste beaucoup de choses a faire et je n'étais pas ici pour un temps. Je suis rentrer chez moi pour aider ma mère...On est entrain de déménager. Je vois que tu ne connais pas Brest et que tu es vraiment à Plouzané...J'étais là aussi l'été dernier. Les groupes musicales français que tu as inscris, tu avais raison, je ne l'ai connais pas. Mais, je vois que tu aimes les MP3...J'ai des MP3 de la musique que j'aime et si tu as du temps, peut-être tu peut m'envoyer un ou deux MP3 français que tu as. [....]
Alicia

Xavier was from the Autumn 1999 group, which we identified as appearing more ethnocentric than the other groups (Section 4.9.1). However, his question during the videoconference was neutral and showed some interest in the American students:

What do you think about Jerry's Springer Show ?
How do Americans feel about series like Baywatch, Beverly Hills and Melrose Place? Don't Americans prefer The Simpsons?
(Winter 1999 videoconference)

Xavier's dismissal of Alicia's attempts to communicate with him could be a result of certain negative attitudes to out-groups which can be observed in the students from the "Grandes Ecoles" (Section 4.2.3.4 and Section 4.5.3). They could also be caused by other variables such as background or personality. This extreme reaction remains unusual; in general, the combination of academic study afforded by the conceptual toolkit and the more informal exploration of the topics in the social space provided by the e-mails and the

videoconferences allowed the students access to multiple interpretations and perspectives (Section 4.8.2.6 and Section 4.9.5).

4.9.16 Towards a global classroom

The academic writings produced by the students could be seen to be merely displaying the knowledge acquired in the classroom, using the foreign language as tools to "do school". However, as we have discussed, many of the private texts were reframed by personal experience and extended beyond the conventional essay. They also provided an informed basis for the discussion in the dialogic, public domain. Here, as Kramsch (2000) points out, these tools become signs which are interpreted and added to by others.

An example of this dialogic engagement (Dunn and Lantolf, 1998) is shown in Sequence Thirteen, where we see the students in the 1998 group engaging seriously with the subject of attitudes to authority. Nivedita asks a question about the changes in the plot of the remake of "Trois Hommes et un Couffin", which are summarized in the following extracts from student essays. In general, the French students agreed that, in the French original, the men return the drugs in a "realistic and efficient way".[52] They are not shocked by this, nor are they disturbed by the image of the policemen as inefficient buffoons. On the other hand, they are surprised by the heroic role adopted by the three American "fathers". As we see in the videoconference, the American students' reaction is very different.

> First we can see that the main characters have a totally different attitude. In the American version they have to be heroes. This difference is obvious when they have to give the dealers the drugs back. In the French version, they use a quite simple way so as not to be seen by the policemen who spies them: Michael hides the drug in the baby's nappy, then he just has to change the baby in a park and he puts the nappy in the dustbin where the dealer can take it. It is a realistic and efficient way to exchange drug. In the American version they choose to catch the drug dealers and to deliver them to police. So there is a little cascade [stunt] in the lifts so as to make it more spectacular. The film is more focused on action than on

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[52] This view was also expressed by the film director, Coline Serreau: "Qu'est-ce qu'un paquet de drogue contre la vie d'un bébé?" (Informal interview conducted by myself and Andrée in December 2001, at the Quartz, the Brest Arts Centre).

characters. Besides the drug dealers look more dangerous in the American version: they have guns and belong to a gang. Life is dangerous in America!
(Essay 15, French male student, 1999, Appendix XXIV)

Another major difference between the two films is the scene where the main characters must give back the drugs they have become [got, received, interference from German *bekommen*] accidentally. On the one hand, the French decide to trade directly with the dealer and give him the drug secretly in a square in order to avoid involving the police, that is often laughed at in France. On the other hand, the American characters prefer warning the police and arresting the dealers, so that they look like heroes.
(Essay 17, French male student, 1999, Appendix XXIV)

That cultural difference can also be noticed in some movies, where police officers have very different roles. It is particularly obvious when one compares the French movie "Trois Hommes et un Couffin" and its American remake. In the French version, the police officer doesn't seem very clever. It's only after having searched a bin that he realises the dealers have left with the drug. And moreover, in the French movie, the men who've got the baby prefer not to do the job in cooperation with the police. Although in the American movie, the police is involved since the beginning and the three protagonists cannot think for a single second of letting the drug dealers leave with the drug. No, they feel that a spectacular arrest is their duty, even if they are just people as normal as you and me. The last behaviour- the American one- would seem somewhat childish and unrealistic to most of the French. French people would generally prefer laughing at their policemen, which is more realistic because we have all met some who were not much clever.
(Essay 18, French male student, 1999, Appendix XXIV)

At the beginning of the sequence, Cassie confirms the view that general attitudes to the police in the United States are more positive than in France. This, at least partially, explains the changes in the treatment of the police in the remake of "Trois Hommes et un Couffin".

> **Nivedita:** My question is about the situation of drugs and all that. I wanted to ask if it was important that the dealers in the American version, is it important that the dealers should be arrested? Because it is not the case in the French version.

> **Cassie:** I think it's very important that the drug dealers should be caught in the American version, because we see drug dealers in America as a bad situation, and we always want to seek help from the police. We see the police as good people, that are on the good side and trying to help us out.

She later repeats this view, although she also adds that corruption can exist in the police force:

> **Cassie:** So there are cops out there that are corrupt and that you can't trust, but for the most part Americans see police officers as someone you can trust, and someone you can go to help you out with your problems if there's a problem that exists.

Cassie also explains the context of drug–related violence found in the United States, confirming the French student's comment that "life is dangerous in America!". She mentions that the film was produced by Disney, for a family audience, which makes it important that the drug dealers should be caught. However, both she and Jack seem to miss the point about the drug dealers, apparently confusing reality and its depiction in the film.

> **Cassie:** And so drug dealers in America are usually the ones that cause all the poverty, and this endless cycle of helplessness: people who are in poverty, they tend to... it's hard to explain. If you see inner-city youth and families who live in the projects, or in the inner city, there's generally a lot of drugs that are being dealt around there and they get caught in endless cycles, and they think that the only way that they can get out is through drugs and most people who use and deal drugs end up in prison, and it's just an endless cycle of doing drugs - going to prison - doing drugs - going to prison. Violence usually is associated with drugs in America. A high crime rate. A .ot of people do just about anything to get their fix, so we don't... it was very necessary in the American film that the drug dealers should be caught, because they're seen as bad people. And the fact that it is a Disney movie, and it's made for the family, it sends out that message if the drug dealers are dealt with appropriately.
> **Jack:** And here if you know information about drug dealers, and it's found out that you know information about it and have withheld it from the police, you could be charged.

This confusion between reality and fiction, which we also discussed in Section 4.8.2.6, is also apparent in some of the students' essays, as we see in the following extract. Some of the students are very clear about the way the films both reflect social attitudes and conform to a certain type of film, as we can see in the following example.

> There is also the drug scene that has been changed in the American movie. I think that Americans cannot stand if the police is being cheated on, at least not in a movie rated for all. This is why in the American movie we see the three men working with the police and not against.
> (Essay 5, French male student, 1998, Appendix XXVI)

However, the differences in the two films also inspire generalisations such as: "It seems that Americans can't admit that people who break the law are not all sadistic killers", or "American people act in a super-hero way", or indeed "The social status is far more important in America than in France".

> However, the American movie goes too far when it shows the three men defeating drug dealers in a very spectacular way. It seems that Americans can't admit that people who break the law are not all sadistic killers, and that a drug dealer can be a nice guy. On the other hand, they see policemen as people you can trust and you

need to help ("Here you are, I give you two drug dealers and a videotape, thank-you, goodbye."), which means they are independent as long as they don't meet authority.
(Essay 16, French male student, 1999, Appendix XXIV)

American people act in a super-hero way. Indeed, when the three men has to give the drug back to the drug-dealers, in the American movie they get the dealers arrested and the policemen are very friendly with them. In the French movie, the policemen don't seem very friendly at all and they even seem kind of stupid. Moreover, the drug is given back to the dealers but they are not arrested.
(Essay 14, French female student, 1998, Appendix XXIV)

Then there are some others [sic] aspects: the relationship with the police. In French films, policemen often look ridiculous: they never get it, they are stupid, narrow-minded. It is the opposite in the US where they look friendly (the detective smiles at the baby) and where they risk their life to protect citizens. Finally, the hero status is completely different whether you are French or American. In the American film, they are rich, good-looking, they have a good job, they have plenty of friends and a huge flat. In the French film, that is not so emphasized, they are normal people and not brilliant heroes. The social status is far more important in America than in France.
(Essay 13, French male student, 1999)

The advantage of having various different perspectives is confirmed in this extract, where Nivedita recontextualises the two American students' statements about drug dealers, returning to the notion of the "hero" which is apparent in the American film and making a distinction between film and the way it can reflect reality.

> **Nivedita:** I think it's the same here, because of course we have drug dealers too in France, but the difference perhaps is that in the French version, the cop doesn't appear as a hero. Is it the case in all America movies? Because we were trying to find American movie where the police makes a fool of it, if it's not something like the "Police Academy" on son ething like that. Is there a film where the police makes a fool of itself? Does it exist or is the US cop still a hero for the American?

There then follows a discussion about attitudes to the police, both in films and reality (Appendix XXIII).The students' talk is spontaneous, although they have clearly prepared the subject. Several students join the discussion unprompted, adopting various discursive roles, providing cultural information and differing perspectives. They position themselves as equals, asking real questions, which require real answers. These answers are co-constructed (van Lier, 1996, Section 4.8.2.4) to reach a consensus: "It's a difference, yes". The students

confirm the difference in attitudes, particularly when the whole French group bursts into

laughter at Lucy's question.

> **Lucy**: And I think that we do have a great respect for the law in the United States. When people get stopped for a traffic violation, they always say to the police officer "Yes Sir, Yes Sir...", you know, you don't talk back to a police officer. And I was curious if it's the same way in France.
> ((Whole French group laugh))

While recognising difference, the exchange also allows the students a critical distance

from their own culture, for instance when Lucy makes the following observation.

> All these are actual videos of police officers catching criminals, chasing cars, that kind of thing. So you'll only see the ones where they get the bad guy. You don't see the ones that get away.

This example is taken from the group's second videoconference, when the students

had had time to "get to know" each other through their e-mail exchanges and webpages and

to study the academic texts. It illustrates the potential for broadened discourse options

afforded by videoconferencing when technical difficulties have been overcome, a view

shared by the students, who were highly enthusiastic about the videoconference (Section

4.8.4.3). The students manage the perceptual latency with ease, so that the conversation flows

relatively easily and gives, for a short time at least, the impression of one cohesive

community, a global classroom.

4.9.17 And it's fun!

As we have seen, telecollaboration can lead to a shift in the locus of control and to

students taking charge of their own learning. One aspect which is often overlooked is that

learning a *languaculture* can be fun. One of the main elements observed in the successful

video exchanges, like the one quoted above, is the amount of light-hearted banter and

laughter between the students. Although the discussion is serious, the whole French group

laughs at Lucy's question. Then Joanne imitates a young person intimidated by a policeman

and Lucy refers back to the conversation about "cop shows " in a humorous way.

Joanne: Right, it teaches you to be a "good citizen" ((signs quotation marks)). But there's also among the young people, who are under age, and they wanna drink, and they wanna drive illegally, and stuff like that. There's also a lack of respect, and they will talk bad about the cops, and they'll make fun of them, but as soon as they see one they're like this ((she sits completely still)), just as soon as they do. Unless they're a drug dealer! They run!
Lucy: And they get on one of those television shows!

Some of the American students and one French student thought that the partner group was more at ease and laughed more (Section 4.8.4.4) and one American student reported feeling alienated by the French group's laughter. However, the adjective "fun", "funny" [literal translation of "marrant"] or "amusant" appeared constantly in the students' evaluations of the videoconferences:

- **Je suis d'accord, je pense la vidéoconference a été très interessant. Je n'ai pas su que la technologie existe comme ça et aussi il etait amusant pour voir vous en France.**
- **Le videoconference etait si merveilleux et amusement, j'ai desire de te telephoner et continuer la conversation.**
- **It was really fun and exciting I would have liked to do it again.**
- **It was really fun to see our partners and communicate with them.**
- **It was fun to discover our partners.**
- **I thought it was good fun asking and answering to you.**
- **I enjoyed the second videoconference very, very much.**
- **Very good, I enjoyed the experience very much.**
- **I enjoyed the atmosphere and spontaneous behaviours very much.**
- **Good, very funny.**

The final sequence in the montage illustrates how the students often appropriated the medium in an amusing way, either to illustrate a point, to make personal connections or to share their enthusiasm at the novelty of the technology. Like Sullivan's Vietnamese students, who used playfulness as a mediator in the language class (Sullivan 2000), the videoconferences appeared to encourage a kind of performance, or collective scaffolding, where students attended to each other's discourse in a playful way. As Morgan and Cain (2000), following Fonagy (1985), point out, the use of humour depends on dialogic discourse, where a previous layer of discourse is used as a basis for a second layer. Comic

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impact arises from the dialogue or conflict between the expected schema and the second echoing voice.

Bakhtin sees parody as:

> an entire system of crooked mirrors, elongating, diminishing, distorting in various directions and to various degrees.
> (Bakhtin, 1986: 127, cited in Morgan and Cain, 200: 16)

These kinds of parodic layers are very common during the videoconferences.For instance, Francesca's reference to Alexis' hair at the beginning of the May 1999 videoconference: "I love your hair!" is later echoed by Alexis when there are technical problems at the end of the conference and only the top of Francesca's hair can be seen. During the same conference, Kelly and Craig gave a practical demonstration of modern dancing, which had been the subject of the film they had made for the partner group. This was then echoed by Alexis, Antoine and Etienne, while Edward showed his wide trousers to the camera as an illustration of their comments about fashion. This kind of interaction helped to create an informal atmosphere, which was conducive to cooperative learning. Similarly, in the 1997 videoconference, the French group toasted their partners with champagne to illustrate a cultural difference in attitudes to alcohol in a light-hearted way. [53]

In recent years, the idea of goal-based teaching has often been stressed. However, the goals were all too often only those of the teacher or institution. Using sociomedia can help us to see that goals can be multiple, students can appropriate learning for their own agenda and enjoy themselves in the process.

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[53] There are many other examples of humorous or parodic exchanges in the videoconferences and e-mails. See, for instance, Section 4.8.4.3, Section 4.9.2 or Section 4.9.11.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Discussion

In this thesis, we have argued for a pedagogy of *languaculture,* based on a view of language with culture at its core and of culture as being embodied, symbolized and represented by language. We have suggested that the appropriation of new technologies can provide students with access to "third places" by confronting their own prior texts with those of native speaker peer groups and by helping them to integrate the "other" in themselves.

After a review of the recent history of language teaching and of various intercultural and pedagogical models and theories as they are conceptualised for the language classroom, we designed a telecollaborative model for *languaculture* teaching (Section 2.6). Our main aims were as follows:

1) to encourage students to move towards a "third place "as intercultural speakers, finding a balance between their own voice and the appropriation of new voices at the interstices of two or more cultures.
2) to extend the traditional communicative classroom through a virtual space or "third place", creating a virtual community of learners.
3) to develop some innovative teaching methods based on dialogic discourse and team teaching across geographical barriers.

In order to imple..nent this model we used a toolkit metaphor, which included a *perceptual toolkit*, a *conceptual toolkit* and a *technological toolkit*. A sociocultural perspective was integrated into both our pedagogy and our research methodology. We based our analysis on multiple sources of data, including students' course work, e-mails between the two student groups, transcripts of whole class videoconferencing, teaching diaries and informal interviews and discussions with students and partner teachers.

To what extent were the theoretical framework and the telecollaborative *languaculture* model illuminated or challenged by practice? The *perceptual toolkit and conceptual toolkits* were found to be beneficial for consciousness–raising and to provide analytical tools and

cultural information in an innovative way. The French students' initial reticence about the relevance of the *perceptual toolkit* changed over time, as the presentation of the subjects was modified to incorporate issues of more personal significance, such as attitudes to education within the *classes préparatoires*. However, the implementation of the *perceptual toolkit* remained relatively problematic for some students, probably due to the less accessible nature of the abstract aspects of languaculture study.

The *conceptual toolkit* was more widely appreciated and appropriated. Student essays and class discussions provided evidence of enhanced understanding of culture as both product and process and the emergence of a "savoir interprétatif" (Zarate 1983). The use of the comparison of American remakes and their French originals to illustrate the analysis provided by Carroll in "Evidences Invisibles" (1988) proved particularly fruitful as an initial critical approach to both the students' original culture and the culture under study.

These two preparatory toolkits have been used successfully without the *technological toolkit* in various other contexts, as we discuss below. However, although we did not carry out a formal comparison, the results of our observations suggest that access to a culturally "other" peer group facilitated by telecollaboration can significantly enhance their use. The *technological toolkit* was observed to provide access to multiple discursive perspectives and negotiation of meaning in a broad sense, where students asked real questions and received real answers, especially when students had built up a relationship with their keyboard pals.

The involvement in the course was unevenly distributed, with different ways of appropriating the mediational means on offer and varying degrees of personal engagement. The extent of individual students' involvement in the e-mail exchanges was difficult to predict. Some students, like Leila (Spring/Summer 1997), demonstrated hyperpersonal engagement (Walther (1996; Thorne 2003) which led to a development from object-regulation to the beginnings of self-regulation and a growing *languaculture* awareness.

Frédéric, her key board buddy's affective involvement in the relationship both helped to destroy unanalysed stereotypes and provided a sympathetic outsider's support for his rejection of certain "ingroups". Other dyads, such as Barbara-Jean and Jérémy (Autumn 1999) built up a close relationship on an academic level, adopting "serious epistemic roles" (Nystrand 1997). Many students demonstrated a commitment to mutual assistance and developed a critical stance towards their own culture, through discussion of personal and academic issues with their partner. A shift back and forth from apprehending the messages as "text-based realities" (Wertsch and Minick 1990; Kinginger 2000b) to relationship building or *interpersonal* content (Halliday 1970) did not appear to be detrimental to these dyads. A minority of the students rejected the project, for reasons which remain unclear, although some were among those with more initially ethnocentric attitudes. On the other hand, changes in positioning from more reluctant participants were also observed during the videoconferences. Indeed, certain students, like Jean-Yves (Spring/Summer 1998) showed a far more positive attitude towards the virtual class than the one shown in the local classroom.

In certain cases, such as with Etienne and Lin (Spring/Summer 1999), there was a breakdown in the e-mail partnership which originated from varying degrees of computer literacy and too great a difference in interests, as predicted by Stephan (1985). However, the differences in linguistic competence and educational and socio-economic background between the French and American groups did not appear to pose an insurmountable problem. On the contrary, the course was more globally successful with the partners from Midwest University, where these differences were far more apparent.

The problems of comprehension experienced by many of the American students and some of French students during the videoconferences suggested that the French content was beyond the students' ZPD. However, this difficulty was addressed through intensive study of the transcripts in Solange's French class and led to far fewer problems during the second

videoconference. The differences in communication styles observed by some of the French students, such as Thiébaut (Spring /Summer 1998) also encouraged reflection on sociopragmatic norms and accommodation. Many of the French students, used to the communicative approach, were reluctant to use French in their e-mail messages, although they were happy to do so during the videoconferences.

Barriers to the achievement of an intercultural perspective derived partly from false understandings due to overgeneralisation, where students from both groups, who felt that they were part of a global youth culture, tended to minimize difference. Single-voiced or authoritarian discourse (Bakhtin 1981) was also observed in the face of criticism or perceived criticism of France and there were rash generalisations or stereotypical views on both sides. On the French side, these views tended to be negative, originating partly from genuine objections to American international policies but also from uninformed attitudes forged by negative prior texts in the media and in school History books. On the other hand, many of the American stereotypes of France and the French were unrealistically optimistic.

Some difficulties were encountered because of differing expectations of the workload involved, due to differences in the objectives of the course, but this was a minor problem. The fact that many of the students positioned themselves as "experts" on their own *languaculture* provided many opportunities for reciprocal learning, particularly concerning culturally biased attitudes to primary and secondary socialisation and indexicality. This led to a change in the locus of control with students positioning themselves as more capable peers, although a few students lacked competence in giving grammatical explanations or information on sociocultural practices.

Other limitations to the achievement of the aims of the telecollaborative model were mainly due to technical difficulties. The need for prepared questions during the videoconferences, in order to cope with perceptual latency, and possible anxiety or stage

fright implied a relatively rigid agenda. The centralised nature of the camera controls also

placed the teacher in the centre of the group, except when students, like Nadia

(Spring/Summer 1997), agreed to appropriate this role. Poor sound quality and occasional

picture loss were also experienced during some exchanges. However, as we have

demonstrated, the vast majority of the students still considered that the teachers' role was that

of "mentor" or "guide" and that they were taking charge of their own learning. Their reaction

to technical difficulties was also positive, as for example when Karma (Spring/Summer1997)

cleverly turned sound loss into an opportunity for lexical scaffolding. The asynchronous

nature of the e-mail was also seen as a limitation by some of the students, like Benoît and

Rosie (Autumn 1999), who attempted unsuccessfully to establish an Instant Messenger link.

In spite of these limitations, a sense of students' emerging "third places" was

frequently observed, particularly in the following areas:

1) Questioning previous assumptions of shared meaning and recognising that some concepts are culture-bound. These are key elements of an *ethno-lingually relative* perspective (Citron 1995).

 2) Gaining awareness that all cultures are relative, through decentring from one's own taken-for-granted world (Byram and Zarate 1994; Byram 1995; 1997).

4)Gaining a new perspective on taken-for-granted shared preconceptions (Carroll 1987; Byram 1997). Achieving intersubjectivity (Dunn and Lantolf 1998; Lantolf 2000a)

5) Seeing the self as a potential stranger or other (Kristeva 1988).

6) Looking at one's own culture from an insider's and outsider's perspective (Kramsch 1993).

7) Developing awareness of addressivity (Bakhtin 1981; 1986).

8) Negotiating meaning to create new meaning/reality with interlocutors (Kramsch 1993; 1998b; Kinginger 2001b).

9) Relating to other identities, either through empathy- seeing the world through the other's eyes (Bakhtin 1981)- or "agreeing to disagree" - conflict resolution or the acceptance of a non-negotiable conflict (Zarate 2001).

As we have seen, one of the other main benefits of the toolkit approach was a strong

sense of a new community of learners, particularly within the first three groups. This global

classroom was observed to lead to a change in the locus of control, which increased

motivation and encouraged students to actively appropriate their own learning and to no

longer silently wait for the teacher to "make" them speak. Secondly, the virtual third space

provided a half-way house between the various interlocutors and "the other", allowing both

access to different social worlds and a critical distance in which to acquire the "suspension of

disbelief" necessary for intercultural competence (Byram 1997). This "virtual mobility"

(Chambers 2001), mediated both by technological tools and the teacher, allowed

opportunities for engagement with otherness denied to some students for emotional or

financial reasons.

The use of the toolkits, based on an ongoing collaboration between the three teacher-

researchers, enabled us to fulfil the first part of our third objective, that of developing some

innovative teaching methods based on dialogic discourse. The final aim of team teaching

across geographical barriers was also achieved, although there were some minor difficulties,

due to the unsuitability of some subject matter for the other cultural group and

incompatibility between calendars and syllabi. The organisation of successful e-mail

partnerships and videoconferencing was time-consuming and required a great deal of co-

operation between the teachers, in order to guarantee maximum and meaningful participation

for both classes. Although, as we have seen, the students were playing a more active role in

the learning process, the teacher's role became far more demanding than that of the

conventional classroom. Our attempts to help students to understand that the technological

means at their disposal were not only exciting to use, but could also result in greater personal

enrichment through exposure to new linguistic experiences and cultural worlds, required a

high level of commitment on our part. On the French side, a more research-oriented approach

than the one we had adopted previously proved enriching. Moreover, there were unexpected

outcomes, such as positive attitudinal change towards certain students after observation of

their performance in the videoconferences or enhanced understanding of student perceptions after reading their e-mails. The multiple resources and voices provided by the cross-cultural team also encouraged decentring on the part of the teachers. Furthermore, involvement in the distance learning gave us the impetus to work in closer proximity with colleagues locally.

5.2 Directions for future research and practice

Since we began the research for this thesis, several projects using part of the telecollaborative toolkit have been developed. In the USA, the project has been extended to a large-scale federally- financed research project which includes learners of German and Spanish. Télécom Bretagne has developed a multimedia project with the University of British Columbia, including an open chat forum, called Café Bavardage. We have also continued our work with East University, adding Netmeeting to the other media to provide synchronous exchange between the two classes (Thorne 2003) . Experimentation into creating audio and video links using Internet Protocol between learners of Spanish at Télécom Bretagne and learners of French at the ETSIT[54] in Valence are also under way.

The first two toolkits have also been used independently during intercultural management courses at the Institut National des Télécommunications in Paris and the Ecole Supérieure de Commerce in Brest and also for in-service training for practising primary school teachers, preparing an English teaching diploma, at the Institut de Formation des Maîtres in Brest. These courses received positive feedback from the participants and the results are under analysis.

These different experiments point to the adaptability of the toolkits. In order to further improve them, it would be interesting to add new ways of exploring the connections between language and culture, for instance by specifically concentrating on the students' semantic

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[54] Escuela Técnica Superior de Ingenieros de Telecomunicación

associations with terms such as *banlieue/suburbs or liberté/freedom* (Furstenburg et al. 2001) or by reflecting on the culturally-embedded synchronic and diachronic connotations of a phrase such as "Bread and Roses". The notion of the "third place" could also be explained more explicitly and students could be encouraged to reflect on their own "third places". They could also be given more extracts from other students' work on which they could build. In the particular pedagogical context of the Grandes Ecoles, more consciousness-raising of the notion of audience and of the benefits of modelling authentic peer usage for both sides of the exchange also need to be included. An exploration of other differences, such as class or gender could also be integrated into the model.

The observations made during this project point to the potential of modern media to connect students and teachers across class, gender, cultural and geographical borders. As more and more people become border crossers, there is an increasing need for analysis of the nature of language learning based on a view of language learners as people, with agency who appropriate or reject the new voices offered by the new language. Further longitudinal studies of socially and historically embedded classroom communities both local and global are also required, along with research on testing students' progress towards the contemporary aim of intercultural or multicompetent speaker. More research should also be carried out into the opportunities for teacher decentring and increased motivation provided by global team teaching. There is also a need for creative teaching materials and comprehensive teacher training:

> Teachers' understanding of both practical and theoretical issues, as well as their ability to integrate computer use with other language activities in a meaningful way will ultimately determine the value of computer-mediated communication in foreign-language teaching.

> (Kern, 1996:118)

5.3 Conclusion

Increasingly easy access to new technologies such as e-mail, videoconferencing and Web pages, along with improved synchronous audio and video links through Internet Protocol and a more evenly spread degree of computer literacy, are facilitating global classroom projects such as the one described in this thesis. The appropriation of these media can provide access to a virtual learning world that extends beyond the conventional classroom and is fulfilling on an emotional as well as an intellectual level. This opens up new horizons and is above all motivating, as it brings an element of personal involvement and a degree of independence in the learning process that cannot exist in the classical teacher/student context. As one student from Midwest University put it:

> Now I have this connection with the French students, I find myself watching TV and finding shows in French and wanting to watch them. Once you know more about a culture you want more: like eating Ruffles chips- you can't eat just one.

As Carr (1999) suggests, the negotiation of "third places" is relevant to both language educators/researchers and language policy makers. Training for intercultural competence should be included in our higher education curricula, both as an integral part of *languaculture* lessons and as a separate area of study (Kelly et al. 2001). In a rapidly changing world, where border crossing and inbetweenness is becoming the norm, recognition of the importance of the ability to negotiate multiple cultural identities should replace the current emphasis on passive quantifiable skills. In this way we will be able to help our students to appropriate their own "third place" and to communicate both with the others who are us and with their other possible selves.

> At the intersection of multiple native and target cultures, the major task for language learners is to define for themselves what this 'third place' that they are engaged in seeking will look like, whether they are conscious of it or not. [..] For each learner it will be differently located, and will make different sense at different times. [..] For most, it will be the stories they will tell of these cross-cultural encounters, the meanings they will give them through these tellings and the dialogues that they will have with people who have had similar experiences. In and through these dialogues, they may find for themselves this third place that they can name their own.

(Kramsch 1993: 257)

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